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## SAD CULTURE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE US' MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AS EXPRESSED IN SOCIAL MEDIA

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### ABSTRACT

The exponential growth of social media has resulted in the establishment of significant communities, trends, and phenomena. Amidst these phenomena is the sad culture, where social media users comfortably express their mental concerns. This study is conducted to have a profound conclusion on Sad Culture as a phenomenon, using social influence theory to determine its cause of emergence. In addition, the meaning of the terminologies is discussed using appraisal theory. This study implements qualitative and content analysis research design. It is implemented by gathering the data from @mytherapistsays Instagram page and performing an in-depth content analysis. Upon conducting the research, it is concluded that Sad Culture is a type of cyberculture. It is formed due to the rapid development of ICT–social media in particular–and the rising number of mental illnesses in the US. It started as a trend, then grew massive due to conformity, a term under social influence theory defined as an act where the majority influences others to perform what is believed to be the norm. In @mytherapistsays Instagram account, ten appraisal items are found, comprising 10% positive and 90% negative items.

**Keywords:** *appraisal; cyberculture; mental health issues; social influence; social media*

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## INTRODUCTION

The United States is undisputedly a superpower nation that possesses the power to transform the trajectory of the world (Herring, 2008). The influence of America on a global scale is apparent in various aspects, including but not limited to media, business, pop culture, technology, and politics (Volker, 2010). The rise of technology, particularly ICT, has played an essential role in further enhancing America's involvement and influence in international affairs. In addition, it boosts the capacity and output of every industry sector (Andersen & Coffey, 2018). As a technology that offers telecommunication-based information access, ICT focuses on communication (Ratheeswari, 2018). Therefore, using ICT has left a positive return, particularly in the timely distribution of information (Bosamia, 2013).

However, it is not without consequences. As of late, a new phenomenon has arisen, and it did not emerge without a cause. The rising phenomenon is “Sad Culture,” a trend of expressing mental health issues on social media platforms. Social media users utilize platforms to depict mental health issues, all while employing irony (Chateau, 2020). The Sad Culture phenomenon in social media is carried out through two types of actions: the first is initiation, which is an act of posting, writing, or performing any uploading that showcases emotional distress, and the second action is to relate—an action in which an individual is showing agreement or to concur on a specific subject. This can be performed by simply liking said post or commenting in a manner of agreement with the subject.

Despite starting to leave an impact globally, Sad Culture is closely tied to the

US social media segment. It is due primarily to the US sheer number of users and high social media traffic. Data compiled by Statista (2022) showed that the number of Instagram users in the US had reached 159.7 million, second most in the world, trailing only behind India with 230 million users.

Concerning these data, this research selected one renowned, established US account with a massive base on Instagram as the subject of research. The designated account is @mytherapistsays, an Instagram account possessing 7.9 million followers, 10,000+ posts, and an average of 100,000+ likes on each of its Instagram posts. The account was founded by Lola Tash and Nicole Argiris, Los Angeles, US, and Toronto, Canada residents. In its first six months, the owner successfully racked up 500,000+ followers and was the most extensive anonymous-run account on Instagram (Koman, 2017).

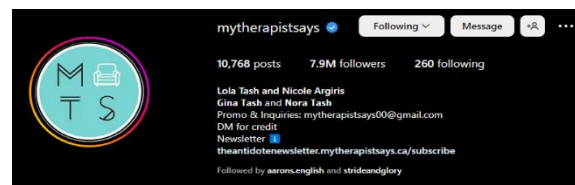


Figure 1. @mytherapistsays Instagram account

The account has become popular due to its relatable, anxious-ridden posts. It revolves around the daily struggle of individuals hindered by their mental conditions, such as depression, anxiety, chronic stress, and other psychological issues—all conveyed comically. The posts are usually made as memes, a unit of cultural information spread by imitation (Dawkins, 1976). In its simplest form, memes are created by selecting an image, clip, or other forms of media and inserting text on said image. These texts are often surrounding one or more topics.

The process is no different regarding @mytherapistsays' meme posts—they used a movie clip, screenshot of an image, or other pop culture products. They inserted a short sentence that stated their opinion or experience toward mental health-related issues. However, occasionally, @mytherapistsays uploaded a screenshot image of other memes, tweet screenshots, or text-based images circulating on the internet.

Due to these relatable topics, in each of @mytherapistsays' Instagram posts, the discourses between its followers are fabricated organically. Be it a simple statement of relatability felt by their followers, a recount of post-related narratives told by their followers, or even a conversation between fellow followers, @mytherapistsays have never been short of people engaging in their contents—all of which in massive numbers. For these reasons, @mytherapistsays is ideal for representing Sad Culture's current state.

This research will discuss three main things—divided into three subsections. The first subsection will provide a thorough analysis to have a clear conclusion on Sad Culture as a phenomenon. This subsection will discuss the definition of Sad Culture and how it is classified as a culture. Subsequently, the second part will analyze how Sad Culture originated using a sociological approach. The final subsection will discuss the linguistics side of this phenomenon by classifying the terminologies used in the @mytherapistsays account. This subsection aims to draw a profound conclusion on the meaning behind the words. The analysis in this subsection will focus on @mytherapistsays' recent posts, ranging from the beginning of January 2023 to March 2023.

While much research has been attempted to examine how mental health difficulties are expressed on social media, there is an increasing need to study such expressions. This study would concentrate on how a massive people's subsequent behavior, particularly in seeking assistance offline, is affected by publicly sharing melancholy, depression, and mental health concerns on social media and any potential stigma attached to such disclosures.

Several studies have been conducted regarding mental health disclosure in social media. These studies are “Modeling and Understanding Visual Attributes of Mental Health Disclosures in Social Media” (Manikonda & Choudhury, 2017); “Detecting Depression and Mental Illness on Social Media: an Integrative Review” (Guntuku et al., 2017); and “Detection of Depression-Related Posts in Reddit Social Media Forum” (Tadesse et al., 2019). These studies have attempted to highlight the phenomenon of disclosing mental health issues on social media through various instruments.

The researchers examined the data from the content shared on multiple social media platforms to gain insight into people's mental states, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Reddit. The studies had similar objectives: to predict and reveal mental health using text-based aspects of the platforms. In addition, the entirety of the studies utilized similar methods, namely automated systems, integrating several subfields, such as linguistics, computer science, and artificial intelligence. Therefore, the notable differences between these studies and the analysis of Sad Culture lie in the instruments and final objective.

Firstly, the analysis of Sad Culture in this study does not utilize any automated instruments. Subsequently, this study aims to unfold the phenomenon of Sad Culture through the perspective of American Studies, which uses Sociological and Cultural approaches. This resulted in distinct differences in the findings between these four studies. However, the approach in this study bears resemblance in terms of theory in a study conducted by Al Fajri et al. (2022), in which the researchers implemented appraisal theory, one of the theories implemented in this study. The study focuses on Biden's rhetoric regarding school shootings, an issue in the US similar to Sad Culture. In all, these studies are integral to the study of Sad Culture.

Sad Culture is a form of social phenomenon. By definition, a social phenomenon is a behavior that possesses the capability to influence or is influenced to respond to one another (Markey, 1926). Therefore, the analysis of Sad Culture demands the approach of sociology. In response to this basis, social influence theory is used. Social influence theory is a concept in which people modify their conduct to fit the expectations of a social setting and is usually applied in persuasion, influencing large groups or behavior over time (Williams, 2022).

Fundamentally, social influence theory comprises several primary forms, which respectively have been presented by numerous prominent theorists. In this study, the applied sub-theory is the majority influence, a type of social influence theory known as conformity. It is a form of social influence that involves altering one's conduct, beliefs, or thoughts to conform to the

expectations of others or to norms (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). It explains how a more influential majority influences an individual or minority group. This is the most prevalent type of social influence. Conformity is classified as an implicit expectation (Heinzen & Goodfriend, 2018) and is distinguished into two types: compliance and acceptance (Levine, 2020). Compliance is the act of giving in to an overt or covert request made by another and is a change in conduct but not necessarily in attitude; one can comply out of a sense of duty or by choosing to keep their private opinions to themselves in response to social pressures (Kelman, 1958).

Meanwhile, acceptance refers to overt changes in perception or attitude. The word "conformity" is frequently used to describe agreement with the majority viewpoint, whether it is due to a desire to "fit in" or be liked (normative), a desire to be accurate (informational), or a simple desire to fulfill a social function (identification) (McLeod, 2023). This study will use the social influence theory, particularly conformity, to understand Sad Culture's roots, development, and prevalence.

Serving as the means to dissect this phenomenon through the linguistics perspective and complement the interdisciplinary side of this study, this research uses appraisal analysis by Martin and White (2005). It is one of the three primary semantic resources for creating interpersonal meaning. Attitude, engagement, and graduation are the three interconnected dimensions of this theory. Each of these types differs in meaning: attitude includes people's emotions, including emotional reactions, behavioral evaluations, and objectivity evaluations; engagement deals

with the interplay of perspectives in a discussion as well as the origin of attitudes; and graduation addresses the grading phenomena, a general property of emotion. This study addresses only the attitude subcategory, particularly the affect component.

Attitude comprises three types of emotions: affect, judgment, and appreciation. The field of affect is focused on methods for comprehending emotional reactions. It is related to both positive and negative emotions, such as happiness or sadness, confidence or anxiety, interest, or boredom; judgment is concerned with attitudes and their relationship with behavior regarding the action of admiring, criticizing, praising, or condemning others; and appreciation takes resources like semiosis and natural occurrences into account while estimating a thing's value.

In conclusion, affect relates to one's expressed emotion, whereas judgment and appreciation deal with evaluating other people or things. Regarding social media posts in Sad Culture, the topic often displays an individual's emotions. Therefore, the selected subtype of attitude needs to be that which analyzes emotion. Hence, affect is utilized in this study.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study implements a qualitative research design. Data for this article was taken from the well-known @mytherapistsays Instagram account. The newest posts were chosen for analysis to ensure the data's relevance and recency. The number of likes and comments, among other engagement indicators, were used to filter postings that were selected to be studied.

This process involves analyzing and collecting non-numerical data (Bhandari, 2020). These data include direct fieldwork observations, open-ended interviews, or written documents (Patton, 2005).

Additionally, Merriam (2009) explained that qualitative research design is the process of understanding the meaning people have constructed, how people make sense of their world, and the experiences they have in the world. Qualitative research design can also be defined as a method that utilizes participant observation or case studies, which result in a narrative, descriptive account of a setting or practice. (Parkinson & Drislane, 2011).

In addition, this study uses content analysis as part of the qualitative research method. Krippendorff (2013) defines content analysis as a research method for extrapolating reliable conclusions about the context of text use. Content analysis allows researchers to identify one person's opinions, interests, or attitudes, as well as small, large, and different cultural groups (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). Within the same literature, Drisko & Maschi also argue that content analysis is divided into three types: fundamental content analysis, which employs statistical analyses such as the word count of the content; interpretive content analysis, which focuses on the interpretation of the content's specific characteristics; and qualitative content analysis, which uses a more empirical approach. In this study, interpretive content analysis is utilized.

## **DISCUSSION**

This section provides a discussion of the Sad Culture phenomenon. This is achieved by dividing the section into three subsections

with distinct subtopics. To get a clear conclusion on Sad Culture as a phenomenon, The first part, “Sad Culture and Its Intangible Nature”, will be used to present a thorough analysis of the phenomenon, which includes the definition and how it is situated under the definition of culture. The second part is “The Emergence of Sad Culture: Trends Spark, Community Cultivates”. This part uses a social influence theory to explain how Sad Culture came to be. The third part will address the linguistic aspect of this phenomenon by categorizing the terms used in the @mytherapistsays account. The part “How Language Plays a Role in Sad Culture” seeks to infer a significant meaning from the words used using Martin and White’s (2005) appraisal theory.

### **Sad Culture and Its Intangible Nature**

Schein (2004) argues that the formal definition of culture is a pattern of shared basic assumptions. Furthermore, he explained that culture is invented, discovered, and developed by a particular group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel about those problems. In addition, culture has several significant traits, which include: learned, something one acquires as a result of their upbringing; transmitted, the older generation transmits it to the younger and continually reinforces it—a culture perishes if it is not passed on; symbolic, derived from images or icons; dynamic, bears no static nature; integrated, dimension of other cultures are impacted by one culture; ethnocentric, the idea that one’s culture is better to and more deserving than another is a

characteristic shared by all cultures; and adaptive, possess the trait of adaptability (Saigo & Chapel, 2022).

Adhering to these definitions and characteristics, whether Sad Culture can be defined as a culture is still debatable. It could be argued that this is merely an internet trend. With no exception to most internet trends, it has a dynamic nature—it could vanish just as instantaneously as it emerged. Therefore, it stands in contrast to the characteristics of conventional culture. Nevertheless, denying the concept of it being an internet trend would be deemed incorrect as well, as it is—in fact—an internet trend. Sad Culture is virtually existent, meaning that it is intangible. It carries no physical presence nor heritage that a tangible culture has. Hence, the decision to classify Sad Culture as a culture requires more than just connecting its characteristics to its conventional meaning.

The analysis of Sad Culture should be shifted from attempting to connect the conventional definition of the word culture and the characteristics of Sad Culture to exploring other concepts that would fit more comfortably. Sad Culture can be simplified into a few characteristics: it started and flourished in cyberspace, meaning that it would cease to exist without the presence of the internet; it is a communal notion that unites people who share a common idea; and it is not a tangible culture. Judging by these characteristics, Sad Culture is a more compatible concept to be classified as a contemporary subject known as cyberculture.

Cyberculture is a collection of practices, attitudes, and values that came to be associated with cyberspace (Lévy, 2001). Cyberculture is a contentious and changing

dialogue that relies on developing ideas and concepts between its members and participants (Bell et al., 2004). Compared to conventional culture, cyberculture's characteristics are the complete opposite.

Several qualities make up cyberculture. Rheingold (1993) argues that cyberculture is a culture in which computer screens serve as a medium and is not a geographic culture but rather a cognitive and social one; it is a result of like-minded individuals discovering a common "place" to engage with each other (Kitchin, 1998); largely relies on the idea of knowledge and information transmission; and compared to conventional forms of community and culture, it is intrinsically more "fragile".

Upon analyzing these characteristics, it is evident that the conventional characteristics of culture and Sad Culture are incompatible. Therefore, it can be concluded that Sad Culture is a trend that prospers under vast cyberspace, transforming it into a cyberculture.

### **The Emergence of Sad Culture: Trends Spark, Community Cultivates**

Similar to most memes, slang, and other forms of cybercultures, there has been no exact data about Sad Culture's origin. Nevertheless, one fact is certain: it has taken over the trend on social media at least since 2019 (Joho, 2019). The number of participating accounts has kept increasing ever since, making it relevant even until recent times. In capturing this phenomenon, several aspects are considered: the instantaneous growth of ICT, increasing mental health issues, and the role of social influence. This study argues that the

emergence of Sad Culture results from these prevailing matters.

To begin, ICT, or Information, Communication, and Technology, serves a significant role in the growth of Sad Culture. Social media/social network is a form of ICT product, as defined by Hu & Yu (2021), ICT-based social media is a variety of Web 2.0-based technologies that emphasize the social aspects of the internet, such as the creation and sharing of user-generated content. This allows social media to develop rapidly, as the market for this segment is exceptionally vigorous. This is indicated by the positive numbers the global ICT market has consistently shown. Data from Atradius (2022) shows that ICT's main sub-sectors recorded double-digit output growth rates globally: computers increased by 14.2%; electronic components increased by 19.6%; and telecommunications, the main instrument to access social media, increased by 10.4%.

In the US, social media, particularly Instagram, is a massive platform. In addition to its enormous number of users, 159.7 million (Statista, 2022), a study by Schaeffer (2021) reveals that four in ten Americans and 71% of young adults (ages 18 to 29) use Instagram. The study also shows that 59% of its users visit Instagram daily.

Consequently, the growth of ICT allows trends to emerge massively and rapidly. Adhering to the aforementioned characteristics of cyberculture, Sad Culture results from like-minded people creating a shared space to interact. This refers to the definition of a "trend", an inclination toward a specific style or taste (Envato, 2019). Despite appearing to emerge suddenly, a trend's emergence is not magical. It is a

social process human beings create (Vejlgaard, 2008). According to the Instagram Trend Report published by Instagram (2021), the trends on Instagram often shift annually. Trends revolved around various topics, including fashion and beauty, music, shopping, celebrities, career and education, memes, food, gaming, social justice, and mental wellness—the category in which Sad Culture is classified. Each trend has a large segment and a large community to sustain it. The existence of trends is one of the causes of Sad Culture's emergence and prevalence.

Subsequently, prevailing mental health issues are one of the primary reasons for the appearance of a Sad Culture. Mental health disorders have been an issue in the US for a long time. Statistics from Mental Health America (2023) indicate that 20.78% of adults in the United States have a mental illness, equivalent to over 50 million Americans. One in ten young people suffers from depression, which seriously hinders their capacity to perform at work or school, at home, with family, or in social life.

Several studies have shown a significant correlation between mental illness and social media. Excessive social media use is a major cause of several mental issues, such as poor sleep quality, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Woods & Scott, 2016). Additionally, inattention, hyperactivity, impulsivity, ODD, and loneliness can also be caused by high social media usage (Barry et al., 2017). Research conducted by Hunt et al. (2018) showed that by restricting the use of social media, an individual could significantly reduce loneliness, depression, anxiety, and the Fear of Missing Out

(FOMO). The correlation between social media and mental issues made people less reluctant to express these mental issues on social media, particularly Instagram. The high number of mental issues cases in the US, combined with the massive amount of Instagram users—particularly from the young adult demographic, caused the inevitable rise of Sad Culture.

Upon analyzing the rise of Sad Culture through the perspective of ICT and the increasing mental health issues, the final part of this subsection will provide an argument on how Sad Culture prevails through social influence. This study argues that significant influence (next to be referred to as conformity) is the most important contributor. Conformity is based on going along with or acting in a way that most individuals in a particular group do, which is caused by several reasons. It can be driven by the need to be perceived as “normal” (Cherry, 2022); the need to be perceived as correct, or to avoid punishments (Sowden et al., 2018). Sad Culture is massive and is starting to be seen as the norm. Attaching to the elements and definition of conformity, this study believes that most Instagram users in the US are drawn into Sad Culture due to the desire to be seen as “normal.”

This study uses @mytherapistsays' Instagram account to exhibit the conformity process. This process is apparent on two bases: the number of likes @mytherapistsays has gained and the comments of @mytherapistsays' followers on their Instagram posts. Below is the data on @mytherapistsays' top posts from January to March 2023, arranged reverse-chronologically:

Table 1. @mytherapistsays Instagram posts, January – March 2023.

No.	Type of Post	Date of Upload	Likes
1.	Twitter Screenshot	March 15, 2023	730.547
2.	Meme	March 11, 2023	1.025.469
3.	Text	March 1, 2023	599.213
4.	Text	February 21, 2023	630.700
5.	Meme	February 20, 2023	661.510
6.	Meme	February 14, 2023	619.245
7.	Meme	February 13, 2023	787.484
8.	Twitter Screenshot	February 7, 2023	928.018
9.	Meme	January 25, 2023	674.944
10.	Meme	January 12, 2023	852.673

The high number of likes on @mytherapistsays’ Instagram post indicates that they are a massive contributor to Sad Culture and can create an enormous community around it. The high number of its followers who are partaking in Sad Culture sustained and cultivated it to the point where it became the norm. As a result, it attracts more people to feel comfortable expressing themselves mentally, showing a process of conformity.

The second instance of conformity is apparent in @mytherapistsays’ comment section. The posts, which contain mental issues-related diction, stimulate their followers to raise comments with a familiar topic as the post itself. Displayed below are several instances that have been gathered from @mytherapistsays’ Instagram posts and comment section:

Me (insane) talking to my friend (also insane): ur not insane. And neither am I (@mytherapistsays, January 29th, 2023.)

In this post, the first subject is attempting to convince the second subject that he/she is not mentally deranged, while both are admitting that they are, in fact, deranged. This is a fabricated discussion that is conveyed comically. In response to this post, several Instagram accounts have commented:

Me talking to myself: You’re not insane and neither am I (@andrew\_dixon)

I’m the same, except the ‘friend’ is also myself (@facubdn)

Both accounts displayed above showed relatability to the original post by saying they often feel mentally deranged. These comments are initiated due to the original post, which created a space for people who think alike.

In other posts, signs of conformity are also evident through the display of agreement and relatability, indicating the massive influence of @mytherapistsays in Sad Culture:

The anxious urge to say “no worries either way” when you are actually worrying both ways plus a secret third way (@mytherapistsays, March 20th, 2023)

With this post, @mytherapistsays is attempting to state that they are not concerned with whatever issue they may encounter when they are concerned in reality. @mytherapistsays’ followers make similar comments in response to this post:

My worry has backup worries and spin-off worries (@lb\_fitlawyer)



I've already pre-worried all options  
(@rislandgirl808)

The uploaded post and its comment section display how conformity unfolds. These comments are used as a sample to capture the massive influence @mytherapistsays' has in Sad Culture, which showed several people agreeing or concurring on the subject.

In conclusion, Sad Culture is created through the rise of ICT—particularly social media, and the increasing number of mental health issues in the US. It emerged as a trend, but the combination of these two aspects resulted in more people resorting to social media to express these mental health concerns. Additionally, the high usage of Instagram worsens the mental state of its users. Instagram users in the US are drawn into Sad Culture out of social influence (conformity). Ultimately, this phenomenon consistently grows and sustains itself.

### **How Language Plays a Role in Sad Culture**

In @mytherapistsays' Instagram posts, specific terminologies are used. An analysis of these discourses is implemented by utilizing Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal theory. This subsection aims to examine the meaning, classify the terminologies under appraisal analysis, and draw a conclusion based on the findings. This study conducted an in-depth analysis of several of @mytherapistsays' Instagram posts.

I have high functioning anxiety which basically just means I'm good at fooling people into thinking I don't have anxiety. So anyways that's been stressful.  
(@mytherapistsays, March 7th, 2023).

The subject expresses a mental burden directly in the first analyzed post from @mytherapistsays. By having “high-functioning anxiety”, they can function well and perform without appearing anxiety-ridden. This, ironically, led them to become more stressed. Appraisal terms found in this post are: “anxiety”, a form of negative insecurity and “stress”, a form of negative unhappiness.

The morning after an emotional  
breakdown: maybe I overreacted



Figure 2. Instagram post from @mytherapistsays  
(March 7th, 2023)

This picture displays a freeze-frame of Bugs Bunny, a character from the Looney Tunes animated series. He is portrayed to be loosened, representing the subject's state after experiencing an emotional burst. Appraisal terms found in this meme image are: “breakdown”, a form of negative unhappiness; and “overreacted”, a form of negative insecurity.

Whenever I'm feeling stressed I like to take a deep breath & think about every mistake I have ever made.  
(@mytherapistsays, January 15th, 2023.)

In this post, a subject expresses their stress upon an issue and somehow worsens it by reminiscing over their past mistake. The point they tried to make with this statement is that they blame only themselves for worsening their mental condition. The

appraisal term found in this post is: “stress”, a form of negative unhappiness.

Does anyone else hate their own attitude sometimes? Like what are you mad now? (@mytherapistsays, February 25th, 2023.)

The subject in this post is expressing their hatred toward themselves. The hatred emerges because they often feel displeased for an unbeknownst reason. Appraisal terms found in this post are: “hate”, a form of negative unhappiness; and “mad”, a form of negative unhappiness.

Beyond excited to announce that I’m giving up! I’m so grateful for this opportunity and can’t wait to see where this decision takes me. (@mytherapistsays, March 21st, 2023.)

The subject sarcastically announces that they are no longer willing to work. It juxtaposes the factual information (giving up) and the words complementing it (grateful). The manner used in this post is usually used for a somewhat positive situation. The appraisal term found in this post is: “grateful”, a form of positive satisfaction.

I’m still tired from yesterday’s tired. (@mytherapistsays, January 16th, 2023.)

The subject expresses their suffering from constant exhaustion. The appraisal term found in this post is: “tired”, a form of *negative unhappiness*.

I was wondering where my irrational anxiety came from until I realized I was told things growing up like if I swam after I ate I would die. (@mytherapistsays, February 3rd, 2023.)

The subject felt that his unreasonable anxiety originated from baseless, illogical information he consumed as a child. The appraisal term found in this post is: “**anxiety**”, a form of *negative insecurity*.

Displayed underneath this paragraph is a table that summarizes the appraisal findings on @mytherapistsays Instagram account. The table displays the total number of subcategories found in these discourses.

Table 2. Types of Effect found in @mytherapistsays Instagram post

No.	Types of Affect	Appraising Items		Total
		Positive	Negative	
1.	Happiness	-	-	-
2.	Unhappiness	-	stress (2); breakdown; hate; mad; tired.	6
3.	Security	-	-	-
4.	Insecurity	-	Anxiety (2); overreacted.	3
5.	Satisfaction	Grateful.	-	1
6.	Dissatisfaction	-	-	-
7.	Inclination	-	-	-
8.	Disinclination	-	-	-
				10

In @mytherapistsays Instagram posts and comment section, most appraisal words found are anxiety and stress with (2) each.

Breakdown, hate, mad, tired, overreacted, and grateful each appeared once. The total number of appraisal elements found in this

study is ten items. Positive items make up only 10% of the entire element, whereas 90% of the words are classified as negative.

Upon examining these posts, it is evident that language is the main instrument Instagram users use to express their mental concerns. It serves as one of the significant essentials in Sad Culture. Despite being a cyber culture that revolves around mental health issues, the terms in Sad Culture do not entirely revolve around negative words such as “sad, cry, suffer”. Instead, some positive words are used. However, it is essential to note that despite a positive definition, positive words in Sad Culture do not necessarily intend to be used positively. For instance, the word “grateful” is classified as a positive satisfaction (part of effect) but is used in a negative manner (e.g., “grateful for this opportunity” which refers to “giving up”). Nevertheless, negative words still make up the majority of terminologies used in expressing mental health concerns. In all, appraisal analysis allows the researcher to understand further the meaning of the words and how essential their role is.

## CONCLUSION

Sad Culture is a term that refers to a phenomenon in which people on social media express their psychological-related issues. This activity can be performed by uploading a post containing mental health concerns or showing “relatability” towards these concerns by liking, commenting, or sharing. It is a type of cyberculture that has been relevant for around five years. Sad Culture is a global phenomenon but is closely associated with the US due to the large social media segment—particularly Instagram users in this country.

Sad Culture is formed due to the growth of information, communication, technology, and the rising number of mental health concerns in the US. It started as a trend, but the development of ICT allows social media to grow more prominent and more people to gain access, which, consequently, enables more individuals who are suffering from mental health issues such as depression, severe stress, or anxiety to be expressing themselves on social media. It then grew massive due to conformity, an act in which most people influence the minority. Those who are part of the minority are attracted due to Sad Culture being seen as the norm since the number of people partaking in this phenomenon keeps increasing.

A study is conducted on @mytherapistsays, one of the most massive accounts regarding mental issues concerns. The uploaded media by this account comprises screenshots of a tweet, memes, or text-only images. These Instagram posts are intended to express their feeling toward a mental issues-related subject but are relayed comically. This is proven victorious as the numbers gathered by @mytherapistsays are incredibly high, reaching as high as 1,000,000 likes. The study aimed to examine the linguistics aspect and found ten appraisal items from the selected Instagram posts, comprising 10% positive and 90% negative items.

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## ATTITUDES IN THE SONG LYRICS OF OLIVIA RODRIGO'S *SOUR* ALBUM

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to determine the types of attitudes and their manifestation in Olivia Rodrigo's *Sour* album. The data used in this research is song lyrics in the form of phrases, clauses, and sentences. This data was obtained from Olivia Rodrigo's official account on Spotify. The research method used in this research is descriptive-qualitative. The theory of attitude in this research is from Martin and White. This theory is used to identify the types and the manifestation of attitude in *Sour*. The results show that three kinds of attitudes (affect, judgment, and appreciation) are applied in the song lyrics. Based on the results, affect is the highest type of attitude found, with 74 frequencies (60.66%). Then, judgment is the second type of attitude that appears a lot with 39 frequencies (31.97%). The last type of attitude is appreciation, appearing at least with 9 frequencies (7.37%). Meanwhile, the manifestation, negative manifestation was the highest with 94 frequencies (77.05%), and the positive manifestation with 28 frequencies (22.95%). Affect is the highest type of attitude found in *Sour* song lyrics. Since more than 60% of the data is found in the form of expressions of feeling undesired, unhappiness, happiness, dissatisfaction, satisfaction, insecurity, and security. Meanwhile, negative manifestation is the highest type of manifestation found. Since 77% of the data is found in the form of expressions of misery, displeasure, disquiet, undesired, criticism, and condemnation.

**Keywords:** *Attitude; Attitude manifestation; context*

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## INTRODUCTION

Attitude is an expression that contains feelings, values, or judgments that the writer or speaker wants to express. Martin and White (2005, p. 35) say “Attitude refers to feelings, including emotional reactions, behavioral judgment, and evaluation of things”. Through attitude, the writer or speaker expresses feelings about something or someone. The writer or speaker also judges someone’s character and appreciation for things that something or someone produces. There are three kinds of attitude: affect, judgment, and appreciation.

The researcher used attitude to describe the stereotyped value of assumptions or perceptions in the writer’s or speaker’s opinion. Attitude is one of three appraisal systems. The way someone expresses judgment and attitude is concerned with the appraisal theory. Martin and Rose (2007, p. 26) say, “appraisal is a system of interpersonal meaning that acts as a tool for people to negotiate their attitudes and feelings.” Appraisal serves as a resource for negotiating social relationships by telling the listener or reader how the writer or speaker feels about things and people. Literary works include novels, poems, plays and song lyrics. This research works on *Sour* song lyrics. *Sour* is chosen because the songs on this album can represent many feelings of sadness, anger, falling in love, satirizing, and appreciation. The songs in this album are widely used as back sounds for *Instagram* stories and *TikTok* videos to represent the feelings of listeners at that time. The songs in this album boomed in the middle of 2021. The lyrics in the *Sour* album contain attitudes. Without a clear understanding of attitude, context and manifestation, the listener would not be able to get the message from the song.

Attitude Rodrigo uses in writing song lyrics. Attitude conveys Rodrigo’s feelings, judgments, and appreciation for the people around her. To understand the meaning of feelings, judgments, or appreciations, listeners must learn more about Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). SFL is a study in analyzing language based on the system of meaning. It is a theory used to analyze the relationship between the social context of the speaker and the addressee, as well as the linguistic aspects related to the language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). SFL analyzes language based on three metafunctions: ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning, and textual meaning. Interpersonal meaning is one of the metafunctions in language related to how people interact by giving information, the way a person expresses judgment and attitude.

Henceforth, the researcher decided to examine the attitude, context, and attitude manifestation in the song lyrics in *Sour*. This research involves the study of SFL and appraisal. This research aims to help some people who do not know the types of attitudes and their manifestation. The research also uses theoretical support that is relevant to the problem. In addition, this research is beneficial and relevant for readers and other researchers who need references related to attitude.

Regarding the related studies, there are three related studies in this area of focus. The first review of related studies is “Critical Discourse Analysis on “We are the World for Haiti” Song Lyrics”. This research was written in 2020 by Herman & Silalahi. This research focused on investigating the song lyrics based on the composer’s attitudes, the social relation among the participants, the context of the situation, and the power relation in the discourse. The theories used in

this research were based on Martin and Rose (2003). The findings showed that all types of attitudes were found: expressing feelings, judging people's character, and appreciating things. However, one part of judging people's character was not found in the song lyrics. The second is "An Appraisal Analysis of Gossip News Texts Written by Perez Hilton". This research was written in 2011 by Ertyas. This research explored the appraisal items system in the gossip news text from Perez Hilton, taken from *perezhilton.com*. This research focused on finding out what appraising items applied in those texts; how they were applied; and why they were applied, including the ideology. The results show that the three kinds of attitude (affect, judgment, and appreciation) are applied in the texts, but mostly judgment. The ideology shows the writer's style in writing gossip news text that he supports the artist if he likes and conversely, he challenges the artists whom he does not like.

The last is 'An Attitudinal Analysis of English Song Discourse from the Perspective of Appraisal Theory'. This research was written in 2016 by Xiaqing Li. This research presents the features of the distribution of attitude resources in the English song discourse: the attitude resources affect and appreciation are frequently used in the English song discourse. Through the analysis, data result shows that in the four English song discourses the attitude resources affect and appreciation are frequently used to demonstrate the emotion of the author and the interpersonal relationship between the author and the listener. As an important symbol of expression of personal emotion and views of value, the attitude resource affect and appreciation are frequently used in the English song discourse to make the personal emotion sufficiently demonstrated, and also make the emotion understood by listeners better. The researcher chose those three

previous studies because of the similarities in terms of the focus of their research, which analyzed attitude. Meanwhile, the difference or the newest aspect in this research is that the researcher analyses the attitude in *Sour*. In addition, this research will specifically explain attitude (part of appraisal) in detail.

## METHODOLOGY

In conducting the research, the researcher used a descriptive qualitative research method. Through this method, the researcher will explain in detail about attitude and manifestation. The data source in this research is song lyrics from *Sour*. The data are collected from Rodrigo's Spotify official account and from several interviews that Rodrigo did on the official YouTube channel Zach Sang Show, Rolling Stone, Disney Plus, and the New York Times. In analyzing the data, the researcher put the data into the table, categorizing the data to the type of attitude and the manifestation, discussing the data, and drawing conclusions from the results of the data analysis and Rodrigo's explanation in the interviews.

The research problems in this research are based on the background and the identification of the research problem. The first research problem is looking for the answer to the types of attitudes used in *Sour*. The second research problem is going to answer how is the attitude manifested.

## DISCUSSION

Martin and Rose (2003, p.43) classify three kinds of attitudes as follows: expressing feelings (affect), judging people's character (judgment), and appreciating things (appreciation). After analyzing the data, the researcher found that three types of attitudes were used in *Sour*. The highest type of attitude used by Rodrigo in *Sour* is affect with 60.66%. The second most frequent is



judgment with 31.97%. The last is appreciation with 7.37%. In this album, Rodrigo expresses her feelings, telling her sadness, pain, hatred, and anxiety. There are also expressions of happiness, love, and gratitude.

In the type of attitude affect, un/happiness is the type of affect that appears the most which is 22.13%. The second is dis/satisfaction with 20.50%. The third is in/security with 15.58%. The least that appears is desire with only 2.45%. The second type of attitude is judgment, in judgment, normality is the highest frequency as much as 18.85%. The second is propriety with 6.56%. The third is veracity with 4.92%. The least frequency is capacity and tenacity with 0.82% each. The last type of attitude is appreciation. Only one type of appreciation appears, which is reaction with 7.37%.

### **Affect**

Affect is the highest type of attitude found in *Sour* with 74 frequencies. The research results show that Rodrigo's song lyrics mainly express her feelings. She expresses feelings of undesired, happiness and unhappiness, security and insecurity, satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

The first type of affect is undesired. Undesired is found in "Good 4 U". In her interview with Zach Sang, Rodrigo said that the song described her condition when she felt very bad seeing her ex who was much better after they broke up. She expressed her desire to be okay like her ex. She said, "God, I wish that I could do that". In this expression, she expresses her feelings related to undesired, she feels like she cannot do what her ex-boyfriend did, and she wishes she could. Through this expression, she reacts to a surge of emotion which in this case is her wish that she can be fine like her ex-boyfriend, so this is included in a situational

context. This feeling expressed how she wished she could be okay like her ex-boyfriend, who was even happier when he was no longer with her. This desire becomes 'undesired' because according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, 'wish' means to have a desire for (something, such as something that cannot be achieved). While 'hope' means wanting something to happen or come true, and refers to the possibility that that desire might occur. In other words, desire has a negative connotation, whereas hope has a positive connotation. In this case, this data refers to a 'wish' which has a negative connotation because it contains her wish, which according to her, will not happen. In this data, she wishes she could also do what her ex-boyfriend did, which she finds this wish challenging to achieve.

The second type of affect is un/happiness. In expressing her unhappiness, Rodrigo shares how miserable she feels about her work life, teenage life, and love story. While in happiness, she talks about how she feels happy, interested, giving affection and loving the people around her. Happiness and unhappiness can be found in "Driver's License". In her interview with the New York Times' Joe Coscarelli, she said that the "Driver License" song was inspired by a true story, in which she drove around her suburban town, listened to music and cried about the recent breakup. As found in the lyrics, she said, "Over all the noise, God I'm so blue". In this expression, she expresses her feelings related to unhappiness, which is misery, in which she feels miserable about her current feelings and situation. She felt tormented by all the images of her ex-boyfriend that still had not left her mind. In this utterance she uses idioms, so this is included in the cultural context. 'I'm so blue' means to be depressed or sad (definition from Thesaurus Dictionary). Through this expression, Olivia expressed that she felt so

sad about her breakup. While expressing happiness, she said, "Cause I still fuckin' love you, babe". She expresses her feelings related to affection. Through this expression she reacts to an external agent, which in this case is her ex, so this is included in a social context. This feeling expresses how much she still loves her ex-boyfriend. The use of the word 'fucking' here does not have a negative connotation, but rather a positive one, through this word she expresses how much she really loves that boy.

The third type of affect is in/security. In expressing her insecurity, Rodrigo talks about how she feels insecure about the people around her. While expressing security, she expressed her confidence in things to come. Insecurity is mostly found in "Jealousy, Jealousy". In her interview on Zach Sang Show, she said this was written based on her experience when she was still so preoccupied with how she looked on social media and how people perceived her. Security is found only in the song lyrics "Enough for You". In this song, she expresses how she is confident that one day she will get a better love story. As found in "Jealousy, Jealousy", she said, "Their win is not my loss". In this expression, she expresses her feelings related to insecurity, in this case is disquiet, in which she is insecure and unsettled by the envy she has of other girls. Through her interview with Zach Sang Show, she said that this piece of lyrics is an expression of her insecurity which she turned into a reminder to herself. Therefore, through these lyrics, she expresses her insecurities into words that can motivate her to get out of her insecurities. However, even so, she said that behind this motivational sentence, there is a sense of insecurity in it. While in expressing security in "Enough for You", she said, "And they'll think that I am so exciting then you'll be the one who's crying". In this expression, she expresses her feelings related to confidence,

which Olivia firmly believes that she will find a good boy who will love her and treat her well, while her ex-boyfriend is the one who will feel hurt when that happened. This feeling is expressed by how confident she feels that in her next relationship, she will find someone who likes her.

The last type of affect is dis/satisfaction. In dissatisfaction, Rodrigo expressed how displeased she was for the boy she liked and for the pain the boy gave her. Then, in satisfaction, she conveys things that interest her. She expresses how she is attracted to a person or certain things. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction can be found in "Enough for You". In this song, she said that she feels she is not enough in many relationships. She is given everything for someone, and yet she is still not enough, and it hurts so much, it is hard. However, on the other hand, she said that this song is about being vulnerable but she also loves how this song contains hope. As found in the lyrics, she said, "Now I don't want your sympathy I just want myself back". In this expression, she expresses her feelings related to dissatisfaction in this case is displeasure, which she is not happy with the way she is now. This feeling expressed about how that man has changed so many things about her. She is willing to sacrifice herself to change herself according to the type of girl he likes, but when they break up, she also feels that besides losing that boy she also loses herself because so much has changed about her. Whether it is from her appearance or even her character. While in express satisfaction, she said, "Tried so hard to be everything that you liked". In this expression, she expresses her feelings related to interest, which she is very attracted to and really likes this boy. This feeling is expressed about how she wants to try so hard to be the girl that the boy likes.

## Judgment

Judgment is the second most common type of attitude that found in *Sour*. Rodrigo expressed her evaluation and judgment of the people around her and even herself. She expresses how she perceives someone's attitude towards her. Sometimes she also insinuates how the person hurts her or is being mean to her. She expressed her judgment whether the person is acting usual or unusual, the person is capable or incapable, the person is resolute or irresolute, the person is truthful or untruthful, and whether the person is ethical or unethical.

Expressing judgment is divided into two types, there are social esteem and social sanction. Social esteem is an evaluation of social behavior and has nothing to do with laws or morals. While social sanctions are more often associated with matters in written form, in the form of rules and laws. These two types of Judgment are found in the type of judgment Rodrigo uses in *Sour*.

The first type of judgment is normality. Normality is a type of social esteem judgment. It is about how unusual someone is, such as questioning is someone's behavior usual or unusual. Normality is mostly found in "Deja vu" lyrics with 11 frequencies. In this song, Rodrigo tells about the unusual actions committed by her ex-boyfriend and her ex's new girlfriend. In her interview on Rolling Stone's YouTube channel, she said that she just thinks *deja vu* is really cool. She gets *deja vu* all the time, and she thinks it is an interesting phenomenon. She thought it would be a cool way to talk about *deja vu*, to talk about when you break up with someone and they move on. Sometimes you watch them on social media, and it turns out they are living the same life as when they were still with you. In that way, she felt that *deja vu* was not only common for her but also for

everyone. She feels that her ex will also feel *deja vu* and eventually act unusual that he is not acting as he should. Likewise, with her ex's new girlfriend, who will act unusual by feeling special even though all the treatment she received was the same as she received. As found in "Deja vu", she said, "I bet she's bragging to all her friends saying you're so unique". This judgment is the kind of normality in social esteem judgment. Through this expression, 'bragging' means to speak too proudly about what you have done or what you own (definition from Cambridge Dictionary). Through the word 'bragging', She expresses a judgment for that girl about her point of view of the girl who must have shown off to her friends about how well she was treated by her boyfriend. She knew that the girl thought that her boyfriend was treating her in a way that was unique and special to her. Through the statement, she explains that the girl is an unusual person who does not behave as she should.

The second type of judgment is capacity. It is about how capable someone is. Capacity can be found in "Brutal". In this song, she said, "And I'm not cool, and I'm not smart". In this type, she is evaluating herself. She evaluates her own capacity and abilities. This judgment is the kind of capacity in social esteem judgment which is expressed directly by her to herself regarding she is not a cool person and not a smart person. Through this expression, she said that she was not a capable person because she felt that she was neither cool nor smart.

The third type of judgment is tenacity. It is about how resolute someone is. Tenacity can be found in "1 Step Forward and 3 Steps Back". In this song, Rodrigo said, "It's back and forth, maybe this is all your fault". This judgment is the kind of tenacity in social esteem judgment which is expressed directly by her to the boy she likes. Through this

expression, she said that what was happening to her at that time was because of the fault of the boy she liked. She was the only one left behind, she was confused and wondering if she said something wrong or she did the wrong thing, but all she could conclude, whatever she was thinking and feeling was because of the boy's fault who did not provide clarity about their relationship.

The fourth type of judgment is veracity. It is about how truthful someone is. Veracity can be found in "Happier". In the song, Rodrigo said, "An eternal love bullshit you know you'll never mean". This judgment is the kind of veracity in the social sanction judgment which is expressed directly by her to her ex-boyfriend. Through this expression, she feels that her ex-boyfriend is a liar who does not prove his words. She felt that the boy was talking nonsense about eternal love. She knew that, when he said their love was eternal, he did not really mean it. Through the statement, she explains that her ex-boyfriend is a dishonest person.

The last type of judgment is propriety. It is about how ethical a person is. Propriety can be found in "Good 4 U". In the song, Rodrigo said, "Like a damn sociopath". This judgment is the kind of propriety in social sanction judgment which is expressed directly by her to her ex-boyfriend. Through this expression, 'sociopath' means a person who is completely unable or unwilling to behave in a way that is acceptable to society (definition from Cambridge Dictionary). Through the word 'sociopath', she feels that her ex-boyfriend is a mean person to her, has no concern for other people. She felt that how this boy did not care about her, by not asking how she was doing, hurting her heart, and other acts that she considered evil, that way she assumed that this boy was a sociopath who does not even fit to live in society. Through the statement, she explains that her

ex-boyfriend is someone who does not behave well.

### **Appreciation**

Appreciation is the last type of attitude found in *Sour*. In this type of attitude, Rodrigo expresses her evaluation of things or people in the form of appreciation. In the songs on this album, she expresses good appreciation for the people around her. She appreciated people's good nature, and appreciated people's looks. These appreciations are expressed in compliments and some are expressed in the form of expressions of love.

Appreciation can be found in "Happier". In the song, Rodrigo said, "She probably gives you butterflies". This expression is kind of appreciation reaction. This appreciation is the kind of positive quality which is expressed directly by her to her ex-boyfriend new girl. Through this expression she appreciated the girl, she says that the girl must have made her ex-boyfriend happy with her. Through these words, she appreciated the girl with her sincere compliments. 'Gives you butterflies' here means if you have butterflies in your stomach or have butterflies, you are very nervous or excited about something (definition from Collins Dictionary). Through this utterance, she says that that girl must make her ex-boyfriend always nervous, excited, and happy at the same time.

### **Manifestation**

There are two types of manifestation, there are in positive manifestation and negative manifestation. Based on the findings, the researcher concludes that all types of manifestation are used by Rodrigo in *Sour*. The most frequently used manifestation by Rodrigo in *Sour* is negative manifestation, which is 77.05%. The positive manifestation is 22.95%. On this album, Rodrigo expresses

her feelings more in a negative way. She mostly expresses feelings of misery, disquiet, displeasure, undesired, as well as negative judgments about people's attitudes, therefore, negative manifestation is the type of manifestation that appears the most.

The first type of manifestation is negative manifestation. The most negative manifestation is found in the lyrics of "Good 4 U". There are 13 data found in the song lyrics, and all of them are conveyed with a negative manifestation. Rodrigo shared how she felt, about what she wanted and about how unhappiness she was feeling at the time. Apart from that, she also gave an evaluation of her ex-boyfriend's unusual acts, as well as his dishonest and unethical. In an interview with Zach Sang Show, she said that "Good 4 U" is a song that is upbeat and hides the true feelings she wants to express. She said it was like how she said "oh I'm so in love and happy" which was not how she felt. she said, this is her favorite thing in conveying a really depressing song covered with a happy chord. According to her, these lyrics are full of sarcastic remarks, which have a different vibe than her previous slower songs about heartbreak. This song is basically a sarcastic about wishing your ex well when you really wish them nothing of the sort. As found in the lyrics, she said, "Good for you, you're doin' great out there without me, baby". This expression is a type of manifestation with a negative way. This is included in the negative way because what she said is a type of criticism or negative judgment that she expresses about her ex-boyfriend. This is included in the type of normality in social esteem which through the utterance, she said that she was happy to see her ex doing great without her, which in fact she was not really happy for that. As she said in the interview with Zach Sang, what she says in this song is not what she really wants to say. So even though she says 'good for you', in fact she is

not really good for him. Another finding in "Good 4 U", Olivia said, "Maybe I'm too emotional but your apathy's like a wound in salt". This expression is a type of manifestation with a negative way. This is included in the negative way because what she said is a type of criticism or negative judgment that she expresses about her ex-boyfriend. This is included in the type of normality in social esteem which through the utterance, she said that she was indeed too emotional about matters related to her ex, but on the other hand she also offended her ex because what she was experiencing at that time was because of the boy's indifference to her which made her situation much worse. 'Wound in salt' means to make a difficult situation even worse for someone (definition from Cambridge Dictionary). According to her, it is not about her being overly emotional or over the top, but if only her ex cared a little, things could be better than this.

The second type of manifestation is positive manifestation. The most positive manifestation is found in the lyrics of "Hope Ur Ok" and "Favorite Crime". All data found in these two song lyrics uses positive manifestation. These two song lyrics express interest in this case satisfaction affect, and affection for happiness affect. she talked about how she was so attracted to a boy that she would do whatever he wanted, she also expressed her love and affection for her friends. Through her interview on the Zach Sang Show, she said that the song "Hope Ur Ok" made her really sad, the song made her really emotional. It is a super personal song about the people she really loves. She felt that this was very hopeful. Sour is a very sort of sad, angry, and emotional record, and she wanted to end it with a song that was like, 'We're all gonna be all right. We're gonna get over it. Everything's gonna be OK, and we have each other.' It was very important for her to end this sort of sombre record on

that note. Meanwhile, through her interview with Elle, she said that the song “Favorite Crime” is about her who has forgiven herself and understands that heartbreak is a two-way street, so she does not focus anymore on her pain but she chooses to be responsible for the feeling she gets. In this song, she only focuses on telling how she is willing to be hurt for the boy she loves so much. As found in “Hope Ur Ok”, she said, “Does she know how proud I am she was created”. This expression is kind of positive feelings she expresses about her friend. This expression is included in the positive manifestation because what she expressed was a feeling of happiness, about her feeling grateful that her friend exists and be her friend. Olivia expresses her affection for her friend. She was grateful that her friend was born, exists in this world, and became her friend. She wished her friend knew that she felt grateful for that. Other finding in “Favorite Crime”, Olivia said, “The things you did, well, I hope I was your favorite crime”. This expression is kind of positive feelings she expresses about the boy she fell in love with. This expression is included in a positive way because what she expressed was a feeling of satisfaction in this case is interest, which she says that she loves this guy so much that she is even willing to let her get hurt. Here she tells that hurting her is a crime that the boy has committed against her. However, because she really loves this boy, she is willing to be hurt and she hopes that this crime is the crime that the boy likes the most.

## CONCLUSION

As the title of this album is *Sour*, so is the content of the songs on this album. There are so many expressions of feelings of sadness, pain, anxiety, sarcasm, negative criticism, and negative condemnation. Far from half of the total data findings are found in the form of negative manifestations.

Rodrigo expressed many feelings of misery, displeasure, disquiet, undesired, and negative judgments about her life as a public figure who is still a teenager with a painful love story. That is why negative manifestations are the highest type of manifestations found. These songs with lots of expressions of feelings, satire, and judgments make the songs on this album widely used as back sounds for Instagram stories, reels, and TikTok videos as songs that describe the feelings of the user at that time.

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## THE CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF BARBIE IN AMERICAN DISCOURSES: NORMAN FAIRCLOUGH'S CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

The cultural construction of Barbie in American Discourses explains how Barbie as an American popular product is seen, talked about, and understood by the public. Barbie, a fashion doll that has successfully developed into an American icon, has been a subject of discussion since its first publication in 1959. The fact that it supposedly played the role of a simple children's toy yet can capture the adults' interests shows that there is something particular in Barbie that might also be deemed relevant by the adults. Thus, this study aims to break down the structure of Barbie as an American popular product in American discourses using Norman Fairclough's theory of Critical Discourse Analysis. Using Barbie itself as the data taken from Barbie's official Instagram account, this study applies qualitative methods. The result shows that in American discourses, Barbie is seen as the face of the American Dream and a reflection of Idealized American women. Through the depiction of Barbie's appearance, the narration of Barbie's abundant leisure activities, the description of Barbie's lavish possessions, and their socialite peers, Barbie has symbolically served as an icon in the American Dream. Additionally, Barbie's position in reflecting the image of American women is seen as the idealized epitome of beauty and success. However, she is also perceived as an icon who brings mixed messages. Even though she aims to promote female empowerment, her representation is also presumed to be problematic and unrealistic.

**Keywords:** *American Dream; American icon; female empowerment; idealized American women*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In a world where virtual and online entertainment is flourishing, toys for children are also assumed to experience a decline in interest from children as the primary market target. Nowadays, children grow up with the advancement of technology, exposing them to tools such as gadgets from an early age. Compared to the older generation, a child has been familiar with gadget operation and even quite advanced at it since a very young age, unlike their parents or grandparents who started late in tech exposure.

For children, gadgets are toys and a source of entertainment. It provides many programs and applications that make them curious and excited, such as social media and online games. Most of the time, it is difficult to detach them from the thing since they are already addicted to what it is offered. As a result, children's interest in concrete toys, such as board games, action figures, and dolls, is decreasing significantly due to their higher interest in the programs on their gadgets. When the world suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic, everyone, including children, was compelled to stay home for almost two years, causing them to have less or no playdate.

In this period, the toy industry generally experienced a decrease in sales and revenue due to the COVID-19 outbreak. However, Tighe (2023) from *statista.com* reported that during the 2020-2021 pandemic, Barbie's gross sale was at their highest level ever since the last decade. This shows that many people are still interested in the doll and think that Barbie is a relevant toy, even though it can be considered old.

Launched 62 years ago, Barbie is a fashion doll manufactured by Mattel, Inc., an American toy company, since 1959. Barbie doll was created by Ruth Handler, who felt concerned with her daughter's limited choices of toys because, at that time, no toy could fulfill her daughter's imagination. According to her, most toys back then were only representative to satisfy boys' imagination, such as astronauts and firefighters. Her daughter's toys to play with were limited in occupation, such as mother or caregiver. This inspired her to create a toy showing girls they can be whatever they want (Mattel, n.d.). Eventually, Barbie became one of the world's most famous toys. Initially, it was designed for American girls in the late 50s, but now it rapidly converts teenage culture, gender roles, and consumer culture today (Uncu, 2019, p. 88). In brief, since its launching in the middle of the 20th century, Barbie's present has been accepted by American society and underwent significant increase and popularity in the global world years later, even until now.

As its popularity skyrocketed, Anindya (2013) wrote that one of the reasons it gained that much popularity across the globe was because its appearance and packaging conveyed the ideal concept of beauty at that time. There is much to say about Barbie, but its timeless and iconic fashion and beauty are always a topic of discussion. Physically, Barbie is depicted with tall, curvy, and petite body proportions. Her skin is white, and she has long, straight blonde hair.

Barbie has attracted a lot of consumers, not only Americans but multination across the globe. As a producer, Mattel produces not merely a toy but has successfully created an icon. For decades since its first production,

there has not yet been a fashion doll that can level up to the popularity of Barbie as it has become a commodity. Children and adults are attracted to Barbie dolls and consider them worth collecting. With this fact, it is agreeable to say that Barbie's success in encaptivating adults when it was purposely created for children becomes an exciting aspect of Barbie. Besides, Barbie is pictured as an adult woman, which contradicts its market target. The Barbie doll's appearance is quite mature as a children's toy.

Due to this portrayal, as much as children love Barbie's image, there has been endless criticism and hate towards the doll. Even though support and approval for the beauty are also visible, debates on the significance of the Barbie doll among adults have never stopped until today. With that being said, this research will break down the structure of Barbie in American discourse using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis.

Fairclough (1992, p. 63) defines discourse as a mode of representation and action, describing how people act upon the world and each other. Fairclough (1992) also explained that discourse is constructed and restricted by social structure in the broadest sense and at all levels: by class and other social interactions at the societal level, by relations unique to specific institutions such as law or education, by categorization systems, by numerous norms and conventions of both discursive and non-discursive character, and so on (p. 64). Not only representing the world, but discourse is also seen as a practice that generally involves signifying, creating, and shaping the world in meaning (Fairclough, 1992, p. 64).

The first process includes text analysis (description). Text analysis (report) is a process of identifying the text to grasp the idea of how the text is presented. Fairclough also stresses the significance of investigating the process of text production, which includes the socio-cultural milieu in which the text is constructed (Fairclough, 1992, p. 97-100). The elements in this analysis are used to comprehend the text's representation, relation, and identity. In the process of analysis, Barbie itself is positioned as the text that is viewed as a cultural artifact for being one of an icon in American culture. A text is used to signify the world and consists of meanings constructing the perception of the world's reality.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Through a qualitative method, the primary data in this research are taken from Barbie's Instagram (@barbiestyle), whose followers have reached 2.4 million by this time. Meanwhile, the secondary data are collected from library and internet sources such as essays, books, journals, and social media. Research on Barbie might have been frequently conducted. Still, observation through Barbie's social media activity is not yet found today, especially in an era where social media is used as a primary tool for engagement. Also, this research is not fixated on a particular time frame. Instead, it focuses more on seeing the structure of Barbie in American discourses, which can be seen through her Instagram updates.

## **DISCUSSION**

Identifying discourse in Barbie as a popular product in American Culture is deemed vital because it explicates the way Barbie is seen, talked about, and understood

by the public. She has been a part of American culture since 1959, and her image has shaped the discourses around her. It consists of a broad range of conversations, debates, and opinions about Barbie in particular, and it has greatly influenced how she has been perceived while being a part of American culture for decades. Hence, this chapter examines the kind of Americanness that contributed to Barbie's production.

There are two major ideas discussed in this section. First, it breaks down several key points that cause Barbie to represent the American Dream, and second, it elaborates the reflection of Barbie as an idealized American woman and how Barbie challenges the structure of American male-dominated culture.

### **The Face of the American Dream**

Barbie, which in its growth is eventually successfully labeled as an icon in American popular culture, is an epitome of how the ideal of the American Dream is perceived in the minds of American society. Ever since its first release and publication in 1959, Barbie has become a mainstay in American culture over the decades. Physically portrayed as an adult woman with blue eyes, blonde hair, white skin, and super slim body proportions, it does not take long for Barbie to be able to enter the market and become a symbol of beauty. Not only is her physical appearance considered captivating, but Barbie also left the world of children's toys in awe due to her fashion depiction, including outfit and accessories, that is not only considered glamorous but also luxurious as some are covered in luxury brands.

In terms of its pleasant-to-the-eye appearance and its production, Barbie is also

complemented with a set of narrations by its manufacturers to switch on Barbie's character and identity. Generally speaking, Barbie is narrated as an adult woman who has everything someone could ever ask for. A mesmerizing look is one thing, but on top of that, she also has a lot of career options. According to Mattel, Barbie's producer, over the years of her existence, Barbie has had experiences in more than 200 careers in almost every category, such as arts and media, business, education, medicine, military, politics, public service, sports, transportation, even including STEM fields.

With such a depiction as a starter, plus profound marketing strategy and media play, Barbie became increasingly popular among children and adults. Barbie successfully develops from a mere children's toy into an American icon, meaning she has occupied a certain position in American industry. Barbie is recognized as an icon and symbol that represents the American Dream in American culture. She embodies the ambivalences in consumption-oriented American society, representing what Americans most admire and dislike about themselves (Nachbar and Lause, 1992, p. 212).

Some points in Barbie solidify society's perception of the ideals of the American Dream. Those are mainly centered on the materialistic ideal of wealth and success, the ability to seize every opportunity as seen in the abundant amount of career options Barbie is described with, and the capability of living in happiness. This idea is in line with what is explicitly stated in the preamble of "The Unanimous Declaration of the thirteen United States of America" (1776), shortly known as the US Declaration of Independence. It says in the charter,

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that their Creator endows them with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. (The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 2023)

Barbie represents a materialistic society in which almost all activities are oriented toward fulfilling goods (Forman-Brunell, 2000). The creator, Ruth Handler, wanted to polish the doll to make it look appealing to middle-class American consumers (Tulinski, 2017, p. 11). In Handler's conception, the wide-ranging wardrobe and complete accessories would construct a different personality for each kind. Still, at the same time, the doll's fashion was assembled to satisfy the expectation of a highly consumerist American society, especially when she is vividly built as glamorous and American as possible by supporting her with high-class French designs (Tulinski, 2017, p. 11). Lord (2004) even pronounced her as sunshine, Tomorrowland, and the future made plastic (p. 43). Barbie's prosperous life emphasizes a kind of life that is precisely perceived in the American Dream. As Nachbar and Lause (1992) mentioned,

[...] she [Barbie] functions as an icon because she represents so well the widespread values of modern American society, devoting herself to pursuing happiness through leisure and material goods. [...] This is the language that Barbie speaks, [...] teaching them the skills by which their future success will be measured: purchase of the proper high-status goods, popularity with their peers, creation of the correct personal appearance, and the visible achievement of "fun" through appropriate leisure activities. (Nachbar and Lause, 1992, p. 212)

In a country where consumption is celebrated, Barbie shows her consumers to include fashion as a basic necessity. While playing with Barbie, her consumers, especially children, are taught that each distinctive outfit is required for every activity. They are supposed to appear appropriate at first glance, interchangeable, and slightly different from each other (Nachbar and Lause, 1992, p. 228). They receive certain nuances that having an extensive wardrobe allows freedom to choose the outfit of the day, and that will elevate one's value. For instance, at the end of 2022, Barbie uploaded several pictures to her 2.4 million followers on Instagram (@barbiestyle), showcasing her day outfit for different occasions.



Figure 1. Barbie poses while ice skating. [@barbiestyle]. (2022, December 2022). Grateful this isn't a video! ❄️ 📄 #BarbieOnIce #barbie #barbiestyle. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CmbxSIGLMXb>



Figure 2. A video screenshot showing Barbie decorating her Christmas tree in pinkish accent. [@barbiestyle]. (2022, December 25). The tree is obvi pink. Happy Holidays, all! ❤️ #barbie #barbiestyle. Instagram.

The two images above were narrated in different settings and activities, yet they share a similarity in fashion. All of them are wearing blazers in different shades of pink. Through these images alone, it seems that Barbie is not just a doll with sty. Still, there is an attempt by the producer to relate the doll to the real world as near as possible by advertising it as if it is real human being than a mere lifeless doll. Nachbar and Lause (1992) also pointed out that in the real world, what is perceived as a seemingly vast array of merchandise is actually a large collection of similar products. Barbie is treated as a model that inspires and teaches its consumers about making subtle fashion distinctions resulting in an appropriate personal appearance.

Veblen (1899) criticized that “conspicuous consumption” has been practiced in America, which he referred to as an activity of buying and consuming unnecessary objects, not out of need but more as a means to show off the capability of affording the objects themselves. Veblen elaborated that the more useless the object is, the more it has the power to show the excessiveness of the wealth of its consumer, and fashion is one seasonal object that fits to represent such practice (p. 33-47). Fashion style changes quite quickly. Some might be considered out of date for the next season and disposable after a few months.

Using Veblen’s dictionary, Barbie is considered a conspicuous consumer after catching up collecting useless objects following her lavish lifestyle. Besides her immense outfit collection, Barbie also owns several groups of housings named after Dream House. On top of that, Barbie also owns several fancy cars in her garage, such

as a Ferrari, and Maserati, electric cars including its charging station, even yacht and boat. In addition to her deluxe possessions, Barbie’s pets are accessorized with pearl necklace, sunglasses, even it is designed a special place in Barbie’s boat.

Through the representation, Barbie enables families who are not privileged to own over-the-top items as such in real life to compete in the miniature (Nachbar and Lause, 1992, p. 228). Nevertheless, Barbie’s creator denies that Barbie’s life focuses merely on consumption. Handler argued that Barbie’s extravagant possessions are solely a property to get children more into play and storytelling. The situations in which Barbie doll helps children to get into is a situation that is surrounded by lavishness and rooted in consumption (p. 228-230).

Justifying one’s success is subject to how the success itself is defined. In the American Dream’s dictionary, success is basically measured by countable possession. This ethos promotes a culture that celebrates the pursuit of material wealth, and in this culture, Barbie reinforces the idea that she is successful through hard work and ambition, proven by the narration of her lifestyle and the possession of luxurious goods such as a mansion, car, and high-end clothing.

However, Mills (1951) proposed that success is no longer obtained through expert skills or hard work, instead, it is justified through how one spends leisure time and consumes products. Leisure activities and possession of luxurious objects are used to measure the status of a person in society. The significant position of leisure in defining one’s success is also emphasized by Mills (1951, p. 236), who that the “idols of work”

have been gradually replaced with “idols of leisure”. Mills explained it is not those who are frequently seen flourishing in politics or in business that are labeled as cultural heroes but those who are successful in entertainment, leisure, and consumption.

The selection of heroes for popular biographies appearing in mass magazines has shifted from business, professional, and political figures—successful in production—to those successful in entertainment, leisure, and consumption. The movie star and the baseball player have replaced the industrial magnate and the political man. Today, the displayed characteristics of popular idols “can all be integrated around the concept of the consumer” (Mills, 1951, p. 236-237).

Barbie’s life is full of all of that: entertainment, leisure, and consumption. Her 2021 Dream House, for instance, is equipped with a room to support those activities, such as a room with a DJ booth and entertainment center. Back in the 1960s, Mattel created various types of Barbie doing sports for leisure, such as skiing, skydiving, ice-skating, fishing, tennis, sailing, jogging, backpacking, gymnastics, basketball, surfing, soccer, and hockey.

Now that the era of social media is flourishing, Barbie’s daily activities are displayed online through her social media account, such as Instagram (@barbiestyle), which was first opened in 2014. Following her Instagram updates, Barbie is seen to conduct several activities for her leisure, which are allegedly not a kind of doable activity on people. Barbie’s leisure activities are exclusive and not relatable to many. Only some people who are privileged with time and money can keep up with it. Her

Instagram posts revealed she likes to pamper herself with beauty treatment, does yoga or cardio every morning, and spends more time with her pet dog after work. She also described that she loves traveling to different places a lot. On top of that, even when Barbie is seen doing low-maintenance activities, her appearance has never been low-maintenance at all. She is always dolled up as a person of high status with branded clothes. Overall, she has done almost every kind of activity.

Additionally, Mills (1951) also wrote that the most potentially successful people are not those with high grades but people with good personalities (p. 186). Nachbar and Lause 1992 wrote that personality and the ability to expand friendships and get along with peers would help one succeed. A pleasant smile, well-groomed appearance, self-control, and conformity replaced honesty, integrity, and hard work as means to success in business and personal life (p. 232). In other words, on top of wealth, another benchmark of success is visible through one’s peers and social skills.

In this aspect, Barbie is also perceived to have achieved another success as she is presented to be surrounded by plentiful friends, and some of them manage to have their own edition in Barbie’s world to be Barbie’s peers. Not only friends, but Barbie also has a longtime so-called boyfriend named Ken, who becomes the second most important character in Barbie’s world after Barbie itself. Like Barbie, Ken is portrayed as a sort of rich boyfriend with a fashionable clothing line and accessories.

Pertaining to this circumstance, peers are usable as a benchmark for success as they function as a way of showing popularity or a

place to seek approval. Then, it serves an important position in the eyes of the American Dream. Having more friends in the group might prove one's popularity and personality, contributing to the construction of success. Besides, Riesman (1989) described that "people and friendships are viewed as the greatest of all consumables; the peer group is itself a main object of consumption, its own main competition in taste" (p. 81). In accordance with Riesman, it can be abridged in a nutshell that peers are the primary influencers for consumption, as their acceptance is considered significant.

Through her Instagram account, Barbie also posted several pictures which showed her hanging out with some of her peers. They are seen engaging in activities such as New Year's Eve, picnics, pajama parties, traveling, holidays, and fashion events. Each doll is styled differently, and they are all for sale. As Nachbar and Lause (1992) stated, portraying Barbie and their friends inspires children to collect friends or get themselves an entire peer group (p. 233).

As an iconic representation of the aspirational qualities associated with the ideals of the American Dream, Barbie serves as a role model and source of inspiration for children, or probably even reaching society in general, and shows them what the American Dream looks like. The representation of the American Dream reflected in Barbie cultivates and promotes the culture of optimism that resonates in many Americans' hearts, including children and adults alike, without exceptions. Through the depiction of Barbie's appearance, the narration of Barbie's abundant leisure activities, the description of Barbie's lavish possessions, and their socialite peers, Barbie

has symbolically served as an icon in the American Dream for setting the standard of success as seen through wealth, leisure, object consumption, and peers.

### **The Reflection of Idealized American Women**

Barbie has been a staple in American popular culture for decades since it successfully entered the toy market back in the 60s. In its development, Barbie became a doll that has been a favorite and popular among children. Only one word captured their consistent interest in Barbie: beautiful. For these innocent children, Barbie is simply beautiful. She is well-groomed and stylish. She has a perfect body, skin, and hair. She is everything the children perceive as beautiful. Even though many other aspects of Barbie make her popular, it is agreed that her beautiful appearance is the ultimate hook since Barbie has become an iconic figure in American culture and has significantly influenced how American women perceive their beauty and femininity.

As a symbol of American femininity, Barbie has embodied various trends and ideals of womanhood throughout the decades, reflecting America's constantly fluctuating social and cultural norms. During the first decade, Barbie was modeled after the classic American beauty with blonde hair, blue eyes, and super thin body dimensions. Around the 1960s and early 1970s, Barbie focused on following fashion trends and movements at the moment, as shown by her stylishly tailored clothing and accessories. Following the era, Barbie became more career-oriented, with dolls representing various occupations, such as doctors, businesswomen, dentists, teachers, and nurses.



However, in the early stages of its publication, Barbie's physical appearance received backlash from some parties, including the mothers. They argue that Barbie's physique, including its breasts, in adult women's form, is horrifying. It imposes a particular sexual image that mothers are afraid would spark a negative influence on their children. Barbie was released in 1959, a post-World War II era, where marriage and motherhood were deemed the peak devotion girls could do in their lives (Gerber, 2009, p. 7). Thus, baby dolls were more common in that era.

Contradictorily, the little girls are fond of Barbie's groundbreaking appearance because it looks like nothing they have ever seen. They are brainwashed by Barbie's beauty, sexiness, and glamorous appearance, which turn out to be the features they want to grow up with. While some mothers argue that Barbie's sexual appearance could harm the little girls, others think that her look could be inspirational and useful. A mother of an eight-year-old girl changed her mind after her daughter gave her testimony on how well-groomed Barbie is (Lord, 2004, p. 40). She was convinced that Barbie would model her daughter to becoming a "poised little lady" instead of a messy, possibly boyish look (p. 40). According to Lord (2004), though unspoken loudly, deep down, the mom admitted that Barbie reminded them of what was better than the worse: "Better her daughter should appeal in a sleazy way to a man than be unable to attract one at all" (p. 40).

Therefore, instead of only pointing out its sexual implication, Barbie could inspire girls to look well-groomed and pretty. Nevertheless, the main goal is that the girls

could attract men to look more desirable when they grow up. Hence, they can marry and start their motherhood rather soon. Motherhood is perceived as the sole purpose of girls after they enter the ready-to-marry age. Regardless of the mothers' hidden motives in allowing Barbie dolls at home, Barbie's alluring portrayal with a slim and toned figure, symmetrical face, white and clear skin, perfect teeth, shiny hair, large bust, tiny waist, long and lean legs, has been embedded in the minds of the girls that that is what beauty looks like. Rogers (1999) described her physique as modern middle-class femininity (p. 11).

Adorable; billowy, breathtaking; charming, chic; dazzling, delicate, dramatic; elegant and exquisite; fanciful, fashionable, and fetching; glamorous and glittering; graceful; lovely; radiant, regal, romantic; shimmering, sparkling, stunning. [...] Barbie is an icon of the femininity associated with the middle reaches of contemporary Western societies. (Rogers, 1999, p. 11)

Since Barbie was introduced to the public, children's orientation in terms of appearance has referred to the doll. Getting used to looking at such a flawless image of a woman as a reference from an early age, children, perhaps silently or loudly, want to copy and paste Barbie's image for herself from her looks and actions. Consequently, children grow up with the ultra-feminine image of women in their minds (Uncu, 2019, p. 87). As time passes, Barbie's physical representation develops a certain ideal in society's perception in general, not only exclusive to children.

The beauty ideal absorbed from Barbie's representation is purposely constructed by Mattel as the producer. Tulinski (2017, p. 1)



mentioned that Barbie's creator expected the doll to carry the legacy as the idealized figure of a woman for the upcoming eras. Asselanis (1996) also suggested that the seriousness and professionalism behind the making of Barbie aside from producing high-quality products is also to enable little girls to project their future dreams. Ruth Handler, Barbie's founder, wanted to help the girl's dream through Barbie because she foresaw that Barbie could model the supposedly ideal American girl (Tulinski. 2017, p. 11).

However, Barbie's appearance has never stopped receiving criticism since day one. Specifically in terms of body proportion, studies found that her body proportions are "unrealistic, unattainable, and unhealthy" (Dittmar, Halliwell, and Ive, 2006, p. 284). Norton, Olds, Olive, and Danks (1996) compared Barbie's body proportion with adult women's body dimensions using anthropometry (a branch of study in anthropology). The result found that only 1:100,000 women might have a similar body proportion as the doll (Norton, Olds, Olive, and Danks, 1996). Rintala & Mustajoki (1992) also noted that if Barbie were a real woman, a human being, her body would not have the capability to menstruate because her body fat percentage does not reach the minimum requirement per medical assessment as her weight is also way too low in number (p. 1575-1576).

Barbie's influence in constructing body image in children's minds is salient, knowing how they look up to the doll as a model and aspiration. The beauty ideal Barbie brings is internalized gradually through fantasy and play while using the doll as an imaginary companion (Dittmar, Halliwell, and Ive, 2006, p. 284-285). According to Dittmar

(1992), a doll such as Barbie also functions as a socialization agent whose qualities are desired and eventually idealized.

[...] young children initially imitate, and identify with, "beautiful" Barbie in a direct, nonreflexive manner but then, gradually, come to internalize thinness as a salient feature of what it means to be beautiful. (Dittmar, Halliwell, and Ive, 2006, p. 285)

For young girls, the beauty ideal exemplified by the doll becomes an essential standard that they conceptualize for themselves, regardless of whether or not it is achieved or whether they have changed their minds when they reach a more mature age. Nevertheless, children growing up having such thoughts internalized in their minds was part of the "consequences of exposure to Barbie doll stimuli" (Dittmar, Halliwell, and Ive, 2006, p. 285). The problem is that the thought might jeopardize children's expectations of the reality of their body proportion or what society expects towards their body proportion, especially when they have become fully grown women. Children do not know what is "normal" and what should be "normalized" yet. They have been unable to see things through and would most likely see things as they are.

In such a condition, Barbie is situated as a parameter of whether or not a girl would be satisfied or dissatisfied with their appearance. Barbie is alleged to psychologically impact girls as it triggers dissatisfaction with their body proportions. Dittmar, Halliwell, and Ive (2006) found that Barbie causes more body dissatisfaction in girls than other dolls with an average American woman's body dimension.

These ultrathin images not only lowered young girls' body esteem but also decreased their satisfaction with their actual body size, making them desire a thinner body. (Dittmar, Halliwell, and Ive, 2006, p. 290)

Jayanti & Adi (2020) also suggested that the framing of American women's ideal body comprises a thin and youthful appearance. According to Jayanti & Adi, thin women are depicted more positively in the media or advertisements, and youthful appearance makes women more visible, causing them to fear looking old as it can deprive them of vital resources (p. 151-154). Gracia-Arnaiz (2010) pointed out that thin bodies have the implications of "good health, self-discipline, and social distinction" (p. 221). On the contrary, fat bodies are often associated with illness, considered undesirable, and have a negative image in society (Jayanti & Adi, 2020, p. 151).

The implications and results of the beauty standard perceived through the Barbie doll are possibly detrimental for those who cannot conform to the ideal. Being so entrenched in Barbie's world, one might see it as their reality. As a result, it might jeopardize them because it consistently makes them feel bad about themselves if the expectation fails to succeed. There have been some cases where some people underwent a series of plastic surgery here and there their body to change their appearance close to Barbie, who later claimed themselves "human Barbie" or "real-life Barbie", or at least used Barbie as their plastic surgery reference. People such as Rachel Evans (@rachel\_evans\_bikin on Instagram), Jessy Bunny (@jessy.bunny.official on Instagram), and Dalia Naeem (@dalia\_naim1 on Instagram) are only a few people who

publicly announced their surgeries are influenced by Barbie. They are willing to spend thousands of dollars for the process as they consider the splurge their way of expressing themselves and pursuing happiness. One of the women, Rachel, confessed that becoming Barbie allows her to be happy inside out, especially when she struggled with identity when she was younger.

There is no judgment in what these women did with their bodies, as it is up to their preference. However, this proves that even if a natural way of looking like Barbie is not deemed possible, an instant way of "becoming Barbie" using the method of plastic surgery is also barely possible for most people as it costs a lot of money. As much as her portrayal is celebrated and considered inspirational in representing idealized American womanhood, Barbie's representation is a headache for bringing unrealistic beauty ideals to society.

In conceptualizing an idealized image of an American woman through Barbie, there is more to discuss than just its American femininity symbol. Not only her appearance but Barbie is also embraced for challenging male-dominated culture in America. Her representation is praised as it awakens women's sense of empowerment and freedom, particularly by depicting her diverse careers and interests. The narration of her successful career history is considered subverting traditional gender roles and stereotypes as it challenges the dominant narratives about women amid American male-dominated culture, especially when Barbie was introduced in an era where the knowledge of women's role was greatly

emphasized in domestic role only. As mentioned by Forman-Brunell in her essay,

When the teenage Barbie doll debuted in 1959, she was a rebel among her contemporaries. Baby dolls had socialized "baby boomers" to assume maternal and domestic roles consistent with the dominant postwar gender ideology, devised as a buttress against unsettling change. (Forman-Brunell, 2000)

The workforce is not very common for women in Barbie's early publication era; hence, her career representation is seen as an agent of change that is a meaningful icon for women. Nevertheless, decades have passed, yet the perception of women's innate domestic role remains glued on them. This causes Barbie's female empowerment representation to stay relevant in supporting the movement, especially regarding her diverse career representation in almost every work field, which is often considered to be exclusive for men, or in other words, male-dominated fields, such as construction worker, pilot, astronaut, police officer, police commissioner, bank governor, president, and so on. As a result, Barbie is seen as a breakthrough and positive influence for the girls by exemplifying that she is empowered and more than capable of making her dream come true. She conveys that women are not inferior, that being a woman does not instantly make her less worthy, and that a woman is not in any way less capable than men, as capability is not defined by sex and gender.

The formation of her character and identity is not inadvertently made up. The philosophy conveyed through the doll that girls can be anything and are rich in choices is already in the mind of the creator, Ruth

Handler, ever since she had planned to create the doll. This is the exact reason why Barbie's tagline says, "You can be anything", which highlights the non-existence of borders and limitations in what girls want to achieve, which shows that she is capable of becoming who or what she wants to be, and shows that she is responsible for her, and she defines herself.

Barbie's representation not only encourages women to break the boundaries but also enables them to have a bigger picture of various occupations that girls do not know in advance. Barbie's diverse career allows girls to discover that certain branches of work exist and that women can take part, too. Therefore, nominating Barbie as an influencer still makes sense, as she was initially created for that. Barbie allows children, especially girls, to have as broad an imagination as possible while role-playing or storytelling using the dolls. Thus, it also helps them to dream of what they want their future to be like. This is explicitly seen through the way Barbie is advertised on the online platform, in which the producer mentioned that "We Are Barbie! Kids can play out stories from the ordinary to the extraordinary because when a girl plays with Barbie, she imagines everything she can become!" (Mattel, 2020), or what Mattel loudly said in the website "imagining she can be anything is just the beginning. seeing that she can make all the difference". Here, not only do the producers employ Barbie as a message conveyor, but they want the children to be Barbie herself.

Barbie's consistent movement in challenging the male-dominated culture in America through career representation expresses Mattel's serious intention to

empower women through the doll. By showing their encouragement, it is expected that girls eventually feel encouraged enough to get away from the social structure that incarcerates their entire womanhood instead of giving them freedom for their future. This is why Barbie is perceived as the epitome of the ideal American woman. Barbie is depicted as that one girl who has the courage to break free from the binding social rules and subvert the dominant narratives of being a woman. Barbie is empowered.

However, despite its positive mission, Barbie allegedly presents a mixed message. She wore a silver and glittery fuchsia pink space suit with puffy sleeves as an astronaut. She wore a toska mini dress with a headcover and face mask in the same color when she was a surgeon, not forgetting a pair of white high heels for the shoes. As a police officer, she let her long, wavy blonde hair loose in a half-up, half-down hairstyle, showing off her gold earrings. She wore a mini white dress, a white handbag in silver metal, pointy blue heels, and brought a small mirror when she became a dentist. She may be depicted as a professional, but her representation focuses on appearance and glamorizes the job more than realistically portrays women's challenges in the field. Nachbar and Lause (1992) suggest that despite trying different high-status occupations, her appearance does not suggest competence and professionalism (p. 230).

Rogers (1999, p. 14) conveyed that regardless of Barbie's pervasive presence, she cannot become a part of ordinary lives in a full sense due to her fantastic femininity. Rogers argued that this goes way beyond what Connell (1987) referred to as "emphasized femininity", the kind of

femininity that is "performed especially to men", such as "the display of sociability rather than technical competence, compliance with men's ego in an office relationship, acceptance of marriage and childcare as a response to labor market discrimination against women" (p. 187-188). In other words, "femininity organized as an adaptation to men's power, and emphasizing compliance, nurturance and empathy as womanly virtues" (Connell, 1987, p. 188).

Rogers used the term "emphatic femininity" to describe Barbie's demeanor. It refers to an extreme scale of feminine appearances and demeanor (Rogers, 1999, p. 14). According to Rogers, Barbie has never looked masculine, even as a police officer (p. 14). Police Officer Barbie indeed wore a police uniform, which surprisingly was not colored pink. Still, her hairstyle and the incompleteness of police officer's materials, such as guns and handcuffs, diminished her masculinity.

Barbie thus feminizes, even maternalizes, law enforcement. More generally, nothing about her appearance ever looks androgynous or gender-neutral even when she is being athletic. (Rogers, 1999, p. 14-15)

Additionally, the exaggerated display of Barbie's ultra femininity in its representation allegedly reinforced traditional gender roles that portray women as passive and decorative objects rather than active agents in their lives. There is a concern that Barbie's highlight on beauty and fashion can overshadow the message of female empowerment conveyed through her diverse range of careers and interests. The emphasis and focus on fashion are feared to perpetuate the misogynistic idea of women, in which physical appearance is

considered the primary value and priority for women rather than abilities, skills, talents, and accomplishments.

Barbie's portrayal of "emphasized femininity" is situated in appearance and her demeanor, which often sparks a particular sense of a penultimate nice girl with no negative attitude. As Rogers (1999) mentioned,

Femininity entails not only an appropriate appearance but also a proper demeanor centered on being nice—soft-spoken, polite, helpful, and sensitive. Nice girls like Barbie are neither combative nor strident; they are neither loud nor critical; they are good-mannered and respectable. (Rogers, 1999, p. 15)

Nevertheless, Barbie's femininity is questioned when she is never seen to have a wedding or build a family, let alone give birth. Barbie per se is the center of Barbie's world, without needing to make a self-sacrifice or put down her dreams for the sake of marriage and motherhood (Rogers, 1999, p. 16). She is indeed narrated to have a long-life boyfriend, Ken, and many friends whom she calls family, but that is it. It never escalated to a point where she was married or built her own family. Barbie's femininity is then perceived as inconsistent and/or ambiguous (p. 16).

While reflecting the idealized image of American women, the value frequently debated in the discourse is how femininity is perceived and treated. Even though Barbie's hyper-femininity representation is underlined, femininity itself is not a stumbling block in challenging male-dominated culture in America. It does not require women to reject the naturalness of their femininity or

particularly adopt traditionally masculine traits. Rather, it should have created a more inclusive and egalitarian society where women can be valued and respected for who they are, regardless of gender. Thus, it is extremely possible for women to be both feminine and powerful, and challenging male-dominated culture does not mean forbidding them completely to embrace their femininity or rejecting masculinity.

Through its career representations, Barbie is seen to cross what is presumed as women's boundaries countless times by working in a male-dominated profession. She is also consistently seen to never fully try to eliminate her distinctive femininity through her appearance despite doing masculine work. Rogers (1999, p. 17) saw this as an attempt made by the iconic doll to allow women to exhibit all of their traditional signs of femininity, including each and every nice demeanor, while smoothly succeeding in male-dominated professions. Barbie implies that women can succeed in masculine domains while remaining steadfastly feminine (Rogers, 1999, p. 17).

From another point of view, idealizing the image of an American woman as a figure who has the ability to balance multiple roles, such as being a successful professional and a devoted mother, would raise society's expectation for the emergence of "superwomen", which requires women to excel in every aspect of their life. The thing is that, regardless of the progressive movement in giving women freedom and power at work, women are still held accountable for domestic roles at home. As a result, women are doing double jobs as breadwinners and housewives. Zavella (1987) found that women engaged in employment

still feel that household work remains their primary responsibility even though they have expected their husbands and children to help with the housework. As a result, women's ambivalence towards the condition might also emerge, leading them to feel imprisoned rather than liberated.

Overall, Barbie's position in reflecting the idealized image of American women is very complex and multifaceted. While Barbie is seen as the ideal epitome of American women in beauty and success, she is also perceived as an icon who brings mixed messages. Even though she has the role of promoting female empowerment, her representation is also presumed to be problematic and unrealistic.

## CONCLUSION

Through the depiction of Barbie's appearance, the narration of Barbie's abundant leisure activities, the description of Barbie's lavish possessions, and their socialite peers, Barbie has symbolically served as an icon in the American Dream for setting the standard of success as seen through wealth, leisure, object consumption, and peers. In reflecting the idealized image of American women, Barbie is believed to have constructed a particular benchmark of how women should act and appear. Barbie becomes an ideal role model in accordance with how she is depicted. Nevertheless, Barbie's position is very complex and multifaceted. While Barbie is seen as the ideal epitome of American women in beauty and success, she is also perceived as an icon who brings mixed messages.

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## THE FOUR FACTORS DOMINATING ONLINE STREAMING PLATFORMS AS WITNESSED BY NETFLIX IN THE WAKE OF GLOBALIZATION

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### ABSTRACT

The globalization process has increased everything's accessibility and connectivity. Through information and technology, globalization makes it easier to move products, services, cultures, innovations, and creative ideas. As one of the most popular online streaming services, Netflix is fostering cross-cultural exchanges as part of the increasing globalization of capitalism. The author uses written sources, information, and evidence in the form of quotes from written works, written papers, and written responses to articles, reports, publications, and statistical data that are pertinent to Netflix. The author will apply globalization theory and a transnational approach to investigate why individuals favor Netflix over alternative online streaming services. These two theories are implemented in elaborating four dominant factors that Netflix has influenced the new habit patterns in today's society. Market growth will always play a role in globalization-related economic and cultural activities and processes. As a result, four key elements affect Netflix's market dominance: substitution, barriers to entry and potential competition, measures of profitability, and market share.

**Keywords:** *globalization; Netflix; online; platform; streaming*

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### INTRODUCTION

Online streaming platforms are proliferating and receiving much attention (Tichem & Tuinstra, 2018). As is well known, a few years ago, before the internet and online streaming market began to develop in society, television was a means of entertainment in the form of audiovisuals. However, when the internet is readily

available, information and entertainment can be easily accessed in the digital era. With a single click, consumers can get the answer to their desires. Today, growth in the technology sector, especially the online streaming market, occurs not only in one age group or field. However, the development of online streaming has affected various age groups. As stated by one of the most popular online streaming companies today, Netflix,

the different age groups here are divided into kids, teens, and adults. These three groups are certainly one of the standards in categorizing shows in the online streaming market. This causes the online streaming market to label shows or entertainment based on their maturity ratings. Where sex, drugs, language, and nudity, as well as parental control, are taken into consideration in their categorization.

No exception, some fields of work also utilize the online streaming market to promote their work. Entertainment industry companies have widely offered the utilization of this online streaming market to deliver their forms of entertainment products. This online streaming market can not only reach one region, but in the digital era like today, with online streaming, entertainment industry players can reach all regions and countries worldwide. Many digital companies, better known as startups, have sprung up and offer a large selection of applications or online streaming that can be used to watch the latest and updated entertainment. Over time, online streaming platforms cannot be underestimated in this modern era, as online streaming entertainment is increasingly globalized and favored by children, teenagers, and adults. Many startup companies have released their work regarding online streaming applications, as is already known, Netflix, Amazon, YouTube, and VLive. According to Wayne (2018), Netflix is the biggest new player, with more than 180 million combined subscribers in the global media climate in the online streaming market.

With the cultural changes of today's world tending to move to online streaming platforms, this indicates that the online

streaming market is growing rapidly. Television and radio programs are being abandoned and replaced by more varied programs in the online streaming market. In this case, it also changes people's habits and perspectives toward the viewing culture that has shifted online. The changes caused by Netflix are one form of globalization worldwide. According to Fishkin (2004), people, ideas, and goods and the social, cultural, and economic intersections created by the historical roots of multidirectional flows. In this way, Netflix is conducting a process of cultural contact around the world, which is part of the rapid globalization of capitalism. The presence of Netflix as an online streaming platform that can be subscribed to from all over the world shows that the power of Netflix as an online platform is strong as an online streaming platform worldwide.

Netflix provides a selection of programs in which there are many viewing options from various countries that join Netflix. This process of globalization that occurs in the Netflix phenomenon is also called transnationalism. Netflix has become one of the platforms for connecting countries through an online entertainment offer. This transnationalism has significant implications for the topic discussed (Traister, 2010). The implication is that Netflix has hegemony in countries outside America. The concept of cultural hegemony enters as a form of implication caused by Netflix. Netflix has changed society's habits in enjoying entertainment shows from conventional TV to online streaming, which provides a large selection of shows that are not only original entertainment from America. Not only that, but they also managed to establish relationships with the entertainment industry

outside the US to offer to join in presenting their work on Netflix.

This transition to globalization is based on a critique of American exclusivism and a rejection of the collective memory of imagined homogeneity produced by the field (Graff, Basiuk, & Krasuska, 2018). On the one hand, the many backgrounds obscured by the word “American” and, on the other hand, the colonial status of the US and how exclusivism works are fundamental. Hence, scholars recognize that status and culture are shaped by it. However, it is only recently that the ongoing and changing globalization in American studies has been enough to eliminate American Exceptionalism. According to McMahon (August 19, 2023), the idea that the US holds an exclusive spot in history and on the international stage due to certain characteristics considered special to the US is called American Exceptionalism. As an example, it is shown in the Netflix series *Emily in Paris*. As the main character, Emily was sent to work in Paris, where she did not speak French. She was surprised by the Parisian work culture, which differed from the American work culture and did not match Emily’s American hustle. (Berlatsky, October 4, 2023). Today, globalization or transnational processes in American studies emphasize the complex relationships between states, cultures, and countries that intersect with the United States, or it can be concluded that this transnational field of studies tends not to reinforce the ideology of “American Exceptionalism” more naturally. Thus, globalization in American studies encourages more focus on the US as an idea or product to be consumed within the scope of globalization.

According to Tomlison (1999) and Hetherington (2001), the form of the current globalization process, all things become more connectable and accessible. Tomlison added that globalization facilitates the movement of goods, services, culture, innovation, and creativity through information and technology. The distance seen geographically is very far and is now felt very close to the existence of electronic media. Not only is distance a concern, but the transfer of information becomes much faster and more efficient. In a discussion related to globalization, of course, globalization will continue to be associated with economic activities or processes that can be realized in the market expansion (Fithratullah, 2018, p. 84). So, globalization not only changes the culture of a society but also shapes society to be far more innovative and creative in responding to changes caused by the emergence of globalization. This definition of globalization is also supported by the opinion expressed by Giddens (1990) that globalization is a form of interdependence between one another, one nation and another nation, humans and other humans. This emerging dependence can be through tourism, culture, information, technology, and interactions with each other. It can be said that this globalization process is a process of communities or countries interacting and communicating with each other, depending on each other, and even influencing each other across national borders. Netflix shows this globalization process in a more modern form. Wayne and Sandoval (2023) stated that Netflix is one of the bridges in cultural interaction worldwide. The presence of shows that maintain the original language or show the culture of each country in a movie, documentary, or series.

With globalization becoming more widespread, this also increasingly affects technology development, especially online streaming platforms that affect everyone in all countries. Many people are now more interested in using online streaming media. Now, there is a lot of discussion about the existence of online streaming platforms, one of which is Netflix. This phenomenon has become familiar today. Without realizing it, people today are dependent on online streaming. Almost every day, they consume Netflix as their entertainment media. Vertovec (2001) reveals that Rastafarianism focuses on complex cultural aesthetics, values, beliefs, and practices that have globalized through music that has increased consumer capitalism, so Netflix increases consumer capitalism with a globalized form of online streaming entertainment. As stated by Stoll (2023), until the second quarter of 2023, Netflix has almost 80 million subscribers, most coming from Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In this discussion, the author uses a qualitative method where the findings are the result of the author's perception, and the author's treatment will have a hand in determining the interpretation of an analysis of this writing (Adi, 2011, p. 240). This qualitative research is based on a transnational approach based on the theory of globalization used by the author as a guide in writing this article. Vertovec (2001) states that transnationalism emphasizes that in the vast transnational literature, some individuals in two or more nation-states now live in a social world spread between, or simultaneously in, physical places and societies. This means people share common

interests that unite them into a common community or habit. In this research, the author uses written media and data in quotations, written documents, and written answers in publications, reports, statistical data, and articles that have information and relevance to Netflix. Based on the explanation above, the author will raise a discussion of what factors influence Netflix to dominate public interest in watching online streaming platforms at this time.

## **DISCUSSION**

Netflix, founded in 1997 by American entrepreneurs Reed Hastings and Marc Randolph, in full Netflix, Inc. is a media streaming and video rental company. The company also develops original programming (Hosch, 2020). Los Gatos, California, is its corporate headquarters. Netflix started offering customers the option of streaming some movies and TV shows directly to their homes through the Internet in 2007. At the beginning of its establishment, Netflix was only spread across Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Hosch added that Netflix later spread beyond the US, and by 2016, the subscription service was accessible in more than 190 countries and territories. Initially, Netflix as an online streaming platform was defined as a home entertainment service (Tryon, 2015), but Osur broke that statement. Osur (2016) states that Netflix now epitomizes the "TV anywhere" technique with a "TV everywhere" approach. A seamless series of access points through laptops, tablets, mobile phones, and conventional TV sets. Anytime, anywhere, and everywhere, viewers can watch Netflix.

Netflix has an indirect hegemony in the mindset of the world community regarding online streaming platforms that are growing rapidly in this modern era, especially with the rapid flow of globalization. Netflix has managed to become an actor with the power to dominate the online streaming market. This worldwide globalization process has certainly influenced Netflix's position as an online streaming platform in contemporary society. This form of Netflix's influence has also hegemonized the world of online streaming platforms. The hegemonizing process by Netflix is undoubtedly caused by several triggering factors related to digital platforms, especially online streaming platforms. To see the factors that influence Netflix's market dominance. OECD (2020) divides them into four main factors: substitution, barriers to entry and potential competition, measures of profitability, and market share.

### **Substitution**

As stated by Tomlinson (1999), the globalization process is a process that allows and facilitates elements or processes in human life to become more accessible and connectable. Internet access or technology is one form of convenience that is felt and continues to occur in society. Younes and Al-Zoubi (2015) state that people are aware of the ongoing technological changes that occur in their midst because technology is a necessity for life at this time. Moreover, technology in today's society shows an indication of cultural awareness. Technology variations today are diverse, one of which continues to accompany people's lives today is the online streaming platform Netflix. As one of the online streaming platforms in great demand by modern society today, Netflix is

an online platform where people can see various types of movies, dramas, documentaries, anime, or variety shows from various countries.

Netflix, originally a business model of selling and renting DVDs through delivery, expanded its business in 2010 by introducing streaming services to people in the US and Canada. Then, in 2013, Netflix began to be creative to produce Netflix Original content in their database on a large scale, both in television and movies, then distributed internationally. However, with the development of the globalization process, the progress of the times, and market demand, the content and programs carried by Netflix have also changed and experienced substitution. When Netflix first emerged as a streaming service, its database comprised content and programs related to entertainment and Western culture. Not only substitute the emergence of conventional television with an exciting entertainment technology. The ongoing process of globalization, of course, also affects the content and program options that Netflix offers. Moreover, Netflix is spread across several countries and almost all countries except North Korea, Mainland China, Syria, Crimea, and Montenegro. Netflix replaces conventional television that cannot provide many choices of shows from various countries. The presence of Netflix offers a large selection of categories of shows from various countries wherever and whenever the audiences want to watch them.

In response to this, Netflix tries to do substitution treatment in the programs they offer. The substitution referred to here is to see changes in demand from the market based on the interests of today's society. So

Netflix modifies the entertainment offerings or the choice of content or programs on their online streaming platform. As of now, an example that is quite obvious is the development of the Korean Wave, which is globalized in almost all countries. Netflix also uses this in substituting entertainment programs or shows for Netflix subscribers by adding and even replacing entertainment programs with Korean culture brought by the current Korean Wave. This is emphasized by a statement issued by Ted Sarandos, co-CEO of Netflix when he met with the President of South Korea in the US last April.

We were able to make this decision because we have great confidence that the Korean creative industry will continue to tell great stories. We were also inspired by the President's love and strong support for the Korean entertainment industry, fueling the Korean wave. I'd like to thank the President for his kind response letter personally. (Frater, 2023)

From the statement above, Ted Sarandos, as co-CEO of Netflix, clearly states that the Korean Wave is a tremendous attraction for Netflix's current development process. Park et al. (2023) emphasized that with the original series offered by Netflix, Netflix can become a new space for the Korean industry to continue to be creative in drama or series content that has a genre that is not possible to be accepted by television. This shows that Netflix is a safe and flexible substitute for the Korean industry that has diversity in investing in genres, stories, or ideas in a drama, series, or documentary.

Sarandos said South Korean stories are "now at the heart of the global cultural zeitgeist" as more than 60 percent of Netflix's 233 million subscribers

worldwide are watching South Korean films, dramas, and reality shows, according to company data. (Bohdan, 2023)

Sarandos stated that the influence of the Korean Wave is also a factor in the increase of Netflix subscribers and users worldwide. From the data owned by Netflix itself, it can be seen that the enthusiasm due to the Korean Wave is genuine in the process of Netflix's development in various countries. Especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, Netflix became one of the online streaming platforms that replaced many other activities or entertainment by presenting many viewing options for the public. Kim (2022) added that, in other words, Netflix has become a breakthrough for many film and entertainment industries.

### **Entry Barriers & Potential Competition**

Although in its development process, globalization has many positive impacts on people's lives. According to Azkia (2019), this society stated that globalization currently developing includes economic, technological, political, and cultural dimensions (p. 15). However, globalization, which includes many dimensions, also provides potential not only in positive terms but also an impact on competition. This form of competition is undoubtedly experienced by Netflix, which is one of the online streaming platforms in the world, where technologies in the current era of globalization are developing a lot. In the development of Netflix, which operates globally, they have expanded a lot of content by applying original culture in each country (Wang & Weng, 2022). These local dramas, series, documentaries, or content are distributed internationally by Netflix.

One of the original cultures that Netflix is working on is developing drama series, documentaries, movies, and other content from South Korea. South Korean culture is currently in great demand by the world community. South Korea's success with its current soft power has succeeded in stealing the world's attention not only politically but also culturally (Valieva, 2018). It is what Netflix also uses and utilizes in developing its productions. However, as the world's largest online streaming platform, Netflix also faces obstacles to growth or potential competition from its existence as one of the world's online streaming platforms.

Netflix is not the only streaming platform that's looking to capitalize on the "Korean wave". Disney+, Apple TV, and Asia-based ViuTV are also increasing investments in South Korea and hosting more K-content. (Frater, 2023)

Being one of the dominant online streaming platforms among other online streaming platforms (Putri, 2022), of course, does not necessarily make Netflix an easy position to be the leader in the field of online streaming platforms. In developing content and disseminating it to the public, few have made Netflix a benchmark for creating online streaming content. For example, Netflix's investment process in the original series that highlights the culture of South Korea eventually became a reference for other online streaming platforms to do the same. As mentioned, Disney+, Apple TV, and ViuTV are also doing the same thing, investing in content for their online streaming platforms by promoting Korean culture. Something like this cannot be avoided and cannot be stopped, so in practice, according to Sitanggang (2022), Netflix and other online streaming platforms

continue to compete for the hearts of the public with their respective innovations and creativity in presenting a spectacle by combining cultural and political factors.

The ever-growing globalization, accompanied by the sophistication of technology and the internet, makes everything virtually be seen and enjoyed worldwide. Netflix, which has been developed and shaped in such a way, has produced many original content that attracts public interest. However, the obstacles do not stop at the competition. There are also obstacles faced by Netflix, namely restrictions on the broadcast of content produced by Netflix in several countries.

Further, several of its existing shows are licensed only for the U.S. and cannot be broadcast in other regions. This limits its content library until the company renegotiates the terms for these shows. Expanding its existing content to international markets will lead to higher licensing costs, impacting the margins negatively. Creating original, local content for each international market is also an expensive proposition, especially if the costs cannot be justified by a huge subscriber base. (Trefis Team, 2016)

Based on Park et al. (2023), from 2015 to 2020, Netflix invested over 700 million USD in more than 80 Korean original series or content. This amount is expected to provide large revenue from the results of the original content produced by Netflix. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Netflix reaped many profits from its content broadcast. During a pandemic, people spend time at home. Online streaming platforms like Netflix became one of the entertainment for people at that time. However, when the pandemic began to end, entering 2022,

Netflix had lost at least 2 million subscribers (Putri, 2022). With the expenses incurred by Netflix getting bigger, of course, this also has an impact on the subscription fees set by Netflix to its subscribers. She also explained that many online streaming platforms other than Netflix offer much cheaper subscription fees than Netflix.

In addition, the obstacle experienced by Netflix is the restriction on the display of their content. According to Matrix (2014), it is explained that by consuming Netflix, traditional TV viewing is disrupted, which has a disruptive effect in terms of viewing schedules and advertisements and in the form of reduced cable TV subscriptions. Also, Netflix shows, sometimes only meant for one region or country, cannot be enjoyed globally due to content restrictions, age limitations, story ideas, and other factors unsuitable for the country where they will be broadcast. Thus, people in several countries cannot enjoy the broadcast of original series content. As an example stated by Putri & Paksi (2021), several parties have blocked Netflix viewing since its inception in Indonesia. However, with the development of existing technology, this obstacle can still be resolved using the sophistication of VPN technology or with country settings provided by Netflix so subscribers can still view Netflix content (O'Driscoll, 2023).

### **Measures of Profitability**

If a digital company or startup shows a relatively high rate of profit compared to others in the market, this can be a measure that the company has a fairly high market power. Gains from stability can signify that the company's market power is excellent. Netflix reported revenue of over 20.15 billion

for 2019. In the four years from 2016-2019, Netflix has seen a 127% increase in its annual revenue.

Profit seems always to be related to a number or a graph. Still, when viewed in a cultural study, the role of culture carried due to globalization is also a real factor in the success of a product, for example, Netflix, in this discussion. Netflix's role in bringing the Korean Wave into its content and programs can be seen. Salsabila (2021) mentions that production from a non-English country is not an obstacle for a global audience to enjoy it. Not only that, but content production with non-English production also has the right to get the same recognition as English production. This cultural difference in language is not a problem in Netflix producing and bringing other cultures from cooperating countries. One of them is the production of content in Korean. This form of culture brought by Netflix is emphasized by the success of one of their original series, *Squid Game*.

As well as providing representation for different identities, Netflix also champions content from a global market. Just recently, *Squid Game* saw enormous success on Netflix's streaming service and took the world by storm. This was a surprise to many, as it required subtitles for being a South Korean drama series, but is one of many examples of Netflix's diverse content. (Trefis Team, 2016)

*Squid Game* is a Korean original series that became one of the series on Netflix that received worldwide praise and attention. By bringing a simple story of traditional games that are quite familiar in Korea, this series is packaged nicely so that the storyline of this series steals the attention of viewers and subscribers from Netflix. The series, which



uses full Korean during its broadcast, has nine episodes in its first season. Despite the difference in language used, Netflix got a profitability figure in the *Squid Game* broadcast of 1.65 billion hours watched. It is inversely proportional to the series *Stranger Things* (season four), which incidentally uses the English language of instruction and received public attention of 1.35 billion hours watched.

In 2022, Netflix won 26 Emmys, with *Squid Game* making history as the first-ever non-English series to win (or be nominated). If you're looking for something new to watch, Netflix should be your go-to pick. (Rayome, Rosenzweig & Jackson, 2023)

By bringing a culture different from Netflix itself, *Squid Game*, which was produced with a thick Korean culture and included in the Netflix Series, also provided other benefits to Netflix as a provider where *Squid Game* was aired. The broadcast of *Squid Game* in 2021 is one of Netflix's winning factors. The Primetime Emmys Awards is an award show held to honor and reward prime-time shows on American television, the winners of which are chosen by the Academy of Television Arts and Science.

With globalization in this modern era, as stated by Fithratullah (2018), the culture that is formed and packaged in such a way can then be disseminated to society and communities. Such cultural dissemination will eventually become commodified by using a culture that is exported on a large scale. This certainly has many positive impacts on the country's culture. Implicitly, they can spread their culture through an interesting entertainment treat. So that it not

only has a profitable impact or material benefit to Netflix but can also provide benefits for the culture brought into the entertainment industry to be more widely recognized. Thus, the culture and habits of one country and another can be learned or known unconsciously through an entertainment presentation. With the continuous development of globalization, it can be said that globalization has had a huge and significant impact on human life and culture. This has given a new perspective to globalization, where the world is borderless.

### **Market Shares**

This market share is considered part of assessing the dominance of digital technologies, such as online streaming platforms. It provides a useful starting point for analyzing whether a startup company has a large market share during competition. Netflix's market segmentation includes several segmentation groups.

For streaming services, this includes separating customers into groups based on factors such as weekend vs. weekday usage, 4K vs. HD streaming data quality, ages, gender, movie genres, and locations. (Punwasee, 2022)

Thus, with the division of market segmentation in society, Netflix becomes much easier to accept. These segmentation groups make it easier for Netflix to distribute content based on the interests of their subscribers. Arun (2023) emphasized Netflix's segmentation is mostly targeted at a young audience, not ruling out an adult or elderly audience who are still tech-savvy. However, many of Netflix subscribers are teenagers, college students, and professional workers. Not only in terms of the audience

they consider but also in terms of genre and location, the goal of Netflix.



Figure 1 & 2. The Distribution of The Most Popular TV Shows on Netflix (Moody, 2022)

In the process of distributing Netflix's content, each country location has a different preference for the category of films and TV Shows. For example, fantasy or science fiction movies are more in demand in Canada. Examples of *Fantasy* or *Science Fiction* movies that are in demand are *Harry Potter* and *Twilight*. This is different from some others. Compared to the US, Argentina, Australia, and other countries, they watch more *Romantic-Comedy* content on Netflix. Examples of *Romantic-Comedy* movies that are quite popular on Netflix are *Clueless* and *Mean Girls*. In addition, some countries prefer the *Animation* and *Drama-Romance* genres provided by Netflix. Then, on the TV Shows content broadcast on Netflix, one country and another also has different habits. In Canada, more people enjoy Netflix content, namely Drama-Romance TV Shows, unlike Brazil and Australia, which prefer comedy content on TV Shows on Netflix. As

Putri & Paksi (2021) stated, this wide variety of interests and markets gives Netflix the space to explore and innovate their content, ultimately generating benefits and profits for the company.

This interdependence between Netflix and its customers is a form of the globalization development process. As stated by Giddens (1990), this is a form of the globalization process that is intertwined and dependent. What Netflix is doing is becoming much more accessible and connectable for many people, anywhere and anytime. With the largest number of subscribers in 2020 and 183 million worldwide, Netflix is one of the online streaming platforms people rely on today. Netflix has become a new habit for society, which is consumed by many people in the world today. With this diverse market share, Netflix has succeeded in presenting a new culture among the people. Koblin (2016) mentioned that this new Netflix habit is binge-watching.

Since October 2015, Koblin has been categorizing this binge-watching model based on the duration of Netflix content watched by subscribers, namely The Very Fast Binger. Subscribers in this category are categorized based on how long it takes them to finish a single content or season on Netflix within four days, where they spend two and a half hours per day. The market in this category watches a lot of Netflix content in the horror, science fiction, and thriller genres. The next category is The Fairly Quick Binger, where viewers spend an average of five days finishing a Netflix season, with most viewers spending two hours a day. The market share in this category is seen from the genres watched, such as dramatic comedies,

crime dramas, and superhero shows. The last category is The Slightly More Relaxed Binger, where viewers watch one season on Netflix for six days. In a day, viewers in this category spend approximately one hour and 45 minutes. The market share in this category is mostly in the genres of political dramas, irreverent comedies, and historical dramas.

## CONCLUSION

With globalization continuing to develop in today's society, the ease of technology cannot be doubted. People can easily see different customs, places, politics, and cultures with just a click. Netflix is an example of transnationalism that can occur through an online streaming platform connecting many countries through entertainment. This has been brought about by Netflix, one of the major online streaming platforms in the world. Netflix utilizes the opportunity they have to develop and bring these differences into online streaming content that is currently enjoyed by many people around the world. They present series, dramas, documentaries, movies, and TV Shows on one platform, and people can easily choose from various content. The development of Netflix as an online streaming platform has its uniqueness and factors that support why Netflix has become large online streaming. In this discussion, four factors make Netflix dominate online streaming. The first factor is the substitution made by Netflix. With the changing times and globalization that continues to develop, television technology is substituted by Netflix by providing more interesting and diverse entertainment. Culturally, too, which used to lean a lot towards Western culture, is now starting to develop and be replaced by

other cultures, for example, the Korean Wave.

The second is the obstacles and competition experienced by Netflix with the development of the times, there are more and more competitors in the field of online streaming platforms, but it does not dampen Netflix's existence. The third factor is Netflix's profitability, which continues to skyrocket with the creativity and ideas that Netflix applies to series, dramas, movies, and other content. Finally, Netflix's varied market share, both in terms of age, genre variations, and locations where Netflix content is in high demand, is one of the factors in Netflix's success as an online streaming platform in the world. It is certainly not bad to follow the ongoing trends in several things, including in the world of technology and digital. Still, choosing a trusted digital platform with good service takes foresight. Netflix has proven to be one of the entertainment options with many segmentations and content choices for the community.

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## THE POWER OF LOVE AS A TRANSFORMATIVE FORCE: ALAIN BADIOU'S THEORY OF LOVE AND CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN THE US

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### ABSTRACT

Love is never considered as a transformative force. Love is generally perceived merely as an affective-emotional thing and personal relationship. Love does not have any practical implication in transforming society. Through Alain Badiou's theory of love, it can be demonstrated that love has the power to impact the world. According to Badiou, philosophy is a truth procedure that is always occurring in the arena. Politics, science, art, and love are the arenas in which philosophy operates. Thus, it is possible to talk about love philosophically. Philosophy aims to change the world since love is one of the arenas where philosophy operates. Based on the descriptive analysis method in interpreting Alain Badiou's works; *Being and Event* and *In Praise of Love*, it implies that love can generate a transformative action. The case of miscegenation marriage between Mildred Jetter, an African-Indigenous American, and Richard Loving, a white male, during the civil rights movement in the US, can illustrate the role of love in transforming the world. Alain Badiou's theory of love explains that love can transcend personal dimensions, and it is not purely a romantic feeling and personal relationship but also a transformative force. Thus, this study brings a new perspective on love theoretically and practically because love is not merely an emotion but also a force for change with social dimensions in practicality.

**Keywords:** *Badiou; civil right; love; theory of love; transformation*

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## INTRODUCTION

Contemporary conditions make love lose its meaning. In *In Praise of Love*, Alain Badiou says love is threatened. Love is increasingly marginalized and considered a “disgusting” thing. Badiou says that love is now instantaneous, and even people can feel love but not fall in love (being in love without falling in love) (Badiou & Truong, 2012, p. 5). Love is nothing more than a commodity that is selected, studied and weighed like a commodity. Love becomes a fetish commodity and a possession like private property (Mažeikis, 2015, p 22). Therefore, trying to eliminate the negative attributes attached to love is necessary. This research is conducted to reverse the negative conception of love by logically proving love as a philosophical and practical thing through the framework Badiou constructed.

Badiou is a French philosopher whose thinking was influenced by Marxism, particularly Marxism-Leninism. In 1960, he was a disciple of Louis Althusser, a famous Marxist philosopher. Early in his career, the works of Badiou focused on developing the Marxian theory of aesthetics and mathematics (Noys, 2008, p. 109). When the Revolution of May 1968 broke out, he was a Marxist-Maoist militant. After the failure of the May 1968 Revolution, Badiou’s militancy toward Marxism decreased, and he was no longer mentioned as a devoted Marxist follower. However, the leadership spirit of his writings continued to adhere to the doctrines of Marxism and left-wing schools in general, providing a sense of distinctiveness that enriched his philosophical system. Badiou still believed in and practiced the fundamental doctrine of Marxism, especially about the faith

in radical equality in society (Johnston, 2009, p. 55).

Badiou acknowledged that philosophy justifies and amplifies the ability to incite radical transformation and revolution, even in the era when revolution is considered an obsolete concept (Ahmad, 2012, p. 54). For him, philosophy is a truth procedure, a practical elaboration of the Idea of the Good which presents in a specific point of time. Badiou embodied Marx’s statement in Theses on Feuerbach part XI, which states, “the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it” (Marx, 1969, p. 15).

In Badiou’s perspective, philosophy is entrapped in malaise because philosophy is unable to create a movement that can instigate a rupture in a structured situation. Consequently, philosophy is dead; if it is not, it has turned into a tradition of baloney. Badiou refused to give up and tried to reorient philosophy in the right direction as a truth procedure. For him, we can save philosophy from malaise and make philosophy capable of interrogating and transforming the world (philosophy is possible) (Sacilotto, 2013, p. 61).

Badiou was disheartened by the failure of the May 1968 Revolution in France, which put the left-wing movement in a subjugated position while, in fact, the left wing gained victory on the ground. Based on this experience, Badiou realized that if philosophy emphasizes only praxis or actual action, in the end, it will result in nothing. If Marx believed that practical action was the primary, Badiou disapproved. For him, philosophy without



understanding reality will become a disaster. Badiou emphasized the balance between practical action and abstraction. His philosophy begins with ontology, a theory about reality. Badiou transformed established concepts in philosophy, such as the concept of subject and object, to construct a unique phenomenology on how we perceive the world and our *Being* (Shaw, 2010, p. 431). Philosophy as a transformation movement must begin with ontology as a theory to comprehend reality.

Badiou said that mathematics is ontology. He referred his argument to Plato's rationalism-materialism. Plato distinguished between truth and *Doxa*. Badiou adopts this concept by stating that a structured situation has its logic. This logic becomes the property of the situation, and it arranges the elements into an orderly state. This property is *doxa*. Philosophy has a role in presenting truth instead of following *doxa*. If philosophy follows *doxa*, the situation's structure will remain unchanged because *doxa* will dictate the whole elements in a situation to follow the property of the situation. At the same time, the truth will not comply with *doxa*. Thus, the truth can transform the structure of the situation.

Badiou distinguished between reality and appearances (Sacilotto, 2013, p. 60). *Being*, for him, always refers to everything that appears in the situation. Presence is an effect of the counting process when the situation is ordered. Therefore, it is possible for excess to happen because the appearance that is ordered in the situation is different from reality. The thing that does not appear and count in the situation is considered void, even though it exists in reality; thus, the foundation of reality is nothingness or void. Badiou differentiated

*being qua being* or *being* without its appearance in the world and *being* with its appearance in the world (Farrán, 2008, p. 2). This concept can be formalized by applying mathematical axioms and explicitly set theory. Badiou's ontology is not focused on the material objects of reality, but on the shifting scheme of logical architecture that composes reality (Daniel, 2016, p. 259).

Badiou's ontology refused the relational theory of society. The basis of ontology is multiplicities, not a unified totality that culminated in *The One*. It is incomprehensible to think of social realities in society as a totality that expresses a unitary historical substance (Sotiris, 2011, p. 37). We face the world's circumstances in various forms and never in integral totality. Therefore, *The One* is not; instead, it is an effect of the counting process that makes one emerge when reality is ordered into a structure. This ordered structure is called a situation. Mathematics can formulate this phenomenon (where the one and the multiple appear altogether); thus, mathematics as ontology is the only way to understand the world.

Mathematics illustrates how truth can transcend *doxa* and how the subject can attain the truth. The power of mathematics in explaining ontology makes mathematics more than just a metaphor; mathematics is ontology itself. Only mathematics and set theory provide a solid foundation for ontology; in this context, ontology or, more specifically, *being* refers to everything that can be said about the existence of entities (Morgan, 2011, p. 244–245).

Philosophy operates in several dimensions of human experience that they encounter because of their existence in the world. The

dimensions or arenas where philosophy operates are science, politics, art, and love. These dimensions attach to philosophy, and the attachment aims to develop an event to fundamentally criticize the structure available in the dimensions. For example, in politics, the Leftist-Marxist movement emerged as an event that contests the politically structured situation of the state in liberal democracy (Morgan, 2011, p. 245–246). Leftist-Marxists can identify a failed pluralism project continually echoed by liberal democracy merely as a marginalization project through ordering strategy. Pluralism is not a reflection of the diversity of the society. Pluralism is no more than a formal strategy from liberal democracy to alienate elements not counted in a political situation, such as alien immigrants, undocumented persons, and marginalized groups. Leftist-Marxist as an event can present excluded elements as generic in the political situation. At last, if there is fidelity in adhering to the Leftist-Marxist movement, the political situation will finally change.

In Badiou's system of thought, philosophy will result in a revolution or a situation transformation. It is due to philosophy as a truth procedure that can interrogate stable situations and bring out the generic as an excluded part of the situation. A truth procedure occurs in four dimensions or domains or arenas. Badiou called it conditions; they are politics, science, art, and love. Those four domains are places for every human experience in the world. The conditions summarized all the essential knowledge necessary for human existence. Love, as one of the conditions, is a place for truth procedure to occur; thus, love assumes change. Love, *per se*, is the force for change. If love cannot incite transformation, it implies that love is not a truth procedure. Therefore, the main problem

that this study will answer is "How to demonstrate that love has the ability to a force for change?"

## DISCUSSION

### Alain Badiou's Theory of Love

What is the technical explanation of love as a place for a truth procedure to occur, thus making love a transformative force?

In explaining love, we commence with love axioms. Badiou formulated the love axiom from 1 to 4. Love axiom 1 states two positions of experience (De Chavez, 2015, p. 97). Love is never a solitary experience. Love always involves another because it is implausible for love between an animate subject and an inanimate object. Love happens between two animate subjects (Price, 2012, p. 217). Love assumes reciprocity, and if we love an inanimate subject, the reciprocity is not likely to happen (Price, 2012, p. 218).

Two positions of experience have their situations. For Badiou, the situation is a structured presentation of pure multiplicity. *Being* present in a situation when it experiences the counting process (counted-as-one). It will make *being* accessible to our knowledge because *being* is categorized based on the properties that it has (Badiou, 2005, p. 34). There are two positions: (1) masculine situation or MS and (2) feminine situation or FS. MS and FS have properties that become the means for ordering the *being* (or multiplicities, because for Badiou, *being* is always multiple) in the situation. In simple terms, the situation is the world where we are in.

Love axiom 2 states that the two positions are disjunctive, meaning there is no intersection between the masculine and

feminine situations; both are in their position. The encounter between two positions is contingent, unplanned, unpredictable, and unmanipulated. When two positions meet and they fall in love, an event begins. Falling in love is an event. Therefore, love is not a pre-established relationship. Love is a process where *Scene of Two* emerges. *Scene of Two* is a nexus between two positions that merge because they fall in love with one another. Thus, love is a hypothetical operator from an accidental collision between two positions of experience. Falling in love is an encounter, a meeting, or a spontaneous event (Badiou, 2008, p. 188).

When two positions meet each other and fall in love, it begins with the process of declaration or nomination. This declaration is expressed in the speech “I Love You”. Afterward, two positions must possess *fidelity* to the event of falling in love. *Fidelity* is faith, a commitment to follow the event to whatever consequences. Falling in love might bring beautiful and sweet moments, but it might bring horrible and bitter moments. Whatever the consequences, two positions falling in love will bear it. Without fidelity, falling in love will result in nothing; two situations (MS and FS) will not change because falling in love as an event will be neutralized to conform with existing properties as a mechanism of ordering.

Declaration and fidelity will lead to the creation of *Scene of Two*. Badiou's concept of love is influenced by Lacan's. For Lacan, love occurs because there is a lack of personal Ego that yearns *objet petit a* that can satisfy the desire. For Badiou, the position of men and women is never complete; their positions are incomplete. The incompleteness is defined as U, a non-being and inexplicable in a non-

relation circular (Jottkandt, 2011, p. 73–74). At this point, U will become the intersection between the masculine situation (MS) and feminine situation (FS), creating the *Scene of Two*. *Scene of Two* is not an effect of counting; it is also not an addition process like  $1 + 1$ . However, it is a subtraction process derived from women's and men's experience positions.

This will lead to love axiom 3, which states no third position (De Chavez, 2015, p. 97). *Scene of Two* is not a fusion that melts MS and FS. Masculine and feminine situations are still separated or disunited. However, from MS and FS, it can derive *Scene of Two* from the intersection of MS and FS. MS and FS have incompleteness U. Love supplements incompleteness U through *Scene of Two*. Love as a disjunction cannot be experienced and witnessed outside *Scene of Two*; thus, love cannot have the third position (De Chavez, 2016, p. 279-281). *Scene of Two* is not a new situation separated from MS and FS. *Scene of Two* is *the generic* or ♀ that emerges to complete MS and FS, and it changes the structure of MS and FS into MS(*Scene of Two*) and FS(*Scene of Two*) following Badiou's concept of forcing that changes S into  $S(\text{♀})$ . From here, the world is not lived and experienced from an individual gaze, but it is experienced through *Scene of Two* (Badiou & Nicolas Truong, 2009, p. 26).

The fact is She, and I are now incorporated into this unique Subject, the subject of love that views the panorama of the world through the prism of our difference so that this world can be conceived, be born, and not simply represent what fills my individual gaze. Love is always the possibility of being present at the birth of the world.

In axiom 4, it states that only one humanity exists. This axiom assumes that

*Scene of Two's* creation process is universal and can happen to everyone. The *generic* appears in both men and women. It is a subtraction from both situations in *Scene of Two*. Therefore, love is the place or location where the truth procedure happens. Axiom 1-3 explains that love is a disjunction, and axiom 4 describes love as a truth procedure that assumes transformation (De Chavez, 2016, p. 261).

Badiou's love conception can resolve the problem of unity and difference that becomes a dilemma when deliberating love as a philosophical discourse (Jottkandt, 2011, p. 78). If love is unity, how is it possible because the subjects in the relationship are disjunct? Badiou answered the dilemma. For Badiou, love is disjunction because the subjects in a love relationship are independent; thus, love is about the difference (Jottkandt, 2011: 78-80). However, love is a unity because there is a *Scene of Two*. It is a subtraction derived from the situation between men and women. It is an intersection that unites the disjunctive subjects.

The explanation of unity and difference in love must be understood in mathematics as ontology. Badiou wants to solve the problem of *being*, whether *being* is one or *being* is multiple. The discussion of *being* is the source of debate in philosophy, becoming a never-ending discourse. Plato refused *being* to be as multiple and stated that *being* is one. According to Plato, in essence, *being* culminates in an idea. In contrast, the multiple in *being* is only the appearance or opinion.

Meanwhile, for Badiou, *being* is one and multiple at once. Humans always perceive *being* in the form of multiplicities; the one appears when *being* is organized into the situation's structure. Thus, *being* as the one

emerges because of the ordering process. In the beginning, *being* is pure multiplicity before the ordering process occurs. After *being* is organized, it turns into one because of the counting process. If we connect this paradigm to love, we can say love is one and multiple at once. Love is a process of unity through the intersection of two positions and creating *Scene of Two*, but love is different because the subjects that create *Scene of Two* are still two different subjects who are disjunct. This concept is illustrated in Figure 1.

The process begins with a void or  $\emptyset$  as the foundation for presentation. Here, the ordering process is not yet happening; thus, its presentation is not yet conceivable. Presentation is conceivable when the counting process starts and puts being into a structured situation. There are two situations in love: masculine or (MS) and feminine or (FS). These two situations are disjunct. These two situations will encounter one another when falling in love as an event occurs.

Falling in love occurs because MS and FS have incompleteness  $U$ . Without incompleteness, falling in love will not happen. Declaration of "I Love You" marks the beginning of the event. Two positions need *fidelity* that will turn out into a transformation in MS and FS. The emergence of *Scene of Two* marks the transformation shared by the two positions. *Scene of Two* changes the situation of MS and FS into MS(*Scene of Two*) and FS(*Scene of Two*). Two positions are disjunct. However, they come together in *Scene of Two*. In Badiou's concept, two people involved in a love relationship do not merge into one. Each subject still maintains its individuality. However, they still share something in common: *Scene of Two*. If MS and FS do not

change, rupture is unavailable in their love situation; thus, the generic does not appear.

Therefore, as one of the places where truth occurs, love must have a transformative power similar to politics, science, and art. In chapter 5 of the book, Badiou explains the interconnection between love and politics. Love and politics (also art and science) has similarity. They are conditions in a place where truth procedure takes place. However, politics and love are different. Politics relates to collectivity, while love relates to twosome. Politics and love are two separate worlds, but each of them can be a model to one another, and the intersection between them is plausible. Even though there is an intersection, it does not mean politics and love are mixed.

In my view, politics constitutes a truth procedure but one that centres on the collective. I mean that political action tests out the truth of what the collective is capable of achieving... In love is about two people being able to handle difference and make it creative (Badiou & Nicolas Truong, 2009, p. 53–54).

Politics also involves the process of identifying enemies, which makes politics always about us versus them. There is always an enemy from the outside. Meanwhile, in love, there is never an outside enemy. The enemy in love is ourselves in the form of egoism or selfishness (Badiou & Nicolas Truong, 2009, p. 56–62).

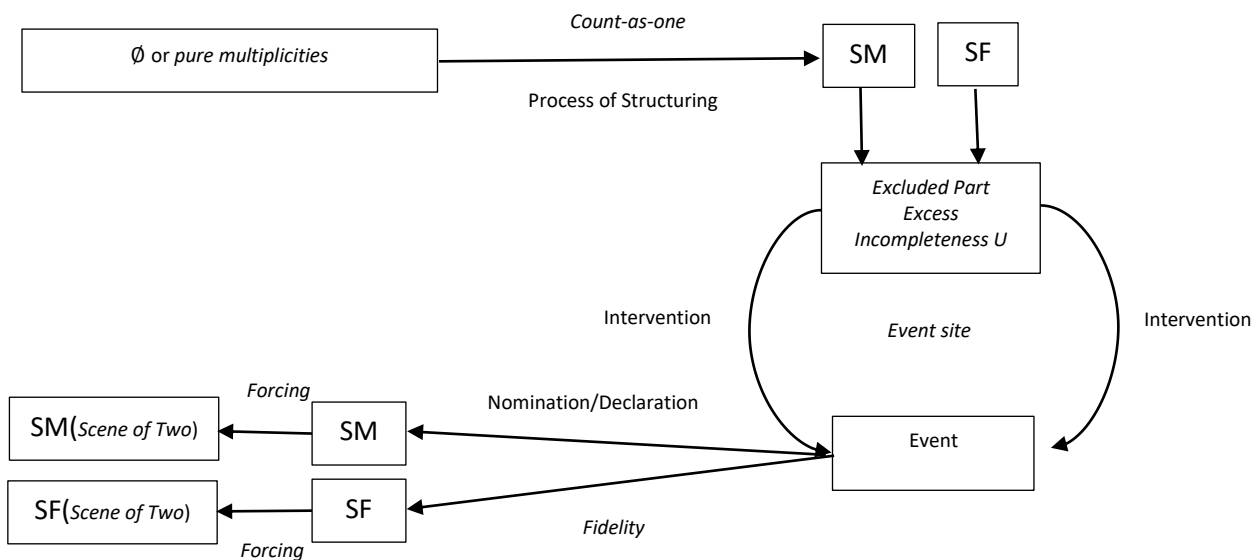


Figure 1. Badiou’s Love Concept

### Civil Right Movement

What real example can explain love's transformative force and its intersection with politics? We can refer to the civil right

movement in the United States, precisely the case of Mildred Jeter and Richard Loving. This case is very appealing to discuss because the love between them not only changed their situations (MS or Richard’s situation and FS or

Mildred's situation) but also changed the political situation in the US during the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s.

Richard Loving is a white man, and Mildred Jetter (later Mildred Loving) is of African and Indigenous American descent. Both lived in Central Point, Caroline County, Virginia, US. At that time in Virginia, the Racial Integrity Act of 1924 still applied. This act was a remnant of slavery that made white people superior to people of color (McClain, 2018, p. 2705). This act prohibited miscegenation.

Richard and Mildred met for the first time as pupils in high school. Both fell in love and married. In Virginia, miscegenation was prohibited. On June 2, 1958, they married in Washington, DC. Richard was 24 years old, and Mildred was 18 years old. After getting married, they went back to Virginia. On July 11, 1958, five weeks after their marriage, police broke into their home and arrested them with an accusation of unlawful cohabitation. They showed their marriage certificate, but the police did not acknowledge it, arguing that it only applied in Washington DC and was unlawful under Virginia's jurisdiction (Roberts, 2014, p. 178–179).

Six months after their arrest in January 1959, a trial began in Virginia with Leon Bezile acting as Judge. This case is well known as *Loving v(ersus) Virginia*. The sentence for violating the Racial Integrity Act 1924 is imprisonment of up to 5 years. Judge Bezile, in his verdict, stated that the Loving couple was guilty and set to 1-year prison. However, Judge Bezile gave the option to the couple. They can escape prison but must live in exile for 25 years. They must leave Virginia for 25 years and may return in 1985 (Gillmer,

2017, p. 138). The Loving couple decided to leave Virginia and stay in Washington, DC.

In the verdict, the Virginia court employed an argument based on religious doctrine to formulate its racial decision. In the copy of the verdict, one of the considerations of the Judge to sentence the Loving couple was,

Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, Malay, and red, and he placed them on separate continents. And but for the interference with his arrangement, there would be no cause for such marriages. The fact that he separated the races shows that he did not intend for the races to mix. (Johnson, 2009, p. 280)

For almost four years, the Loving couple lived in exile in Washington DC and could visit Virginia occasionally in separate visits. They would face arrest if Richard Loving and Mildred Loving were found together in Virginia. When they lived in exile, the Loving couple had three children (Gillmer, 2017, p. 138). In the fourth year, 1963, the Loving couple felt fed up with their unfair treatment and wanted to fight the court. The Loving couple contacted Robert Kennedy, the attorney general, asking for help (Roberts, 2014, p. 199). At the same time, the wave of protests about civil rights escalated. The Loving couple refused to identify their action with the civil rights movement. Mildred Loving said that her effort was merely an act of an ordinary black woman who fell in love with an ordinary white man and wished to get married. The state's interference in their marriage should have ended. They insisted that their effort was aimed only at their interest.

Attorney General Robert Kennedy suggested that the Loving couple contact the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), an organization that fights for civil rights,

including black civil rights. Bernard Cohen and Philip Hirschkop from the ACLU represented the Loving couple and contested the verdict of the Virginia court to the Supreme Court. Cohen and Hirschkop posed two arguments in the Supreme Court trial. First, the verdict of the Virginia court violated the equal protection clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment, and second, alleging that it violated the due process clause (Gillmer, 2017, p. 138).

Supreme Court annulled the verdict of the Virginia court and ruled that the anti-miscegenation law was unconstitutional. Supreme Court judge Earl Warren agreed with Cohen and Hirschkop’s argument and stated that the Virginia court’s verdict violated the US Constitution (Sears & Greenberg, 2016: 28). The Supreme Court decision annulled not only anti-miscegenation law in Virginia but also across the United States. Fifteen states were affected by this decision and urged to abolish anti-miscegenation laws that still available in those states are (1) Alabama, (2) Arkansas, (3) Delaware, (4) Florida, (5) Georgia, (6) Kentucky, (7) Louisiana, (8) Mississippi, (9) Missouri, (10) North Carolina, (11) Oklahoma, (12) Carolina, (13) Tennessee, (14) Texas, and (15) West Virginia.

This Supreme Court decision became momentum for the US civil rights movement and was celebrated nationwide. It gave equal legal standing to all citizens. However, Mildred still refused to relate their winning in the Supreme Court as a political victory and stated it was a love victory. She said: "We were in love, and we wanted to be married" (Sears & Greenberg, 2016, p. 29).

This decision also crushed ancient relics of US law that were based on racial

segregation and white supremacy doctrine. It changed the political landscape, and in the future, it opened the way for Barrack Obama, the African American, to be elected president and Asian-American Kamala Harris to be elected vice president (McClain, 2018, p. 2701).

Martha Nussbaum commented that the Loving case is not only related to a private and personal issue but also a public issue. Their marriage has a public dimension because it relates to the issue of liberty, particularly the right to marry. Marriage in the United States still contained past idealism that put marriage as a long-life commitment between male and female according to God’s rule and officiated by the state (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 672). It is the heart of the problem because the state legitimation of marriage always refers to religion, while religion is not under state authority. State authority should legalize and record the marriage following the principle of respect and equal justice for all (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 696).

The Loving case still echoes, and it transcends time. It is still relevant in the United States today, primarily in relation to marriage equality for same-sex couples. Mildred specifically stated the parallelism of her case in 1967 and the same sex today.

My generation was bitterly divided over something that should have been so clear and right. The majority believed . . . that it was God’s plan to keep people apart, and that government should discriminate against people in love. But . . . [t]he older generation’s fears and prejudices have given way, and today’s young people realize that if someone loves someone they have a right to marry. Surrounded as I am now by wonderful children and grandchildren, not a day goes by that I do

not think of Richard and our love, our right to marry, and how much it meant to me to have that freedom to marry the person precious to me, even if others thought he was the —wrong kind of person for me to marry. I believe all Americans, no matter their race, no matter their sex, no matter their sexual orientation, should have that same freedom to marry (Nussbaum, 2010: 678).

Richard Loving passed away on June 29, 1975, from a road accident with Mildred. However, Mildred survived and passed away on May 2, 2008. In 2007, during the 40<sup>th</sup> year commemoration of the Supreme Court decision in the case *Loving v(ersus) Virginia*, Mildred delivered a speech.

When my late husband, Richard, and I got married in Washington, DC, in 1958, it was not to make a political statement or start a fight. We were in love, and we wanted to be married. Not a day goes by that I do not think of Richard and our love and how much it meant to me to have that freedom to marry the person precious to me, even if others thought he was the “wrong kind of person” for me to marry. I believe all Americans, no matter their race, no matter their sex, no matter their sexual orientation, should have that same freedom to marry. I am proud that Richard's and my name are on a court case that can help reinforce the love, commitment, fairness, and family that so many people, black or white, young or old, gay or straight, seek in life. I support the freedom to marry for all. That is what Loving and loving are all about (Guidero, 2017, p. 682)

Badiou's theory of love can be applied to Loving's case. It focused on four love axioms and the conception that love is a place for a truth procedure to occur and incite a transformation. Love axioms 1-3 discuss love

as a disjunction, while love axiom 4 discusses love as a truth procedure.

Love always begins with two presentative positions (Badiou, 2008, p. 183). In the case of Richard Loving and Mildred Jetter, their love started when Richard and Mildred, two individuals, had different experiences. Both experiences are disjunct because they are independent and unrelated. There is no third position. It implies that the event of falling in love between Richard and Mildred only can be experienced by them. Here, Richard and Mildred have incompleteness U, complementing each other to fulfill the lack. It leads to creating *Scene of Two* as a jointure between them. *Scene of Two* becomes the new way for them to experience the world. In *Scene of Two*, Richard and Mildred witness new things they never encountered before they fell in love: discrimination, arrestment, court verdict, imprisonment, and exile. Richard and Mildred have fidelity in following the event of falling in love. Finally, the event of falling in love change permanently their situations. Their victory in the Supreme Court brought a new situation that never existed before: the right to marry. It is a truth procedure that reveals the generic. This situation of Richard and Mildred will be available in every love relationship following love axiom 4: there is only one humanity. It means as a condition, love allows truth procedure to occur, bringing out the generic (Badiou 2008, p. 184). Love undoubtedly will incite transformation, minimal in the personal dimension. Love radically changes the way humans live their *being* in the world.

The transformation in *the Loving Case* happened not only in the personal dimension of Richard and Mildred's situations but also in a wider dimension. In this context, it



overlapped with the political dimension. It is plausible because, according to Alain Badiou, the intersection between different conditions is acceptable. It is normal if love, science, art, and politics are places for a truth procedure to intersect. This intersection is dissimilar to fusion. Badiou said this intersection is like various instruments with different notes and volumes played together in harmony. Harmony is not a result of a fusion but because of the ensemble.

It is like two musical instruments that are completely different in tone and volume, but which mysteriously converge when unified by great a great musician in the same work (Badiou & Nicolas Truong, 2009, p. 75-76)

In conclusion, love as a condition where truth procedure occurs always assumes a transformation of the situation. An event will bring out the generic as an element that previously was not counted in the situation. The emergence of the generic will change the situation's structure because the generic becomes a new element. In love, transformation minimally happens in the personal dimension when the masculine situation (MS) and feminine situation (FS) experience enlargement from MS into MS(Scene of Two) and FS into FS(Scene of Two) as a result of falling in love.

Transformation may transcend the personal dimension because the possibility of intersection among conditions can provide a transformation effect to various conditions such as politics, art, and science, as well as vice versa. Other factors can have an impact on love.

## **The Implication of Love as a Transformative Force**

What is the implication of the thesis that love has power as a transformative force? The implication is twofold: (1) love is active, and (2) love transcends the personal dimension. Two implications give a new dimension to the comprehension of love. General conception perceives love as unthinkable and inexplicable. Love is perceived as incapable of impacting anything but sentimental feelings. This implication will put love in a more dignified position.

### *First Implication: Love is Active*

Love as a transformative force impacts that love is an active force. Many believe that love does not have any power to change anything. Love is viewed as incapable of bringing emancipation to promote human dignity. Love is perceived as passive instead of active. At the same time, this statement is a fallacy (Mažeikis, 2015, p. 30). This statement, which puts love merely as emotion and alienation from politics, is challenged by Alexandra Kollontai as she described it in her paper (Mažeikis, 2015, p. 29-32).

In the Marxist tradition, the power of love has been recognized despite the later development of the Marxist tradition, forgetting love and putting the economy solely as a power. Gintautas Mažeikis, a professor of social-politics theory at the University Vytautas Magnus, Lithuania, said that romantic love is also a means to deal with alienation and instrumentalism, including alienation and instrumentalism at work (Mažeikis, 2015, p. 22). Romantic energy can overcome the limitations of human capabilities and bring them into a state of self-transcendence.

Moreover, Mažeikis contended that Romanticism in Europe during the Enlightenment proved that love could inspire and actively incite transformation. Romanticism in Europe revealed the power of love and its irresistibility. Love is an ideal process and a motive for development and destruction simultaneously (Mažeikis, 2015, p. 24). Romanticism contributed to democracy through *volonte generale* popularized by Rousseau. Romantic love can unite political collective, state, party, and class with individual hope and emotion.

Justyna Szachowicz-Sempruch, a Polish feminist and a professor of social science at the University of Warsaw, affirmed the thesis of the broader dimension of love. According to her, a loving subject as a social-politics subject must be seen as an active subject with knowledge and awareness of being together. A new understanding has emerged from the signification of love as socio-emotional power. It realized the unity of the world, and it has awareness about humanity that aimed to cooperate by crossing identity borders to solve ecological, socio-economical, political, and security problems (Szachowicz-Sempruch, 2015, p. 76).

The implication of love as an active force emerged because of the rationality within love. Love is never blind. Love has its rationality. It gets along with the mind. Even if love is perceived as irrational, thus making love blind and just affective instinctual, love still has an active power because emotion and affection are the foundation of human consciousness. Sebastian Gardner, a commentator of Sartre, argued that consciousness is an autonomic totality. Thus, whether love is rational or irrational, it still has the power to change within (Gardner, 2009, p. 19).

Falling in love as an event will result in transformation, at least on a personal level, where a new appreciation for life will emerge. Love gives people power, energy, and motivation to move, struggle, and fight, and often it transgresses their self-efficacy.

#### *Second Implication: Love Can Transcend Personal Dimension*

General conception believes that love is personal and private. Love is not related to public issues; It is the argument proposed by marriage equality activists who believe love is love. Yes, love *per se* is personal and private; thus, state or religious authority regulating a romantic relationship's legality is outrageous. It is an individual privacy trespassing. Love must be respected without interference.

In general, love is indeed personal and private. However, to corner love in personal and private dimensions is not always possible. Love as a condition has a probability of intersecting with other conditions. Thus, although love is personal and private initially, because it can incite transformation and is active, love frequently transcends its personal dimension.

Falling in love as an event unquestionably will bring change because love gives new meaning to the person in understanding the world. Love starts as something personal. Change happens between two people who engage in a love relationship. This is a minor transformation when love inspires transformation in the couple's personal life.

However, in Heidegger, human experiences were never closed experiences. Human experiences are always about their life and the world. In a book entitled "*Heidegger's Being and Time: A Reader's Guide*", William

Blattner stated that the main issue that Heidegger criticizes is the conception of subject-object separation in understanding human experiences. Human experiences are always experiences about the world. It is never about the isolated world but the world where humans are absorbed. No subjectivity is based on the inner versus outer concept or representation versus object (Blattner, 2006, p. 9). Therefore, even though love is a personal experience, in the beginning, this experience is always directed to the world. It is not surprising if the changing meaning in life has an impact not only on the self but also on the world. Due to self and world colliding, human existence is time-space, worldly.

Gergely Szilvay, a journalist and gender researcher from Hungary, believes that no matter how hard we try to neutralize romantic love, romantic love will never be neutral. As social beings, humans live in intertwined institutions of religion, law, and civil. Those things cannot be separated. It relates to many things, including love and sexuality. Thus, love and sexuality will always relate to other things, such as politics. Love is never neutral politically (Szilvay, 2015, p. 55). Aside from love, numerous issues must be considered.

Moreover, for conservatives, the issue of love is central and needs to be interrupted. For them, family is a crucial aspect of conserving social stability. Love is not always about personal aspects such as marriage and family but stretches further. Love has social-political aspects that need to be regulated and guarded. Love is a means to perform social engineering (Szilvay, 2015, p. 56-57).

The power of love as a transformative force offers huge and significant implications. Love cannot be neglected anymore and be

reduced to something trivial. Irving Singer believed it needs many efforts to elaborate on love. It is very few efforts that philosophers and scientists spent to make love a severe inquiry object. Singer said that until today, many believe that philosophical and scientific investigation of love will result in fruitlessness. Even though we insist on investigating love, frequently, our investigations are perceived with suspicious looks (Singer, 2009, p. 117-120).

## CONCLUSION

This study expands on the effect of Mildred and Richard Loving's love relationship beyond their personal dimension. In this case, love as a condition intersects with politics. Aside from Loving's case, there have been numerous transformations in a personal dimension caused by love that has spilled over into other dimensions. For example, the love relationship between Stephen Hawking and Jane Wilde can be used to illustrate the intersection of love and science. The love story of Hawking and Wilde impacted not only their personal life but also contributed to the great leap in the scientific world, particularly in cosmology and theoretical physics. As a couple, they worked together in completing their lacks (Incompleteness U in Badiou's terminology). If Hawking and Wilde did not fall in love, their life story would have been very different, and because they were different, it is possible that Hawking would have become a different persona, not as the genius physicist that we know today, and he may never be able to formulate his physics theory. The story of Hawking and Wilde's love and how it affects their world and science in general is told in the 2014 biopic *Theory of Everything*, which was produced by Universal Pictures and Focus Features.

Another example of the intersection of love and art, which are conditions, is the love story of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. Their falling in love was full of bitter and sweet moments. It enriched their lives and provided them with new perspectives unavailable before their encounter with love. Because Kahlo and Rivera were faithful to the event of falling in love, love could bring something new to their personal dimension. These new experiences influenced the emergence of a new art style in Kahlo's paintings: Magical realism or New Objectivity. This style presents Kahlo as an object for her paintings in various symbols as a form of expression from her inner experience, including her love experience with Rivera. If Kahlo had not fallen in love with Rivera, Kahlo's New Objectivity style would never have existed. Perhaps Kahlo will turn into a different persona, and her painting style will differ from what we know today. The love story of Kahlo and Rivera can be seen in the 2002 biopic film *Frida*, produced by Ventanarosa and Lionsgate Films.

It is time to place love in a more dignified position in many inquiries, particularly philosophy. Love as a philosophical discourse generates significant contributions to humanities. Love must not be reduced to instinctual emotion, sexual desire, procreation, irrational feelings, or inexplicable affection. More than that, love is a place for a truth procedure to take place, which can result in discontinuous rupture, break, and revolution because it creates a new situation due to the changing structure.

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**AMERICAN SUBCULTURE: AN IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION OF HIP HOP**

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**ABSTRACT**

Hip-hop has become a global phenomenon, transcending cultural boundaries and influencing artists and communities worldwide. It came from the Black community's idea of creativity concerning their lifestyle and how they dress—starting from their youth's energy of creativity to represent their community identity in a larger dominant culture of the US. It transforms the identity of the Black people community into a hip-hop subculture. Through literature analysis, the process of breaking all the challenges and contradictions from the mainstream culture is explained in this paper. Moreover, Burke's social identity theory and identity theory are utilized in this research. Identity transformation of hip hop to a subculture cannot be separated from its core elements, i.e., music with its poetic and rhyme wordings, unique fashion to emphasize their presence in society, dance as the platform of freedom activity, and language as the tool to convey their identity. These elements are the core of hip-hop in forming self-identities and collective identity, as well as providing a platform for self-expression, storytelling, and cultural exchange.

**Keywords:** *Black people; Hip hop; identity; identity transformation; subculture*

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**INTRODUCTION**

Generally, Hip-hop is known by the public as a music genre. Hip hop is a subculture born from the oppressed community of African Americans in the United States. Today, hip-hop has become a global phenomenon, transcending cultural boundaries and influencing artists and communities worldwide. Its impact can be

seen in various music genres, fashion trends, visual arts, and educational practices and pedagogies (Chang, 2007; Kruse, 2018; Kim & Pulido, 2015). Identity transformation is a central theme within hip-hop culture, as it provides a platform for individuals to explore, construct, and express their identities in various ways. Hip-hop's subculture elements, including music, fashion, dance, and language,

play significant roles in this process (Salmons, 2017; Nguyen & Ferguson, 2019).

One way in which hip-hop facilitates identity transformation is through its music. Rap lyrics often reflect individuals' experiences, struggles, and aspirations, particularly those from marginalized communities. Through storytelling and poetic expression, artists use music to assert their identities, challenge societal norms, and address social and political issues. By relating to and resonating with the lyrical content, individuals within the hip-hop community can find a sense of empowerment, validation, and belonging (Salmons, 2017; Kim & Pulido, 2015). Fashion within hip-hop also contributes to identity transformation. The distinctive style of dress, characterized by baggy clothing, streetwear, and unique accessories, allows individuals to express their affiliation with the subculture and their tastes visually. Fashion choices in hip-hop can be seen as a form of self-presentation and a way to challenge mainstream norms of appearance. Through fashion, individuals can shape and project their identities, embracing individuality and creativity (Chang, 2007).

Dance, particularly breakdancing, also influences identity transformation within hip-hop culture. Break dancers can assert their individual styles and personalities through intricate movements, physicality, and self-expression. The dance form allows individuals to showcase their creativity, athleticism, and unique interpretations of the music. Individuals can develop a distinct identity within the hip-hop community by engaging in breakdancing and finding a space to express themselves physically and emotionally (Chang, 2007). Language and slang within hip-hop subculture also contribute to identity

transformation. Using unique vocabulary, wordplay, and expressions creates a distinct linguistic identity within the community. Hip-hop language is a form of communication and cultural currency, allowing individuals to signal their affiliation, express their creativity, and assert their identities within the subculture (Chang, 2007).

Furthermore, hip-hop's emphasis on self-expression, authenticity, and individuality encourages individuals to explore and embrace different facets of their identities. The subculture celebrates diversity and enables individuals to define themselves on their terms. This openness allows for personal growth, self-discovery, and the forging of new identities within the hip-hop community (Magana, 2021; Jeffries, 2014). Identity transformation within hip-hop is not limited to individual experiences. Hip-hop's ability to foster community and collective identity is also significant. Shared experiences, values, and cultural references create a sense of belonging and solidarity among participants. Through engagement with the subculture, individuals can develop a shared identity that transcends individual transformations, allowing for the formation of tight-knit communities (Chang, 2007).

Hip-hop as a subculture has had a profound socio-cultural impact, influencing various aspects of society and shaping the cultural landscape in significant ways. Its effect can be observed in areas such as music, fashion, language, activism, education, and the empowerment of marginalized communities (Chang, 2007; Brown & Kopano, 2014). One of the most prominent areas of socio-cultural impact is in the realm of music. Hip-hop has become a dominant genre in popular music and has influenced and shaped other music



genres. Its rhythmic patterns, sampling techniques, and lyrical styles have transcended cultural boundaries and can be found in diverse musical genres worldwide. Hip-hop has become a global cultural force, with artists from different backgrounds incorporating hip-hop elements into their music (Chang, 2007).

Hip-hop's influence on fashion is another significant aspect of its socio-cultural impact. The distinct style associated with hip-hop, characterized by baggy clothing, streetwear, and unique accessories, has permeated mainstream fashion. Hip-hop fashion trends have become commercialized and widely adopted, reflecting the cultural impact and influence of the subculture (Chang, 2007; Walker, 2000). Language and slang within hip-hop have also left an indelible mark on popular culture. Hip-hop's unique vocabulary, wordplay, and expressions have seeped into everyday language, influencing mainstream colloquialisms and shaping linguistic trends. Hip-hop language and slang have become a form of cultural capital, signifying cultural knowledge and affiliation (Chang, 2007).

Hip-hop has also served as a powerful platform for social and political activism. Artists have used their music and public media to address social injustices, inequality, and systemic issues. Hip-hop has been a vehicle for raising awareness, sparking dialogue, and mobilizing communities for social change. It has provided a voice to marginalized communities and as a tool for empowerment and resistance (Salmons, 2017; Garcia, 2021). Hip-hop also played a significant role in the empowerment of marginalized communities. It has provided a platform for individuals from historically disadvantaged backgrounds to express themselves, assert their identities, and challenge societal norms. Hip-hop has given

voice to the experiences and perspectives of those who have been marginalized and silenced, empowering them to tell their own stories and shape their narratives (Chang, 2007; Magana, 2021).

Hip-hop's socio-cultural impact extends beyond music, fashion, language, and activism. It has influenced visual arts, film, literature, and entrepreneurial business. Hip-hop's influence can be seen in the representation of urban culture, the exploration of social issues, and the business ventures that have emerged from the subculture (Chang, 2007; Brown & Kopano, 2014). While hip-hop's identity transformation has brought about significant cultural and social changes, it has also faced various challenges and controversies. These challenges often stem from debates around authenticity, commercialization, representation, cultural appropriation, and the perpetuation of negative stereotypes (D'Souza, 2014; Brown & Kopano, 2014). One of the primary challenges within hip-hop's identity transformation is the tension between maintaining authenticity and commercial success. As hip-hop gained mainstream popularity, there has been a struggle to balance the core values and cultural roots of the subculture with the demands of the commercial music industry. Some argue that the commercialization of hip-hop has diluted its original artistic and socio-political messages, leading to the commodification of the culture (Brown & Kopano, 2014; Chang, 2007).

## **METHODOLOGY**

There are two objectives of this research. First, to explore how hip-hop transforms from an African-American identity into a part of the American subculture. Second, to examine how



hip-hop's elements, including music, fashion, dance, and language, contribute to identity transformation. By understanding these transformations, we can gain insights into the complex dynamics that shape and influence hip-hop as a subculture. To achieve these objectives, a comprehensive literature review will be conducted to provide a theoretical framework and construct for understanding the transformative nature of hip-hop culture. This will involve examining scholarly works, cultural studies, and sociological perspectives to explore the concepts of identity, subculture, and the socio-cultural impact of hip-hop. Using theoretical frameworks and a comprehensive literature review, this research aims to deepen understanding of the transformation of hip-hop into a subculture.

The identity theory is utilized to explore how hip hop shaped an individual's identity and how the group assimilated into the dominant culture of the white community of the United States. There are two identity theories circulated that have similarities and overlap with each other. One is social identity theory, which is based on categories or groups. The second is identity theory based on *roles* (Stets and Burke, 2000). In both theories, the self is reflexive. It is considered an object that can categorize, classify, or name itself according to certain ways about other social categories, which then form an identity. It is called self-categorization in social identity theory and identification in identity theory (Stets and Burke, 2000). Generally, one's identity reflects self-categorization or identification of membership in certain groups or roles. There are three areas within Burke's identity theory, i.e., the base of identity, the activation of identities and identity salience, and the cognitive and motivational process. Having a certain social identity means being

one in the group, being like others, and viewing things from the group's perspective. In contrast, having a role identity means doing something to satisfy the expectations of the role, organizing and negotiating interrelation with role partners, and utilizing the environment to control the resources for which the part has responsibility (Stets and Burke, 2000). This research tends to apply identity theory more than social identity theory regarding the role of hip hop origin, black people community in much larger communities or groups. Among the two objectives, the first objective is discussing intergroup relations. Meanwhile, the second objective is to discuss black community roles and their presentation in the larger community.

This research explores hip-hop culture's role in identity transformation. This research aims to unravel how individuals navigate and express their identities within hip-hop by examining its elements, challenges, and controversies. This research will examine how hip-hop provides a platform for identity transformation, enabling individuals to navigate and express their identities as they evolve into a subculture.

## DISCUSSION

Hip-hop's emergence as a subculture can be traced back to the late 1970s and early 1980s historical context. It originated in the Bronx, New York City, as a response to social and economic challenges faced by African American and Latin communities. The cultural landscape of the time, characterized by urban decay, poverty, and marginalization, provided the backdrop for the birth of hip-hop (Aldridge & Stewart, 2005; Chang, 2007). The subcultural elements of hip-hop serve as vehicles for identity transformation, allowing

individuals to express their unique experiences, aspirations, and struggles.

The historical context of hip-hop's emergence reflects the resilience and creativity of marginalized communities in the face of adversity. In particular, young black individuals' creativity spearheaded the shaping of hip-hop identity. Youth tend to question their identity and existence in the community with norms and rules that should be obeyed (Fathmawati & Adi, 2022). It was a means of reclaiming agency, amplifying voices, and addressing social issues that were often overlooked. Hip-hop provided a platform for self-expression, storytelling, and cultural pride, allowing individuals to shape their identities and build a sense of community and belonging. As hip-hop continued to evolve, it spread beyond the Bronx and gained popularity across the United States and eventually worldwide. It transcended racial and cultural boundaries, resonating with diverse audiences who connected with its authenticity and the experiences it represented. The historical context of hip-hop's emergence in the South Bronx during socio-economic challenges played a crucial role in shaping its subcultural elements and its transformative power.

Hip-hop originated from the experiences and struggles of the Black community, serving as a powerful cultural expression and outlet for marginalized voices. Its roots can be traced back to the socio-political conditions of African Americans in the 1970s, particularly in inner-city neighborhoods (Chang, 2007). Hip-hop emerged as a form of artistic resistance, addressing issues such as racism, inequality, and social injustices faced by Black people (Aldridge & Stewart, 2005). Over time, hip-hop has evolved into a broader American subculture, transcending racial and ethnic

boundaries. It has become a global phenomenon and has influenced various cultural aspects (Morgan & Bennett, 2011).

The growth and expansion of hip-hop have led to its integration into mainstream American culture, shaping popular music, entertainment, and youth culture (Jeffries, 2014). As hip-hop gained popularity and recognition, it began to resonate with a wider audience beyond its original cultural context. The appeal of hip-hop's raw energy, lyrical prowess, and distinctive style transcended racial, ethnic, and geographical boundaries, leading to its assimilation into mainstream American culture. The transformation of hip-hop into an American subculture can be attributed to several factors. The rise of the music industry and the advent of technologies like radio, television, and the internet facilitated the dissemination of hip-hop music to a mass audience. This exposure led to the commercialization of the genre and its subsequent integration into mainstream media and popular culture (Chang, 2007). As hip-hop expanded its reach, it began to influence various aspects of American society, including fashion, language, and social norms. Hip-hop fashion, characterized by baggy clothing, sneakers, and accessories, became a prominent trend embraced by Black communities and people of diverse backgrounds. Adopting hip-hop slang and expressions into everyday language further demonstrated the genre's cultural impact (Podoshen, Andrzejewski, & Hunt, 2014).

However, this transformation has not been without tensions, challenges, and controversies. As hip-hop gained popularity and commercial success, it faced cultural appropriation and commodification issues. Elements of hip-hop culture, such as fashion, music, and language,

have been adopted and adapted by individuals and industries outside of the original Black community (Brown & Kopano, 2014). This has raised debates about hip-hop culture's ownership, authenticity, and representation. Cultural appropriation in hip-hop has often involved extracting cultural elements without acknowledging or respecting their origins and significance. This can contribute to the erasure of the struggles and contributions of the Black community in shaping hip-hop (Garcia, 2021). Moreover, the commercialization of hip-hop has sometimes perpetuated stereotypes and commodified aspects of Black culture for profit, raising ethical and social concerns (Podoshen, Andrzejewski, & Hunt, 2014).

The tensions and controversies surrounding hip-hop's transformation into an American subculture highlight the need for critical discussions on cultural ownership, respect, and representation. Recognizing and honoring the roots of hip-hop in the experiences and struggles of the Black community is essential for understanding its cultural significance and preserving its authenticity (Durham, 2015). This includes giving credit to the pioneers and innovators of hip-hop while providing opportunities for diverse voices within the subculture to be heard and celebrated (Magaña, 2021). Hip-hop's transformation from the identity of Black people to an American subculture reflects its profound impact and influence on popular culture. While it has expanded beyond its original community, the tensions and challenges surrounding cultural appropriation and commodification underscore the importance of acknowledging and respecting the roots and contributions of the Black community in shaping hip-hop.

Hip-hop's evolution into a subculture has also facilitated cross-cultural exchanges and hybridity. It has fostered cultural borrowing, collaboration, and the formation of diverse communities based on shared interests and passions (Nguyen & Ferguson, 2019). This has contributed to creating a global cipher, where hip-hop serves as a vehicle for cultural identity construction and navigation. The socio-cultural implications of hip-hop's transformation extend beyond the individual level. Hip-hop has become a powerful tool for social commentary, activism, and community mobilization (Salmons, 2017). Its music and lyrics often address social injustices, inequality, and systemic issues, allowing communities to voice their concerns and advocate for change. Hip-hop has the potential to foster collective consciousness and empower marginalized groups.

Hip-hop's subcultural elements, including music, fashion, dance, and language, significantly impact individual and collective identities. These elements provide a platform for self-expression, cultural exploration, and identity formation (Kim & Pulido, 2015). Hip-hop offers a space for individuals to assert their unique identities, challenge societal norms, and navigate complex issues of race, ethnicity, and cultural belonging. The transformation of hip-hop's identity has played a crucial role in shaping notions of race, ethnicity, and cultural belonging. Hip-hop has become a multicultural and transnational phenomenon by combining diverse influences and styles (Morgan & Bennett, 2011). It has provided a platform for marginalized communities, including Black, Brown, and immigrant populations, to assert their cultural identities and challenge dominant narratives.

Hip-hop's subcultural elements intersect with various aspects of identity, including gender, sexuality, and other marginalized identities. It provides a platform for individuals to express their multifaceted identities and challenge societal stereotypes. Hip-hop can potentially disrupt traditional notions of masculinity, femininity, and sexuality, opening up spaces for diverse voices and experiences (Kruse, 2018). One of hip-hop's significant contributions is its role in challenging stereotypes and providing a platform for marginalized voices. Through its music, lyrics, and artistic expression, hip-hop confronts stereotypes and sheds light on the experiences of underrepresented communities (Bolduc & Kinnally, 2018). It allows individuals to address social issues, express their frustrations, and share their experiences, fostering validation and empowerment.

Hip-hop's identity transformation is not without complexities and challenges. While it has provided opportunities for cultural empowerment, there are instances of cultural appropriation and the commercialization of hip-hop that perpetuate stereotypes and dilute its authenticity (Podoshen, Andrzejewski, & Hunt, 2014). Hip-hop's association with specific themes and imagery can reinforce negative stereotypes and influence social perceptions. Understanding the broader socio-cultural implications of hip-hop's evolution requires critically examining power dynamics, representation, and social inequalities. It is crucial to recognize and elevate the voices and perspectives of diverse communities within the hip-hop subculture (Magaña, 2021). Hip-hop can continue to serve as a transformative force for positive change by promoting inclusivity, cultural respect, and social awareness.

Hip-hop's ability to challenge stereotypes extends beyond the music itself. It influences fashion trends, dance styles, and language, allowing individuals to challenge societal norms and express their unique identities (Walker, 2000). Moreover, hip-hop is a powerful tool for social justice and the empowerment of diverse communities. It allows individuals to reclaim their narratives, challenge systems of oppression, and advocate for change (Taylor, 2019). Through its lyrics and cultural influence, hip-hop provides a platform to address issues such as racism, inequality, and social injustices, fostering dialogue and mobilizing communities for social transformation (Salmons, 2017). However, it is important to acknowledge that hip-hop is not immune to internalized biases and perpetuation of stereotypes. Some aspects of hip-hop culture can reinforce gender and sexual stereotypes or marginalize certain identities (D'Souza, 2014).

### **Music**

The first element, music, is perhaps the most recognizable aspect of hip-hop. Fashion is another integral element of hip-hop culture. Fashion choices within hip-hop allow individuals to shape and protect their identities, challenging mainstream appearance norms and embracing a unique, distinct, and culturally significant aesthetic. Dance, particularly breakdancing, is a physical expression of identity within the hip-hop subculture. Language and slang form another crucial aspect of hip-hop culture. Hip-hop language becomes a form of communication that creates a shared cultural understanding and reinforces a sense of identity and affiliation within the subculture. Hip-hop's subcultural elements, including music, fashion, dance, and language, play a vital role in identity transformation

within the hip-hop subculture. These elements provide avenues for self-expression, cultural affiliation, and the exploration of personal and collective experiences. By embracing and engaging with these elements, individuals within the hip-hop community assert their unique identities and contribute to the ongoing evolution of the subculture.

Rap music, a prominent form of expression within the hip-hop culture, is a powerful catalyst for identity transformation. Through the lyrical content of rap songs, artists convey their lived experiences, struggles, and aspirations, providing a voice to marginalized communities (Bolduc & Kinnally, 2018). One of the critical aspects of rap music is its ability to reflect the realities of individuals' lives. Rap lyrics often delve into personal narratives, addressing social and political issues and shedding light on the challenges faced by marginalized communities (Kruse, 2018). By sharing their experiences, artists create a platform for listeners to relate to their stories and find solace in the shared struggles. Rap music becomes a medium through which individuals can explore and articulate their own experiences, allowing for identity formation and transformation.

Storytelling and poetic expression are integral to rap music, serving as tools for asserting identities within the hip-hop community. Through vivid storytelling, artists create narratives that reflect their unique perspectives and cultural backgrounds (Kim & Pulido, 2015). The poetic nature of rap allows artists to craft intricate wordplay, metaphors, and social commentary, providing a nuanced representation of their identities. Rap artists assert their individuality, challenge stereotypes, and reclaim their cultural narratives by harnessing the power of language and artistry.

The impact of resonating with hip-hop music extends beyond mere enjoyment; it fosters empowerment, validation, and a sense of belonging among listeners. Hip-hop music provides a space for individuals to find solace and understanding, especially in historically marginalized communities (Chang, 2007). The relatability of rap lyrics allows individuals to feel validated in their experiences, offering a counter-narrative to dominant cultural norms. This validation, in turn, contributes to developing a positive self-image and affirming one's identity within the larger hip-hop community (Nguyen & Ferguson, 2019).

Moreover, hip-hop music offers a sense of belonging to those who resonate with its themes and messages. By finding a community of like-minded individuals who share similar experiences, individuals can forge connections and build supportive networks (Durham, 2015). This sense of belonging further enhances the process of identity transformation, as individuals feel embraced and empowered within a larger cultural framework. Rap music plays a vital role in identity transformation within the hip-hop culture. Through the reflection of lived experiences, the use of storytelling and poetic expression, and the empowerment and validation derived from resonating with the music, individuals find a medium for self-expression, connection, and transformation. Rap music catalyzes asserting identities and amplifying the voices of marginalized communities within the broader context of hip-hop culture.

### **Fashion**

Fashion also plays a significant role in hip-hop culture as a means of expressing identity and challenging mainstream appearance norms. The distinct fashion trends

within the hip-hop community, such as baggy clothing and streetwear, serve as visual markers that contribute to the overall aesthetic and identity of the subculture (Podoshen, Andrzejewski, & Hunt, 2014). Hip-hop fashion trends often involve oversized and loose-fitting garments deviating from conventional fashion norms. The choice of baggy clothing is not only a style preference but also a deliberate statement of rebellion against societal expectations of how one should dress (Walker, 2000). This deviation from mainstream fashion norms is an act of resistance and self-expression, allowing individuals to assert their unique identities within the hip-hop subculture. Fashion choices within hip-hop culture go beyond mere trends; they serve as visual expressions of affiliation with the subculture. Through specific fashion styles and accessories, individuals can communicate their involvement and connection to the hip-hop community (Morgan & Bennett, 2011). For example, clothing adorned with hip-hop logos or symbols signals a sense of belonging and solidarity within the subculture.

Furthermore, fashion allows individuals to shape and protect their identities. The clothing, accessories, and overall style adopted by individuals within hip-hop culture reflect their tastes, values, and aspirations (Salmons, 2017). Fashion becomes a medium through which individuals can experiment, curate their image, and present themselves authentically. The choices made in this manner contribute to constructing a unique identity within the larger hip-hop community. Hip-hop fashion also challenges mainstream appearance norms by defying traditional notions of style and beauty. The subculture embraces diversity and celebrates individuality, often incorporating elements from various cultures and subcultures

(Brown & Kopano, 2014). Fashion plays a vital role in hip-hop culture, enabling individuals to express their identities while challenging mainstream appearance norms. The exploration of hip-hop fashion trends, the visual expression of affiliation with the subculture, and the ability to shape and project identities through fashion choices are all critical aspects of fashion's significance in hip-hop culture. By deviating from traditional fashion norms and embracing individuality, hip-hop fashion becomes a powerful tool for self-expression and a catalyst for redefining standards of style and beauty.

### **Dance**

Dance, explicitly breakdancing, is a significant form of physical expression within hip-hop culture, allowing individuals to assert their identities and showcase their unique styles and personalities. Breakdancing is a means of self-expression and communication within the hip-hop community (Jeffries, 2014). Through breakdancing, individuals can assert their individuality and express their styles (Taylor, 2019). Each breakdancer develops unique moves, combinations, and improvisations, reflecting their personalities and artistic sensibilities (Jeffries, 2014). By showcasing their styles, breakdancers contribute to the diversity and richness of the overall hip-hop dance culture. Beyond its role as a performance art, breakdancing provides a space for physical and emotional expression, fostering identity development. The energetic and expressive nature of breakdancing allows individuals to channel their emotions, release stress, and communicate non-verbally (Kruse, 2018). The movements and techniques in breakdancing enable individuals to convey their experiences, feelings, and narratives in a way that transcends language barriers.

Furthermore, breakdancing is a platform for building connections and forming communities within hip-hop culture. Dance battles and ciphers, where breakdancers showcase their skills and compete against one another, create a sense of camaraderie and mutual respect (Jeffries, 2014). These spaces allow breakdancers to connect with one another, exchange ideas, and learn from different styles, fostering a sense of community and shared identity. By developing individual moves and techniques, breakdancers contribute to the diversity and vibrancy of the hip-hop dance culture. Moreover, breakdancing is a powerful medium for physical and emotional expression, enabling individuals to channel their experiences and emotions. Breakdancers build connections and form communities through dance battles and ciphers, reinforcing a sense of shared identity within the larger hip-hop community.

### **Language**

Language and slang play a crucial role in hip-hop culture, serving as cultural currency and identity signifiers. Hip-hop has developed a unique vocabulary, wordplay, and expressions that reflect the experiences, values, and attitudes of the community (Morgan & Bennett, 2011). Hip-hop language is characterized by its distinct style and linguistic creativity. Rappers employ wordplay, metaphors, and clever lyrical techniques to convey their messages and narratives (Kim & Pulido, 2015). This linguistic artistry not only showcases the lyrical skill of the artists but also creates a shared cultural language within the hip-hop community.

Hip-hop language serves as a form of communication and cultural currency, allowing individuals to connect and identify with the subculture. The use of specific slang and terminology within hip-hop becomes a way to signal affiliation and shared experiences (Nguyen & Ferguson, 2019). By speaking the language of hip-hop, individuals can assert their identities and establish a sense of belonging within the community. Moreover, language and slang contribute to identity assertion and affiliation within the hip-hop subculture. Adopting and mastering hip-hop language allows individuals to demonstrate their authenticity and cultural fluency (Podoshen, Andrzejewski, & Hunt, 2014). By employing unique vocabulary and expressions, individuals can align themselves with the values and aesthetics of hip-hop, solidifying their sense of identity within the subculture.

Language and slang also serve as tools for resistance and social commentary within hip-hop. Rappers often use language to address social issues, express political opinions, and challenge mainstream norms (Salmons, 2017). Through their lyrics, artists can assert their identities, critique societal inequalities, and give voice to marginalized communities. Language and slang are integral components of hip-hop culture, contributing to its unique identity and serving as cultural currency. Hip-hop's distinct vocabulary, wordplay, and expressions allow for creative communication and connection within the community. Language and slang become powerful tools for identity assertion, affiliation, and resistance, shaping the cultural landscape of hip-hop.

## CONCLUSION

Understanding the significance of these subcultural elements expands knowledge of how individuals construct and transform their identities within the context of hip-hop culture. It sheds light on the dynamic and influential nature of hip-hop as a cultural movement that continues to evolve and shape the identities of its participants. The discussions on hip-hop's subcultural elements have revealed key findings and provided valuable insights into the process of identity transformation and the broader impact on individual and collective identities. By examining music, fashion, dance, language, hip-hop's transformation, socio-cultural implications, and intersectionality, gained a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of hip-hop culture and its influence on identity.

As a central element of hip-hop, music is a powerful medium for expressing lived experiences, struggles, and aspirations. Rap lyrics reflect the personal narratives of individuals and communities, allowing them to assert their identities and find empowerment, validation, and a sense of belonging through hip-hop music's resonating themes and messages. Fashion within hip-hop culture is a visual expression of identity and a means of challenging mainstream appearance norms. Through trends such as baggy clothing and streetwear, individuals shape and project their identities while defying societal expectations of dress, thus embracing their unique style and affiliation with the hip-hop subculture.

Dance, particularly breakdancing, is a form of physical expression and asserting identity within hip-hop culture. Break dancers showcase their individual styles and personalities through movement, creating a

unique identity within the subculture. Breakdancing provides a transformative space for individuals to express themselves physically and emotionally, fostering the development and exploration of identity. Language and slang in hip-hop culture serve as cultural currency and identity signifiers. Hip-hop communication's unique vocabulary, wordplay, and expressions contribute to identity assertion and affiliation within the subculture. Hip-hop language becomes a means of establishing connections, shaping identity, and fostering a sense of belonging.

Hip-hop's transformation from the identity of Black people to a broader American subculture highlights its roots in the experiences and struggles of the Black community. As hip-hop evolved, it became a cultural force that transcended racial boundaries, embracing diverse voices and experiences. However, tensions, challenges, and controversies surrounding cultural appropriation also arise in this transformation, necessitating ongoing dialogue and critical examination. The socio-cultural implications of hip-hop's identity transformation are far-reaching. Hip-hop's subcultural elements profoundly impact individual and collective identities, influencing notions of race, ethnicity, and cultural belonging. Hip-hop culture fosters a sense of pride, empowerment, and community among its participants, challenging social norms and providing a platform for marginalized voices to be heard. Intersectionality plays a crucial role in hip-hop, as its subcultural elements intersect with other identities such as gender and sexuality. Hip-hop challenges stereotypes and offers a platform for marginalized voices, amplifying their experiences and struggles. It has the potential to be a powerful tool for social justice and the empowerment of diverse



communities, dismantling systemic inequalities and fostering inclusivity.

Hip-hop's transformative power extends far beyond its artistic and entertainment value. It serves as a platform for marginalized voices, challenges stereotypes, and fosters empowerment and social justice. Through its music, fashion, dance, language, and overall subcultural elements, hip-hop has emerged as a force that empowers individuals and communities, redefines cultural norms, and reshapes societal perceptions. One of the most notable aspects of hip-hop is its ability to provide a platform for marginalized voices. Historically, marginalized communities, particularly the Black community, have utilized hip-hop as a means to express their experiences, struggles, and aspirations. It amplifies their voices, allowing them to articulate their narratives and shed light on social injustices that have often been overlooked or dismissed. In doing so, hip-hop becomes a powerful tool for social commentary and a catalyst for change.

Hip-hop also challenges stereotypes that have plagued marginalized communities. Defying conventional norms and expectations breaks free from limiting narratives and reshapes perceptions. It provides a counter-narrative to prevailing stereotypes, showcasing marginalized communities' diversity, resilience, and creativity. Hip-hop offers a platform for self-expression, where individuals can assert their authentic identities and challenge the prevailing stereotypes imposed upon them by society. Moreover, hip-hop fosters empowerment and social justice. It inspires individuals to embrace their unique identities, find their voices, and assert their presence in a society that often marginalizes them. Hip-hop offers a sense of belonging and

community, creating dialogue, support, and unity spaces. It can galvanize social movements and advocate for systemic change, addressing inequality, racism, and social disparities.

The transformative power of hip-hop lies in its ability to shape narratives, challenge norms, and empower individuals and communities. It provides a creative outlet for self-expression, fosters cultural pride, and catalyzes social change. Through its music, fashion, dance, language, and cultural evolution, hip-hop inspires and uplifts, making an indelible mark on the lives of its participants and society at large. Hip-hop's transformative power cannot be underestimated. It provides a platform for marginalized voices, challenges stereotypes, and fosters empowerment and social justice. As a cultural phenomenon, hip-hop serves as a driving force that reshapes narratives, amplifies marginalized experiences, and empowers individuals and communities to create a more inclusive and equitable society. Its transformative impact reaches beyond entertainment and influences the cultural, social, and political landscape, making hip-hop a powerful catalyst for change.

The subcultural elements of hip-hop, including music, fashion, dance, and language, play a pivotal role in shaping individual and collective identities. Through its transformative power, hip-hop provides a platform for self-expression, storytelling, and cultural exchange. The unique vocabulary, distinct fashion trends, and rhythmic dance movements serve as powerful identity signifiers, allowing individuals to challenge mainstream norms while affirming their affiliation with the hip-hop subculture. Moreover, hip-hop's evolution from an

identity rooted in the experiences and struggles of the Black community to a broader American subculture highlights its ability to transcend boundaries and resonate with diverse audiences. However, this transformation has not been without tensions, challenges, and controversies, particularly concerning cultural appropriation. Navigating these complexities and engaging in meaningful dialogues is crucial to ensure the respectful recognition of hip-hop's origins and the continued empowerment of marginalized communities.

The socio-cultural implications of hip-hop's identity transformation are far-reaching. It impacts notions of race, ethnicity, and cultural belonging, challenging stereotypes and providing a platform for marginalized voices. Hip-hop's influence extends beyond the realm of entertainment, inspiring social change, fostering community resilience, and amplifying calls for justice. It has the potential to dismantle systemic barriers, promote inclusivity, and empower diverse communities. Hip-hop's subcultural elements, it becomes evident that this dynamic and influential force continues to shape the cultural landscape. Its relevance resonates across generations, transcending geographical boundaries and connecting individuals with shared experiences and aspirations. Hip-hop remains a vibrant and ever-evolving art form, constantly adapting to reflect its creators' and audiences' realities and aspirations.

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**COUNTERING HIP-HOP AS A BLACK SPACE: HOW “THE OTHERS” STRUGGLED TO FIND SPACE IN RAP BATTLE CULTURE AS ANALYZED IN *8 MILE* (2002) AND *BAD RAP* (2016)**

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**ABSTRACT**

This article analyzes the normativity of the black race in rap music and how it affected Asian American and White American MCs in Rap Battle (specifically Jin the MC, Dumbfoundead, and Eminem), the importance of rap battle in connection between race and rap, and how rap battle’s connection with race and rap contributed to Jin the MC, Dumbfoundead, and Eminem’s success factors as they tackled racist attacks from their rap battle opponents. The corpus of the study is a documentary about Asian American’s struggle in the hip-hop industry called *Bad Rap* (2016), as well as Eminem’s revised-autobiography film *8 Mile* (2002). The study uses De La Garza and Ono’s CRT (2016) tenets and Edgar and Sedwick’s New Criticism (1999) to discover the importance of Rap Battle in the connection between race and rap as well as the ways that black-originated music affected the nonblack MCs mentioned; specifically, in their performance characteristics, strategies to battle racist attacks from the opponents, as well as their recognition and career development in the industry. Following that, the researcher discussed a gap within racial and sociocultural aspects of black normativity in rap and how it contributed to the ‘success factors’ of these mentioned artists, while racist attacks played a strong role from Black American opponents.

**Keywords:** *Asian America; Black Culture; Hip-Hop; Racial Discrimination; Rap Battle*

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**INTRODUCTION**

“You wanna say I’m Chinese, Sonny, here’s a reminder, check your Timbs, they probably say made in China,” “Ask your girl, I was doing something in her house, matter

fact she had my eggroll and my dumplings in her mouth”. The crowd cheered in awe in 2002 on BET’s popular show 106 & Pain for its segment Freestyle Friday, where rookie rappers took turns performing in a battle rap. The guy draped in an oversized jacket and

backward cap was Jin The MC (abbreviation for master of ceremony), and he soon became the first Asian-American solo rapper to be signed to a major record label in the US. It was the beginning for Asian American rappers to rise as Jin entered the scene.

Rap battle is not a mere aggressive competition between two rappers who are seeking money prize by shouting offensive rhymes at each other; instead, it is an authentic performance based on the values of the black community, a communication done powerfully to let people speak up about ideas and problems (Aleksanyan, 2018). The contents of a rap battle can usually be related to ideology, status, identity, or race in a signature call-and-response style by pointing to the opponent’s weak points. The “bars” are used in rap music and music theory to reference a line in a rapper’s lyrics.

Every line in a rap song is usually considered a bar. According to Daily Rap Facts, bars emphasize a verse or a line in a rapper’s lyrics that may determine if it is good or clever. They function as one of the aspects used to determine whether a rapper wins or loses. The bars, including bragging and insulting, can be complex. Historically, rap battle was formed in the 1970s in the Bronx, one of New York’s suburbs, and was associated with hip-hop performances like graffiti, DJ, breakdance, and rap. Eventually, the competition began moving to HBO, BET, and MTV TV shows by the early 2000s. Participants in this competition originally used hip-hop music as a black space that often foregrounds the working-class street community, delivered with gestures that exude hypermasculinity (Alim et al., 2011). From my observation, rap battles may give an outlet for performers to express their skills

to gain recognition. Still, there is a missing link regarding how black normativity (Alim et. al, 2015) in the rap battle culture challenges non-black participants. Learning from Jenkins (2021), black normativity is a view of blackness as the default culture in hip-hop society or regarded as the unspoken norm. Therefore, hip-hop’s black normativity carries the notion that connects the social identity of this subculture with Black American artists as its main proponent.

Next, the black normativity in rap music automatically put the non-black MCs from the early days of hip-hop in a challenging position in which they were in the spotlight for challenging the origin of hip-hop from black artists. It is in contrast to the fact that non-black MCs tend to refer to blackness only indirectly or mostly not at all since it is important to gain audience approval to win. White and Asian Americans are considered “the others” in the rap music (Alim et al., 2010) due to the existing notion of black normativity in the hip-hop music category. However, there were some cases when White and Asian American rappers made strategies for their rap battle performances by embracing the racist attacks coming from their opponents. For instance, in *Bad Rap* (2016), the Asian American rapper Jin, the MC used humor to disarm his rivals with bars that recast his ethnicity as a weapon (Coates, 2004).

Additionally, early White-American hip-hop MCs like the Beastie Boys and Eminem beat the racial boundary while participating in the genre (Ford, 2004), but Eminem stands out as a white MC who defied the stereotype of black artists and their authentic presence in the hip-hop industry based on the comments made by other rappers like Big

Sean and Jay-Z (Trending Tracks, 2021). However, non-black MCs were subjected to racial discrimination in many hip-hop performances like rap battles.

The origin of rap music is firmly attached to the act of resistance. At the beginning of its era and arguably until the present time, rap was formed as a medium to speak up for voicelessness and performed as a language that addresses silence, the silenced, and the state of being silenced (Ibrahim, 1999). This research explores how black normativity in hip-hop affects White and Asian American MCs in rap battles and how these rappers seek strategies to counter discrimination against their race, especially. Asian Americans in this research are specifically Chinese-American and Korean-American, to which the two selected subjects from *Bad Rap* (2016) belong. Using the application of CRT, which is an intellectual movement that seeks to understand how white supremacy as a legal, cultural, and political condition is reproduced and maintained, mainly in the US context (De La Garza and Ono, 2016), Eminem will be analyzed as subject depicted in the film *8 Mile* (2002), Jin the MC (Jin Au-Yeung) as well as Dumbfoundead (Jonathan Edgar Park) as depicted in the recent black-produced documentary movie called *Bad Rap* (2016), a presentation about Asian American rappers and their struggle to fit within the rap industry.

In this research, CRT (De La Garza and Ono, 2016) discusses how racial elements construct hip-hop alongside its space as a part of American culture. Tenets from the theory, for example, the resistance of the oppressed, a radical approach to challenge normativity, structural racism, and

commitment to social justice that affect social phenomena, are observed for the analysis.

Additionally, the importance of rap battle as an arena where race and rap collide was also observed, along with how it played a significant role in MC's success and displays how they face racial attacks from their Black American opponents. Several highlighted texts, such as dialogues, lyrics, and other excerpts from *8 Mile* (2002) and *Bad Rap* (2016), are seen through the lens of New Criticism (Edgar and Sedwick, 1999). Swann (2022) defines this as a way of analyzing literature based only on that work's text since the theory promotes close reading by dismantling the elements within a text, such as symbolism or metaphors, to find the meaning of the work. The study matters in the Generation Z era or anyone born from 1997 onward (Dimock, 2022) who actively seeks mediums as a form of self-expression. The popularity of hip-hop draws attention, either by listening or performing, as an art with enough ability to cultivate a sense of power in the enjoyer's souls. In that context, as the youth and hip-hop's popularity coexist, this study seeks to acknowledge the importance of respecting the actors who originated and participated in it. More importantly, this study aims to elaborate on the historical aspect of how several Asian and White American MCs contributed to racial dynamics in the US culture, which countered the origin of hip-hop as a mainstream genre.

The research novelty lies within rap battle's racial and sociocultural aspects and how they contribute to the 'success factors' of Eminem, Jin the MC, and Dumbfoundead. At the same time, racist attacks against Asian

and White Americans exist as a common strategy Black MCs use in underground rap battles. This article fills the gap by presenting two films that depict the counterattack from these non-black participants as they participate in rap battles as an act to begin their careers in the industry. Using New Criticism (Edgar and Sedwick, 1999), this paper examines rap lyrics and performance characteristics of the subjects and elaborates on several issues with De La Garza and Ono’s CRT (2016) to put together the racial elements that construct rap as a part of Black Americans culture, where aspects such as resistance of the oppressed, rap as a radical approach to challenge the normativity, structural racism, and social and political condition are observed through the analysis. Gathering several journal articles that highlight race issues in rap as a hip-hop performance, there emerged a gap regarding the multiracial encounter upon the entrance of Asian and White American MCs to the music that was derived and is a medium that emancipates Black Americans.

## METHODOLOGY

This paper aims to describe the performance characteristics of the subjects using textual analysis within the realm of qualitative research. The analysis mainly focuses on racial aspects within hip-hop and rap battles as one of its performances. In this case, De La Garza and Ono’s CRT (2016) enlightens how racism works in the US, uses the tenets to fit the research, and digs deeper into race and its correlation with political and social phenomena. Furthermore, texts such as lyrics and dialogues from *8 Mile* (2002) and the *Bad Rap* (2016) documentary are analyzed using the New Criticism Approach (Edgar and Sedwick, 1999). Through its self-

referential emphasis on rhetorical complexities like ambiguity and irony, New Criticism combined an investigation of linguistic structures with a more open-minded interest in the psychology and sociology of language production. It treated literature (in this case, scripts of film dialogues and rap lyrics) as an object that would reveal the complexities of life (Edgar and Sedwick, 1999).

## DISCUSSION

### **Observing Rap as a Black Space in *8 Mile* (2002) and *Bad Rap* (2016)**

Originating in the Bronx, New York, back in the 1970s, hip-hop was a blend of several influences and cultural powers. As rap was introduced as one of hip-hop’s subcultures, there started a renewal of an urban lifestyle in American cities (Trott, 2021). This fresh youth culture then flourished while focusing on the consciousness of economically disadvantaged urban black youth of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Phillips et al., 2005) as they expressed it through rap, and we can consider that a genre that came from the African-American culture is regarded as a black space; an area that originated and hence is forever linked to black artists. The existence of black space impacts the non-black participants in the hip-hop community.

First, the rough early life of the rapper Marshall Bruce Mathers III, known as Eminem, is depicted in his revised autobiography called *8 Mile* (the term “revised” refers to how the film is unreservedly inspired but not entirely based on the rapper’s life, with lyrics and few characters being fictional), whose title was adopted from Detroit’s *8 Mile* Road, a place



where the rapper grew up. B-Rabbit's habit of jotting down lyrics on paper on his way to work in a shuttle bus as he listens to a demo of a rap instrumental symbolizes his intelligence as a lyricist. His industriousness is highlighted despite him being booed off stage in his previous battle rap competition with Lil' Tic (DeShaun Dupree Holton, also known as Proof, who in real life was Eminem's hype man—a backup rapper who supports the rapper with exclamations and interjections and who attempts to increase the audience's excitement with call-and-response chants), whose lyrics against him began with:

Imma murder this man / he the type to  
lose a fight with a dyke / they don't  
laugh 'cause you wack / they laugh  
'cause you white with a mic (*8 Mile*,  
2002, 06:44).

This bar initially confirms B-Rabbit's otherness within the underground rap society. Among many freestyles aimed at him in the movie, this excerpt proves just how much the thing people first notice would be his skin color. Making use of New Criticism (Edgar & Sedgwick, 1999) that believes that the need for a mind to explain and resolve control over language takes meanings in literature, it appears that this excerpt acts as a symbol that introduces the audience to the fundamental issue that underlies the problem of the film, which is a white person trying to challenge himself in an all-black underground rap battle society.

The observation continues as B-Rabbit continuously faces mockery for his failed rap attempt, especially for being white, as shown in the basement scene of *8 Mile*, as one of "The Free World" gang members calls out, "Hold on, yo Elvis, you don't wanna step to this, you need to take your white ass rap shit

of yours back across *8 Mile*. Caught your choke act at The Shelter last night. [Performs fellatio gesture] (*8 Mile*, 2002, 31:14)" Although B-Rabbit ends up being the winner of the battle rap in The Shelter by the end of *8 Mile*, competing against Lickety Split (Gerald L. Sanders), Lotto (Nashawn Breedlove), and finally Papa Doc (Anthony Mackie), I observe how his success is strongly influenced by his encouraging Black American sidekick Future (Mekhi Phifer) through his character development, not to mention the off-stage rap battles that gained him acclamation from the black audiences as shown in the food truck as well as the basement scene.



Figure 1. B-Rabbit's rap battle in his workplace. (*8 Mile*, 2002, 53:23)



Figure 2. B-Rabbit's rap battle in the basement. (*8 Mile*, 2002, 29:18-29:57)

In the first scene, B-Rabbit is defending his gay coworker from a street rapper's homophobic lines with,

"Hey why you fuckin' with the gay guy, G? When really you're the one who's got the H.I.V? Man I'm done with this clown, he's soft. Fuck it, I'll let my homegirl finish you off" and the people working at the pressing plant applauds



his successful attempt to rap battle the man that started the rabble (starring rapper Xzibit) (*Bad Rap*, 2016, 54:18)

In the second scene, the predominantly black underground rappers witness and cheer for B-Rabbit’s clever freestyle rhymes: “My style is generic / Yours authentic made / I roll like a renegade / You need clinic gate / My technique’s bizarre and ill / I scar and kill / You were a star until I serve you like bar ‘n grill” (*8 Mile*, 2002, 29:18) From these scenes, how black people encourage and uplift B-Rabbit’s confidence in rapping in the film is noticeable and preeminent.

The observation continues with the use of textual analysis as in *Bad Rap* (2016) there is this lyric: “You can’t be an Asian rapper talking ‘bout busting guns, even if that’s your life. You can’t rap about that, ‘cause everyone’s gonna think it’s fake,” said Traphik (Tim Chantarangsu) (*Bad Rap*, 2016, 11:35). Here, the word ‘fake’ indicates racial stereotypes from the black community in which Asians are viewed to grow up studying for good grades, or their lives are ‘supposedly’ far from that of gang-related issues, such as the ones involving guns, drugs, the streets, etc. Next, sociology professor Oliver Wang also mentioned how “African American men, have that association in terms of being considered the most racially authentic performers. Anyone who does not fit into that particular box, becomes more, in a sense, suspicious for an audience member.” (*Bad Rap*, 2016, 11:27) This affirms the idea of the initial approach regarding how hip-hop was rooted in black society. The person implies that hip-hop, with its hybridity, the consistent contributions of nonblack artists, and the borrowings of cultural forms from other

communities, is black American music (Wang, 2017).



Figure 3. Traphik discusses how Asians cannot adopt black ‘gangsta’ accessories despite living a low- life (*Bad Rap*, 2016, 11:35-11:43)

Next, hip-hop as a black space became a starting point that triggered these Asian American rappers to create strategies while performing in a rap battle arena. In this case, I highlighted a topic from the CRT (De La Garza & Ono, 2016) that mentioned how the resistance of “the other” in the rap context shows “a manifestation of our humanity which survives and grows stronger through resistance to oppression, even if that oppression is never overcome,” as De La Garza and Ono (2016) cited from Bell (1991, p. 378). Acknowledging black Americans as the race that originated the genre, it is inevitable for “the others”, let alone rappers of Asian descent, to be conscious of their otherness status.

Then, regardless of how much the person has encountered the characteristics of living a ‘thug life’ or what is typically understood to be a determined and resilient attitude to succeed in life despite racism and injustice, racial struggles while using rap as a medium to express themselves would be unavoidable. While Black and Asian Americans are often considered minorities in American society, hip-hop has a bubble of deviation. When Asian Americans challenge a particular

culture that initially belonged to the Black community, they are susceptible to various prejudices. Black Americans unavoidably treat them unjustly as other underrepresented groups in the US.

### **Strategies Against Asian Stereotypes in *Bad Rap* (2016)**

In the documentary *Bad Rap* (2016), Asian American hip-hop artists and people who work in the music industry claim that rap music is immensely tied to the black community. However, this part of the analysis will show whether Asian American rappers or the participants interviewed in this documentary have taken ownership of the hip-hop genre and battled racial discrimination. They use specific strategies to respond to racial attacks in rap battles, such as those shown by Chinese-American rapper Jin the MC and Korean-American rapper Dumbfoundead. Jin, the MC, began his career as a battle rapper on BET's Freestyle Friday in 2002. His method of responding to his opponents is by proudly announcing that he is indeed of Chinese descent. He embraced his ethnic identity and put a humorous touch to the bars he rapped on the show.

Yeah I'm Chinese / now you understand it / I'm the reason your little sister's eyes are slanted / If you make one joke about rice or karate / N.Y.P.D be in Chinatown searching for your body (Random7Seven, 2019).

While Jin The MC's clever strategy might win him the show for a record-setting seven straight weeks and a contract with Ruff Ryders, there lies an issue with this winning method. Delahoyde (2018) mentioned how, in applying New Criticism, the aspects inside

the text affect the meaning of the piece. This excerpt above communicates that Chinese stereotypes such as having slanted eyes, eating rice, and doing karate are considered long-time verbal discrimination from non-Asian communities. In the second line, a stereotype of Asians is that they have slanted eyes. Jin mentioned how he made Hassan's little sister have slanted eyes, implying how he impregnated Hassan's mother.

In the fourth line, Jin uses a violent bar that indicates what Asian people can do to blacks, despite how Asian men are often stereotyped as weak. Furthermore, Jin's bars that are mentioned in the background section of this article (p.1) also strengthen his rap characteristics to bring up sexual innuendos, "Ask your girl, I was doing something in her house, matter fact she had my eggroll and my dumplings in her mouth." (*Bad Rap*, 2016, 22:13) This particular lyric refers to Jin's opponent's girlfriend giving Jin oral sex by symbolizing an Asian man's manhood with 'dumplings' and 'eggrolls.' By doing so, Jin The MC affirms the racial stereotypes instead of breaking them. For instance, his first hit, "Learn Chinese" (2004), raised controversy as the song begins contentiously with the lyrics, "Yeah, you know who this is, Jin. Let me tell you this. The days of the pork fried rice and the chicken wings coming to your house by me is over" (Jin The MC, 2004). Jin The MC's choice of strategy is frowned upon by some of his Asian fellows.

However, by saying that the days are over, Jin might insinuate his agreement towards the stereotype of Chinese men working as delivery guys in the US Jin The MC himself mentioned,

The interesting thing about that song is, there's no middle ground. Out of all

people that I’ve ever encountered, they either loved it, like literally to this day right now, I’m still like, Are you lying? Are you just putting me on? When people see me they’re like, ‘Yo that Learn Chinese, that was my song,’ or they be like, ‘Yo I thought about you and I thought about that Learn Chinese song.’ Or the complete opposite end, which is, ‘Jin, that was the worst song you could have ever recorded, or wrote, or released. Like what were you thinking?’ to the point where people think that that song was the downfall of my career. (*Bad Rap*, 2016, 23:30)

The listeners’ response also shows that this song may have made Jin The MC lose popularity after he parted ways with Ruff Ryders and began recording independently in 2006. The song also raises eyebrows among some Asian-American rappers. “Learn Chinese, yeah, that one was kinda weird,” confirmed fellow Asian rapper Rekstizzy (*Bad Rap*, 2016, 23:11). It further exhibits how his lyrical strategy does not lead to a successful benchmark for him as an Asian-American rapper, yet resulting in a problem with him complying with Asian stereotypes. In addition, *Bad Rap* (2016) also shows one of Asian-American greatest rap battlers under the stage name Dumbfoundead. As an artist who began his career in the 2000s as a battle rapper in some random bars located in Los Angeles, Dumbfoundead has reached the point where he earned respect through rap battles, specifically from second-best-selling Black-American rapper like Drake.



Figure 4. Drake mentions that he is a big fan of Dumbfoundead, has been watching him for years, and he looks forward to seeing him battle. (*Bad Rap*, 2016, 55:50)

His lyrical strategy is mainly packed with wit, outstanding rap skills and comedic bars. “The power he holds in the rap battle world gives him the longevity that other rap battlers may not be able to have,” stated fellow Asian American rapper Awkwafina, one of *Bad Rap* (2016) subjects whose work in the hip-hop industry represents Asian women’s rebellion. A scene in *Bad Rap* (2016) shows Dumbfoundead’s rap battle against The Saurus and PH, the non-Asian MC’s opponents, as they throw racist jokes at his opponent.



Figure 5. PH Rap Battle Against Dumbfoundead (*Bad Rap*, 2016, 32:05)

The Saurus:

“I wanna punch the face of this guy (Dumbfoundead) / But based on the shape of his eyes, we know the policy / You break it you buy /”

PH:

And if you ain’t know / Dumbfoundead’s real name is Jonathan

Park / But we all know Asians can't  
drive / So Jonathan parks  
Dumbfoundead:

That first round was a weird display /  
You've been rapping 30 years to date /  
I'm surprised you didn't start your round  
with 'My name is big P, and I'm here to  
say / (Dumbfoundead refers to P as in  
'penis'; which refers to how his  
opponent may use rap as a strategy to get  
a date).

What the hell, dude? / Stop rapping and  
go sell shoes / After he lost that battle he  
went to / His dad got down to his knees  
and said, 'I have failed you' /  
(Dumbfoundead (2009). Dumbfoundead  
vs. Tantrum [Song]. Fun With Dumb.)

Like any other non-Asian battlers in the documentary, The Saurus and PH have grown up with prejudice against the people and culture of Asia in a way that he has familiarized himself with the discriminating stereotypes. Within the short freestyle excerpt above, PH included discrimination toward Asians in his bars. The first bar says: 'Based on the shape of his eyes, we know the policy / You break it you buy' a term adopted from signs commonly found in china shops. The racist humor is shown as he implies that punching Dumbfoundead may cause him trouble since his physical appearance reminds him of the policy inside Chinese shops (where customers tend to break porcelains).

In addition, PH Twists Dumbfoundead's name into a wordplay in which Park or Bak, the third-most-common surname in Korea, is turned into the verb 'parks', disgracing his descent with bad Asian drivers stereotype. However, it is notable that Dumbfoundead's rap skills act as a medium that successfully made him stand out amid the historical notion that hip-hop is a black space, thus

creating a racial boundary in the non-Black rapper's career, further positioning him as "the outsider." His rap battle opponents, including PH, whose bars are shown in the lyrics above, mention a direct, verbal bully towards Dumbfoundead's race and bring a pun twist to his Korean surname. Dumbfoundead, on the other hand, performs his strategy by tackling these racial attacks, but instead flipping insults back at his opponent, adding his blatant humor and excellent rhymes.



Figure 6. Sociology Professor Oliver Wang and his take on Asian Market in Hip-hop (*Bad Rap*, 2016, 12:42)

Furthermore, there is a question in *Bad Rap* (2016) coming from sociology professor Oliver Wang: "If you are a young person, regardless of your ethnic or racial background, you are inspired to want to perform hip-hop as a dancer, or graffiti artist, or as an MC, or as a DJ. Is the logic here, if you're not black you should just give up on that interest?" The dialogue may speak for itself, but most importantly, this shows how hip-hop is acknowledged as a medium for art expression that may attract people regardless of race. Thus, any boundary that hinders "the others" from entering the space is worth investigating. Dumbfoundead also mentions how, back in the day, the media would not show the 'cool' depiction of Asians. Instead, the media displays films, such as *Hangover* (2009-2011), which shows an Asian character played by Ken Jeong who speaks in

exaggerated Asian slurs and is greedy for money. This proves that in a social context, there is a gap between Asian rappers and the hip-hop industry.

The normativity of whiteness, giving voice to people of color, how liberalism is obtained, and interdisciplinary research are the five tenets of De La Garza and Ono’s CRT (2016). Making the third tenet, critique of liberalism, as a fundamental point of this section in the analysis, CRT believes that liberalism is associated with the use of numerous small incremental modifications rather than a few (extensively planned) significant jumps. Incrementalism believes that the theory of policy results from interaction and mutual adaptation between actors who advocate for different ideals, represent various interests, and possess different information (Hayes, 2013).

Given that racism has always been a structural issue for people of color, it is comprehensible from this tenet that incrementalism is crucial to ending oppression. The term “structural” refers to how racism’s history goes beyond the time and physical representation of slavery (Price, 2019). In this case, Jin The MC and Dumbfoundead are two of the several Asian American hip-hop forerunners who contributed an attempt to contest the black normativity that belongs to hip-hop to be seen and welcomed on the platform. Using their rap battle strategy to represent Asian Americans’ reach to liberalism in artistic platforms, these MCs completed the incrementalism practice to enter hip-hop. What may be inferred from this is that these Asian American rappers strategize their successes while representing their race. It favors how CRT scholars favor interaction

and adaptation to reach freedom rather than waiting for human society to improve over time, allowing racism to decline. *Bad Rap* (2016) counters that non-black artists cannot express themselves within this preference for culture-infused genres.

### **The Anomaly in Underground Rap: “White Trash” in *8 Mile* (2002)**

Rodman (2006) mentioned Eminem’s status as a White American artist challenges mainstream societal constructs of race in hip-hop. The reason is that he has found critical and financial success within a predominantly black cultural idiom. Therefore, it can also be said that he works to deconstruct and reconstruct popular understandings of both Whiteness and Blackness in the US. *8 Mile* (2002) shows how the character B-Rabbit, played by Eminem himself, faces three black main opponents for the night of the rap battle. Each session is filled with racial attacks against his race, mainly using the infamous term “white trash,” referring to the insignificance of his race in the underground rap shelter.

Throughout the film, B-Rabbit debunks the concept of black space in rap with his authentic lyrical skills, making him the battle-winner. Eminem had a turbulent childhood, with his mother being a drug addict and his little brother being taken away by the state at eight. He dropped out of school in the ninth grade and worked poorly paid jobs to help his mother pay the bills until finally making it as a rapper upon releasing his second album, *The Slim Shady LP*, in early 1999. It is shown in autobiographical songs *Headlights* (2013), which was meant to be a letter to his mother

and *Mockingbird* (2004), which was written for his daughter:

Back to grandma's house, it's straight up  
the road / And I was the man of the  
house, the oldest / So my shoulders  
carried the weight of the load / Then  
Nate got taken away by the state eight  
years old / And that's when I realized  
you were sick / And it wasn't fixable or  
changeable / And to this day we remain  
estranged, and I hate it though (Eminem,  
2013)

“And at the time, every house that we  
lived in either kept getting broken into  
and robbed / or shot up on the block /  
And your mom, was saving money for  
you in a jar / trying to start a piggy bank  
for you / So you can go to college /  
Almost had a thousand dollars / ‘Til  
someone broke in and stole it” (Eminem,  
2004)

Although CRT seeks to understand how  
white supremacy is maintained in legal,  
cultural, and political conditions (De La  
Garza and Ono, 2016), the system would not  
pay attention to a broke White American who  
lives impecuniously in a location where more  
than one-third of the city's residents live  
below the poverty line. Race correlates with  
many other social phenomena, and the  
intertwining between race and other aspects  
of human life creates structural racism. White  
supremacy questions why BIPOC (an  
acronym for Black, Indigenous, and People  
of Color, a word used only in the US to  
highlight the struggles of Black and  
Indigenous communities and to show support  
for other communities of color.) whine about  
not getting well-paid jobs and why they  
would not level up despite the former times  
of enslavement.

According to one of CRT's tenets that  
White Americans pervade society, it is

unlikely for BIPOC to live in a world free  
from prejudice and under optimal  
circumstances. Even when they strive to  
improve, discrimination is an unshakable  
obstacle. Racism is viewed as a system not  
only because of one's skin color but also  
other aspects. For instance, a Black  
American child in Detroit (the city where *8  
Mile* (2002) is set) might want the newest  
gadget. Still, their parents cannot afford it  
because of how difficult it is for the majority  
of Black people in Detroit to achieve wealth  
and justice in society due to racism's  
structural effects. When the CRT theory is  
applied, these Black MCs have adopted the  
aforementioned system throughout their lives  
as a member of the Black American  
community, making it fair for any Black MC,  
such as the character Lyckety Splyt (Gerard  
L. Sanders), to challenge B-Rabbit's racial  
identity in the film *8 Mile* (2002)'s final rap  
battle scene, as can be seen here during one  
of the rap battle performances against B-  
Rabbit:

You ain't Detroit, I'm the D, you the  
new kid on the block / 'Bout to get  
smacked back to the boondocks / Fuckin'  
Nazi, your squad ain't your type / Take  
some real advice and form a group with  
Vanilla Ice / And what I tell you, you  
better use it / This guy's a hillbilly, this  
ain't Willie Nelson music (*8 Mile*, 2002,  
1:29:57-1:30:12)

With New Criticism (Edgar &  
Sedgwick, 1999) and the method suggested  
by Delahoyde (2018), B-Rabbit is viewed by  
his Black-American opponents as an  
impostor of the Black-American community.  
It is explicitly noticeable how Splyt implies  
that a white person who resembles a boy  
band member cannot represent hip-hop. Thus,  
he suggests pursuing country music in the



countryside rather than trying to be a white rapper. Moreover, Splyt also insults B-Rabbit for his ethnicity, implying that he looks just like a German Nazi and does not fit in with his mostly Black-American peer group. Caucasian rapper Vanilla Ice was deemed a joke by the underground hip-hop community as he appropriated hip-hop for commercial gain with no regard for the origin of the music. Thus, Lyckety’s suggestion is an insult as that would go against Rabbit’s attempt to become accepted by the community. Following that, there is also an excerpt of freestyle lyrics from Rabbit to the ‘final boss’ of the rap battle, Papa Doc, which is noteworthy to discuss.



Figure 7. Final Battle between B-Rabbit and Papa Doc

Don't ever try to judge me, dude / You don't know what the fuck I've been through / But I know something about you / You went to Cranbrook, that's a private school / What's the matter, dawg? / You embarrassed? / This guy's a gangster? / His real name's Clarence / And Clarence lives at home with both parents / And Clarence's parents have a real good marriage / This guy don't wanna battle, he's shook / 'Cause ain't no such things as halfway crooks (*8 Mile*, 2002, 01:40:59-01:41:23)

The paper observes how Eminem, the original freestyle writer of this rap battle, challenged the black normativity in this excerpt. Such a thing as ‘halfway crooks’ is adapted from the song “Shook Ones, Pt. II” (2013), in which rapper Mobb Deep refers to

the black “gangster” attribute. The attribute then infers to the idea given by the film: if you want to represent the underground hip-hop society, you have got to at least be a badass with a tough growing up. In other words, you cannot steal a little bit from someone and be called a partial thief. Applying De La Garza and Ono’s CRT (2016), as they mention that intentional racist acts must be understood politically, the normativity of blackness in the underground rap battle society in *8 Mile* can be disrupted when the leader fails to represent the lowlife.

In the excerpt, B-Rabbit highlights how his opponent, Papa Doc, grew up with both parents, lived harmoniously, and went to a private school, which commonly costs larger tuition than the public ones, called Cranbrook. The freestyle reveals Papa Doc’s financial status and privilege as an American. This is the complete opposite of B-Rabbit’s upbringing, considering how, at the time, he was living poorly with a depressed single mother, and they just got evicted from living inside a trailer. B-Rabbit is shown in the film to contribute to several crimes, for instance, being in street fights and possessing drugs and guns. A matter regarding how Papa Doc does not own the domestic attribute of being a gangster here is challenged by B-Rabbit, who holds a position as “the other” from the freestyle excerpt.

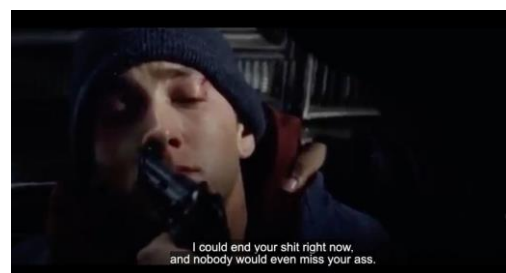


Figure 8. B-Rabbit held at gunpoint for beating up one of the Free World members. (*8 Mile*, 2002, 1:18:46)

As stated previously, *8 Mile* is a revised autobiography of Marshall Mathers, making him one of the all-time hip-hop legends who began his career from an underground battle and still uses rap to criticize other popular figures until this very day. In such an aggressive art expression medium like a rap battle, the battle's connection with race and rap contributes to Eminem's success factors, whilst racist attacks play a strong role from their opponents, based in the film. Williams (2018) propounded how Beastie Boys, a White American hip-hop group from New York City formed in 1981, started the commentary about the racial hijacking of hip-hop, in which the cultural phenomenon previously triggered by none other than Elvis Presley, who emerged in 1955 and snatched rock 'n roll, gospel, and blues image away from black artists.

Furthermore, this notion regarding racial hijacking is applicable as a medium to observe Eminem's accomplishments in the hip-hop industry. The veracity that in the 2000s, White audiences and industries preferred White artists selling Black aesthetics (works of art, literature, poetry, music, and theater that emphasized black life and culture) points to Eminem's success factors during his age. Eminem is regarded as one of the most influential artists in the genre's history because of his obvious privilege as a White man. Although his music contains many problematic elements such as homophobia, violence, and misogyny (yet also openly discusses his troubled upbringing and marriage), he can sell the favor for White people regarding their interest in hip-hop.

Evidence to support the idea that Marshall Mathers or Eminem in real life

might confirm his racial identity contributes profoundly to his quickly-escalating major success in the industry of rap, which is commonly known as black people's music, is shown in one of his songs titled "White America" (2002). In this song, Slim Shady, the alter-ego stage name for Eminem raps,

Look at these eyes, baby blue, baby just like yourself / If they were brown, Shady'd lose / Shady sits on the shelf / But Shady's cute, Shady knew Shady's dimples would help / Make ladies swoon, baby (ooh, baby) / Look at my sales / Let's do the math, if I was black, I woulda sold half / I ain't have to graduate from Lincoln High School to know that (Eminem, 2002).

What is written in the lyrics is truly a depiction of pre-modern popular culture where in a vast American media platform like MTV, his whiteness acts as an asset that rapidly raises more popularity and fan base. Andre Young, publicly known as Dr. Dre, the founder of Aftermath Entertainment record label, mentioned how Eminem's entrance to the industry was frowned upon by many hip-hop producers who worked with him at first.

The records I'd done at the time didn't work. They wanted me out the building. And then I come up with Eminem, this white boy. My general manager had this 8-by-10 picture and was like: 'Dre, this boy's got blue eyes. What are we doing?' recalled Dre in his recent television documentary (The Defiant Ones, 2017, 09:58).

However, it is apparent that race was not an issue, considering Eminem's ability to develop rhymes for every beat Dr. Dre gave. This further affirms how Eminem's race might have been contentious initially,



particularly in his entrance into the industry, but then managed to become a stepping stone to his decade of success. It is proven by Eminem’s breakout album titled The Slim Shady EP, which was released in 1999, that made a significant impact on the music business by drawing attention to his exaggerated, nasal rapping style as a distinctive quality in addition to the fact that he is white (Ford, 2004). Record executives took note right once, and Eminem soon gained the reputation of being the music industry’s next “great white hope”. Even though many Black rappers had already achieved great success, more White Americans were purchasing rap music at this point. Knowing that 75.1 percent of White Americans were in the US in 2001, a respectable white MC with such an edge would generate even more sales (US Census Bureau Public Information Office, 2001).

## CONCLUSION

As hip-hop has become increasingly streamed among young Generation Z, it is important to understand how the music’s attachment to its origin affects hip-hop’s non-black participants, referred to as “the others.” However, the entrance of “the others” can easily raise questions about whether the attempt deserves accreditation from the black community. These non-black participants, such as Eminem, Dumbfoundead, and Jin The MC, succeeded in putting on a strategy while coming up with freestyle ideas. Anyone can witness how Eminem, Dumbfoundead, and Jin The MC broke down a racial border built since the creation of music that represents the voice of Black Americans. Artistic expression through rap is now capable of being achieved regardless of race.

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## MYTH OF VIOLENCE IN *VENOM: LET THERE BE CARNAGE* (2021) SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

Popular culture is a product created for many people. The audience's tastes are essential in production. Besides that, popular culture can also describe a culture that exists in society. One popular product that people like is film. Along with the times, the world of cinema also has more exciting story plots and various characters. One is an American film called *Venom: Let There Be Carnage*. The film shows signs of the violent formula usually used in American cinema. Therefore, this journal discusses *Venom*, who is an anti-hero who uses much violence to deliver his existence but has a heroic soul, and also Eddie Brock, an ordinary human who acts as a host who has contradictory traits with *Venom* even though they live in one body—coupled with conflicts with other villains characters such as *Carnage* and *Cletus Kasady*. Researchers present signs of violence using dialogues and movie posters as data references. Also, the characteristics of the heroes used using semiotic analysis supported by John Cawelty's *Myth of Violence* theory. With this method, the researcher also describes the culture of violence in American society.

**Keywords:** *American society; hero; movie; myth; popular culture; semiotic; violence*

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### INTRODUCTION

According to William in Storey (2015), popular culture is a cultural product consumed or produced for the broader community so that people's tastes become essential for profit and entertainment (pp. 4-5). McDonald's statement (2004, p.38) supports that popular culture is also referred to as a mass product or commercial product because it is created to be sold without any social class boundaries so

that its development becomes very practical with conveniences. Supported by existing technology and constantly changing with the changing times, on the other hand, popular culture is also a culture that is symbolized in everyday life, such as myths and lifestyles. Therefore, developing popular cultural products such as music, popular novels, games, applications, and especially films has rapidly connected with the times, especially in technology. For example, American films

that used to be made without sound and color are now made with sophisticated technology that can create various audio effects and CGI, which spoils the audience's eyes. The plots, characters, and genres are also increasingly diverse and exciting. One example of a successful film in America is the sequel to the film *Venom* titled *Venom: Let There Be Carnage*. The film contains a lot of violence. Supported by the doubling number of films with violence since 1950, it has become a film that contains much violence but is still popular with audiences, emphasizing action, superhero, and thriller genres (Muller et al., 2020).

*Venom* is a symbiote or an object that comes from another planet and can live when attached to the body it inhabits. It was becoming one of the popular anti-hero characters published by Marvel Comics, who first appeared in the *Amazing Comic Spider-Man* (1988) written by David Michelinie. After that, *Venom* had his comic series and was ranked the 22nd Greatest Comic Book Villain of All Time out of 100 comic book villains and the 33rd character out of the 50 Greatest Comic Book Characters in *Empire* magazine. Then, it began to be adapted into *Spider-Man* animated series such as *Spider-Man: The Animated Series*, *Spider-Man Unlimited*, *Spectacular Spider-Man*, and also in the film *Spider-Man 3* (2007). *Venom* debuted in 2018 with the title *Venom*, starring famous stars such as Tom Hardie (*Venom*) as the main character, Michelle Williams as Anne Weying, Naomie Harris as Frances Barrison, Reid Scott as Dan Lewis, Stephen Graham as Detective Mulligan, Woody Harrelson as Cletus Kasady (*Carnage*), and directed by Ruben Fleischer and produced by Sony Pictures. The first *Venom* film was well received by audiences and received a Box Office of 856.1 USD internationally with a rating of 6.6/10. It was followed by a sequel

titled *Venom: Let There Be Carnage*, which was released in 2021, directed by Andi Serkis and still starring Tom Hardie as Eddie Brock in the leading role, also produced by Sony Pictures. This sequel earned over 506.9 USD at the Box Office internationally with a 6.0/10. Interestingly, this film was released amid a pandemic that has infected parts of the world, but it was a success because it entered the top 10 at the box office and became the third highest-grossing film in 2021. This film was associated with three awards: the People's Choice Awards, the Visual Effects Society Awards, and Artios Awards.

*Venom* is unique; when it lands on the human body, it can strengthen its host. However, only some humans can be perched by him. Eddie Brock is the only human who is strong enough to match *Venom*'s power. Eddie Brock is a career-crushing journalist who is emotionally compatible with *Venom* and physically strong enough to endure it. At first, *Venom* was obsessed with eating the heads of innocent humans to become stronger and tended to be evil because he often destroyed other people's property and used violence. However, Eddie was a human who could not kill. They have contradictory characteristics even though they live in one body. So from that, there was an agreement that *Venom* would no longer eat human heads but could perch in Eddie's body and perform his 'heroic' actions, and *Venom* helped Eddie to rise from his fall. Plus, they can partner to solve the conflicts with other villain characters.

This phenomenon sees *Venom* and Eddie as heroes who eradicate evil and other monsters. As Stan Lee put it, a hero is "a person who performs heroic acts and can do so in ways that normal people cannot do" (2013, p. 115). The audience also expects violence from the antagonist and the protagonist (Dorzweiler, 2017). Can it be said

that bad guys or monsters are not always bad in fiction?

Moreover, this phenomenon can describe a culture in a particular society. So, for this reason, this paper will use a semiotic approach to see how the form of signifiers will give birth to a meaningful 'sign' in the film. These signs can include social behavior that reflects a particular culture because a popular product must have meaning for its audience. When it comes to the masses, there must be a particular culture behind the creation of these signs or meanings. (Adi, 2016, pp. 154-156). This semiotic approach was also developed by Christian Metz, who related semiotics to film (1991). Whereas in film, many codes and signs have meanings, the film is also the language used to communicate to the public. Lapsley & Westlake's statement (2006, p.42) supports that the code in a film is also called cinematic code, such as costumes, dialogue, characterization, and facial expressions, then sub-codes such as lighting and settings.

This paper uses John Cawelty's theory of Myths of Violence, which talks about myths or patterns of violence that usually exist in American stories. Where the protagonist experiences a situation that makes it necessary to commit violence, or the background of the antagonist commits violence. Thus, it can also help describe the culture of violence in the US (Cawelty, 1975, pp. 525-529).

### **The Theory of Semiotic**

The semiotic theory is a theory that examines signs that are used to find out a particular meaning. According to Pateda (2001, p.28), a sign has various forms and origins, and an example is a sign that comes from humans, such as symbols and signs of nature. However, this theory has the concept of a signifier and a signified. These two important components cannot be separated from the birth of a 'sign'. The signifier is a

concept and requires something else to be connected to produce a meaning, namely the signifier. At the same time, the signifier is associated with the signified and does refer to one signified.

Semiotics is a theory used for research in the early 20th century, initiated by two different people on a different footing. Ferdinand De Saussure, a linguistic expert from Switzerland, his semiotic theory is based on linguistic science (Storey, 2015). Language is used as a bridge of meaning. Saussure is a linguist from Sweden who pioneered this linguistic theory in the book *Cours de Linguistique Generale*. The book emphasizes three elements: langue, parole, and langage. Langue is the same as a language defined as a particular language, parole like speech is defined as spoken language or what is usually spoken by humans, and langage means language in general.

In essence, Saussure uses language or langue as the object of research because this is the only aspect that can describe the social facts that exist in society (Zaprul Khan, 2016, p. 171). Charles Sanders Peirce is an American philosopher based on philosophy and logic. He divides the sign into three: Qualisign, which has a concept of quality such as color—Sinsign of a real thing or actual event, and Legisign of rules about how something should act. However, based on the object, a sign can be called an icon that refers to the object itself, an index sign that is related to or refers to an object, and a symbol is a sign that is related to an object but based on an agreement or law that is made (Peirce, 1940, pp. 101-103). From here, many other experts, such as Roland Barthes, began to develop it with semiotics in the social area. The sign includes social behavior, which also divides a sign into three, namely Denotative Meaning in which a sign has a precise

meaning, Connotative Meaning that a sign can have more than one different meaning, or implicit and open meaning, on new interpretations, as well as Myths about a culture which are closely related to beliefs and religion which can influence people's mindsets (Fiske, 1993, pp. 85-88). Levi-Strauss, in the context of cultural science, relates to the theory of Christian Metz that a film is a form of reflection of a particular culture.

The idea of semiotics also includes analysis in the context of literature to examine the use of language whose meaning depends on an additional agreement. So that it can produce various meanings, likewise, if it is related to popular fiction, which states that the audience or reader must also be involved in interpreting a sign. Because these two components are the most important elements in popular fiction research, when it comes to the masses, there must be a certain culture behind the creation of the sign or meaning. (Adi, 2016, pp. 154-156).

### **The Concept of Formulas**

Filmmakers widely use the concept of the formula itself to attract viewers. The formula itself has a definition as a storyline and is related to the existing culture, the unification of themes, and the existing culture of society, so that what is shown with what is in society is interrelated like human traits in a particular culture. It is like the same pattern that one story has with another story. For example, murder stories must have the same pattern as other murder stories (Adi, 2016, p. 203). Formulas are archetypal story patterns embodied in images, symbols, themes, and myths. Archetypes and formulas are interrelated because they are distinctive patterns that can represent a universal pattern or a pattern that has been formed since time immemorial in society unconsciously (Cawelti, 2014, p. 16). The formula is based

on archetypes because certain story archetypes tend to entertain and fulfill human pleasure.

Filmmakers use that to make stories according to the audience's taste. The most famous formula is the formula in American films with the detective, gangster, police, and action genres. Usually, the background of violence is legal justice, past grudges, murder, and burdens of life. The presentation is supported by a gun, explosions, or chasing scenes (Lichtenfeld, 2007, p. 1). The four genres are closely related to violence patterns like events in America. However, it has become trendy because the audience also needs something different, mainly to satisfy the audience's fictional imagination and entertainment. Because violence still makes sense with the morals that exist in society, it can be depicted in films (Cawelti, 1975, p. 526). On the other hand, in developing studies related to culture, myth is a topic that is quite popular with academics, especially in popular culture research. Myth in popular culture understands what makes a film popular and has survived today (Cawelti, 2004, p.6).

### **The Myth of Violence**

There are five patterns sparked by Cawelti (1975) that will be related to the conflicts that occur with the characters Venom, Eddie, and Carnage, in his article entitled *Myth of Violence in American Popular Culture* (pp. 530-540):

- a. The Myth of "Crime Does Not Pay", or "As Ye Sow, So Shall Ye Reap"

One of the patterns of crime that can be analogous to 'an eye for an eye' or what you sow is what you reap. However, if this is applied to the reality of society, of course, the community will reject it for immoral reasons. Conversely, everything becomes possible

when entering the realm of fiction because crime and morals try to be in balance. Heroes have sworn enemies or villains who are finally reunited after playing with plots and conflicts. However, in the end, the Hero will not kill his enemy because of his morals. The plot used is that the Hero will only catch and hand him over to the authorities. This pattern can be said to use violence in line with existing morals, so the duty of the Hero is only as a 'media' between the community and the authorities. Therefore, the motto used until now is that a crime does not pay anything, but on the contrary, whoever commits a crime will receive a reward. Therein lies the legitimacy of the Hero to use violence.

#### b. The Myth of the Vigilante

In this pattern, the Hero character does not fully plunge into the Conflict, or even violence is not the last resort. Heroes in this pattern tend to act when things are unfair and society can no longer handle these crimes. In other words, vigilante behavior will be the punishment when the authorities cannot protect guilty people from criminals. However, the Hero has two choices: kill or let him go. If the situation does not allow the criminal to be released, then the Hero here will destroy evil through violence.

An example is if a criminal has been thrown into prison, and then after a while, he is released and carries out his brutal actions again, where the authorities can no longer handle their brutal actions. The new individual Hero will use violence such as torturing or even killing so that the criminal becomes a deterrent. This pattern is commonly used in contemporary action films or gangsters.

#### c. The Myth of Equality through Violence

The lower or middle-class people usually carry out this pattern. To achieve equality in

the social order, they tend to use violence perpetrated against corrupt elite groups or antagonists in the social order of society. This myth can be said to entirely follow America's perception of violence, especially in border areas. For them, violence is a normal thing that exists in everyday life. Thus, violence is widely used in films, but it is rarely used by heroes in the context of equality because those who can do this action are gangsters.

#### d. The Myth of the Hard-boiled Hero and His Code

Using violence is tantamount to testing the moral code that is believed by oneself and the moral code that applies in society. Because the hero character in this myth will wait for the villain's confrontation or let the villain start the action first, this is done based on honor and integrity. This attitude also shows that a hero must remain in control and be disciplined in the rules or codes that apply in society. The code is indeed unwritten but refers to existing traditions or morals. However, the Hero's challenging nature and sensitivity to conditions require him to break the law to save society. Because usually, the police or detectives who always obey the law cannot stop the crimes that occur. The honor held by the Hero here is a code of ethics in which he will never take what is not rightfully his, does not take sides with anyone, and does not embarrass violence without an apparent reason. Heroes are people with unusual abilities and integrity.

#### e. The Myth of Regeneration through Violence

In this myth, violence is justified and passed down from generation to generation, like when America entered a new phase as a move from the wilderness into a country inhabited by many people from various countries. However, in the forest, other



inhabitants are Indians. A conflict arose between the British and the Indians, which gave rise to two more myths, namely captivity, which tried to frighten and torture someone detained. However, the impact was the destruction of a charming person and as if reborn into a new person after committing the violence. The hunting myth, where the hero wants to rule the universe, returns to the forest, kills wild beasts or, with the villains to eat, and is reborn.

### **The synopsis of *Venom: Let there be carnage***

This time, Eddie Brock and Venom face a serial killer named Cletus Cassady, sentenced to death. Nevertheless, at that time, the whereabouts of Cletus' victims had not been found, so the detective in charge, Patrick Mulligan, tried to investigate. However, Cletus remained silent and only wanted to talk to Eddie about where the victims were. After his visit, Venom and Eddie managed to find the victims' locations, resulting in Eddie's career as a journalist. On the day of his execution, Cletus invites Eddie again to talk to him, but Cletus insults Eddie and anger Venom. The conversation ended when Cletus bit Eddie's hand, causing him to swallow a small part of the symbiote from Venom. After that incident, Eddie and Venom returned home. However, they argued about Venom wanting the freedom to eat criminals. Eddie still did not allow it, so they chose to separate temporarily. Venom does what humans do, like going to parties, badmouthing Eddie, and moving from one human to another. Finally, Return to Eddie because only Eddie can bear the power of Venom.

As suspected, Cletus also has a Venom-like symbiote named Carnage, a very evil and indiscriminate symbiote to kill. With Carnage, Cletus turns the prison into a bloodbath and helps Frances Barrison escape prison. Frances is Cletus' girlfriend who has an unpleasant

past with Detective Mulligan because of the power of her voice, so she is exiled to Ravencroft. From there, they both have a grudge against Detective Mulligan because he indirectly made them separate.

Once free, they aim to get married in the cathedral, but they also take Detective Mulligan and Anne Weying (Eddie's ex-girlfriend) as a hostage. This phenomenon reaches Eddie and Venom's ears, so Venom and Carnage fight it out there. At the end of the story, Venom defeats Carnage and devours the head of Cletus, the bad guy there.

### **DISCUSSION**

The conflict is that Venom, who used to be a human-eating monster, must face Carnage, who is more evil. In other words, he helped Eddie to save other people. As seen in the poster below, there is a striking color difference between Venom and Carnage, the film icon. Venom is depicted in black, and Carnage is dark red to differentiate the character.



Figure 1. The poster of *Venom: Let There be Carnage*

Black means death, evil, and mystery, while dark red means rage and anger (Wierzbicka, 1990). From the poster, there is a denotative meaning that the two icons in the poster show the same meaning that Carnage and Venom are sadistic characters because their positions depict violence and are ready to attack each other. Supported by the explanation of the two icons, according to Merriam-Webster, the meaning of Venom is a poisonous substance,

and Carnage means slaughter. Venom and Carnage are symbols of evil.

Furthermore, there are four combinations from the myth of violence in *Venom: Let There Be Carnage*. The first is The Myth of the Vigilante. It can be seen from the dialogue that Eddie does not want to be involved in the Cletus arrest case. As evidenced in the dialogue below between Eddie and Detective Mulligan,

Denotation : Detective Mulligan, with all due respect, **I don't want anything to do** with Cletus Kasady.  
(05.35)

Connotation: The sign means someone who does not want to interfere in other people's affairs.

However, Eddie has no other choice. This dialogue is explained in theory that Eddie has no intention of doing anything with Cletus, who is in prison. It is a sign that Eddie still acts according to his code of ethics as an ordinary human being and that it is inappropriate for civilians to interfere in major crimes. Because in this case, the authorities could already handle this case. This also depicts that residents surrender and trust the authorities to solve existing problems.

Venom also sometimes suddenly appears from inside Eddie's body. So this makes Eddie always alert when going out for activities. Because Venom always wants to show the existence of his strength, but he cannot fully control his thirst to eat human heads, which Eddie finds annoying. On the other hand, the writer made Eddie do the right thing to prevent Venom from coming out of his body too often because it looks scary and acts outside of society's morals. As shown in the dialog below,

Denotation : Be quiet. How many

times have I told you that **I want you to hide yourself** when I am working?

(06.25)

Connotation: This sign means that its existence is terrible when it is unnecessary.

The dialogue above has a denotative meaning that Eddie clearly says Venom must hide. This sign means that Venom is not suitable to be shown in society because of its scary appearance and behavior.

The film is rated for ages 13 and over with parental guidance because it contains violence, harsh words, and inappropriate things for children to watch alone. However, today's hero films tend to show many opposing sides with more violence than positive ones (Bauer et al., 2017). The positive side for children is that the characters shown are good, as shown by Eddie here. He just wants to have a good life by working as a journalist and does not try to get involved in many conflicts with criminals because he is an ordinary human being. However, this action-hero film is also suitable for stimulating children with autism and increasing children's appetite (Rosenberg et al., 2013). Also, this film succeeded in showing the concept of an American audience, according to Cawelti's statement (1975), that audiences like scenes of violence, as shown in Eddie and Cletus' dialogue.

Denotation : People **love...** serial killers  
(08.09)

Connotation: The meaning of the dialogue is that people are more interested in scary or thrill stories.

The dialogue has a denotative meaning that the film displays violence packaged in a way that the public likes. In the dialogue, "love"

symbolizes someone's liking for something. As Carroll (2019) said, most audiences like good versus evil or superheroes versus villains. The more violence, the more attractive it is for the audience, with one of the reasons to explore which characters are good and evil (p. 27).

Secondly, The Myth of the Hard-boiled Hero and His Code is a myth seen in this film. Venom's form of violence against Eddie does not allow him to eat human heads because he is too hungry or kills criminals. Connotatively, this is a clichéd reason for Venom to eat humans when he is bored to satisfy his lust for killing. Eddie remains stubborn that Venom cannot do that and provides chicken and chocolate as human substitutes. In this case, Eddie does not want to get out of his usual way even though Venom is beating him. It can be seen that Eddie tries to treat Venom like a human being and continues to explain what is permissible and what is not according to the norms in society. Because Eddie still has a fear of being chased by the police because he is suspected of being involved in the missing human head case. Like the Venom dialogue below,

Denotation : I need **human brains to survive**.

(15.53)

Connotation: The sign from the dialogue is that one needs something like food to survive.

The dialogue indicates that Venom is not a human who can eat human food and not be treated like a human. The dialogue further emphasizes that Venom is a monster that gets its power from eating humans. Because one of the characteristics of human beings is an understanding of the moral values that exist in society, they know how to behave (Kahn et al., 2007). Besides that, because of his desire to be a hero, he obeys Eddie to behave according to

morality. Venom does not want to stay silent and always wants to be a hero who saves the city, as evidenced when Venom says,

Denotation : We should be out there **protecting the city lethally!**

(06.12)

Connotation: The sign has the meaning that its existence aims to protect the city.

There is a denotative and connotative meaning that Eddie and Venom have two different views. With Venom's statement, it is proven that Venom has an explosive 'hero' spirit. However, Venom wants to use his power as an 'eating' monster to protect the city, especially with violence. In contrast, Eddie wants to live quietly as an ordinary human and avoid conflict. In denotative meaning, Venom usually acts as an evil symbiote but also tries to be a hero.

Following the authorities' inability to adequately punish Cletus in jail, Eddie and Venom had to get Cletus to talk. This is evidenced in the dialogue below when the reporter says,

Denotation : Brock was **able to uncover** what the FBI and police could not.

(12.03)

Connotation: A sign from the dialogue is that someone can be more expert than a government organizational unit.

This dialogue proves that the community needs someone other than the police to help keep society safe.

Next was their negligence in guarding Cletus down to the point where he could bite Eddie, resulting in Carnage being evil, breaking out of prison, and making noise in the city by brutally eating innocent humans.

Carroll (2019) says that most antagonist characters always commit physical violence before committing other crimes in superhero action films. However, even here, Eddie still does not want to show the existence of his strength with Venom and still hands him over to the police. This phenomenon is complicated by evidence from the Myth of Vigilante, where a hero will use violence at the last moment. Eddie and Venom do that as if they were waiting for Cletus and Carnage to do something horrible because they do not want to take the wrong step by using Venom's power, which is as terrible as Carnage's. In the end, Carnage caused trouble, resulting in many victims, so the police could no longer handle Carnage.

Eddie was forced to show the existence of Venom's cruelty and fight using violence with Carnage. But as seen in the third myth, The Myth of "Crime Does Not Pay," Eddie and Venom both have their own opinion regarding being a hero, as the meaning of the sign in the dialogue below says,

Denotation : *You know, this could be us, Eddie. Going out there, solving cases, fighting bad guys. Maybe I eat them, hmm? And then we save the day.*

(12.44)

Connotation: The sign is a way to solve the problem.

Denotation : But we **saved** the day. It's done.

(12.57)

Connotation: This sign means that someone has solved a problem.

In the first dialogue, as the final solution, Venom wants to be a hero but still wants to eat evil humans. However, on the other hand, Eddie, who was enough with enough finishing, was able to save many people. These signs

have a connotative meaning where the process of this hero has more than one way and perspective. Venom thinks that they must pay for a crime with violence, while Eddie does not, that a problem can be solved without violence.

Even though, in the end, violence is the solution, Carnage and Cletus' heads end up becoming food for Venom. It can be said that this ending is a happy ending because Eddie and Venom finally choose to leave and try to live in peace. Endings like this have become a consistent pattern in American cinema (Crothers, 2021, p. 45).

Therefore, the form of violence committed by Eddie and Venom is not merely to justify the violence itself but rather to change the audience's view that there is a solid reason to do it. This is one of the imaginary forms of America that fiction films try to portray (Philips, 2021, p. 3). It is coupled with battle scenes to show the relationship between heroes and villains to resolve existing conflicts (Lichtenfeld, 2007).

The last one is The Myth of Regeneration through Violence. In the film, the antagonist also has a background of committing crimes.

Denotation : You didn't write about the part where Cletus was **abused by Mommy, Daddy and Granny!**

(12.03)

Connotation: This sign means that someone has experienced violence in the past.

In this dialogue, Cletus said that as a child, he was abused by his family because he committed a crime. Cletus has an inherited crime; this is like a long-term trauma. The dialogue uses the word "abused" to signify the cause of his evil adult behavior. This phenomenon also happens in the reality that abused children have a high risk of

problematic behaviors such as developing aggressive and violent behavior. Therefore, the dialogue has a denotative meaning, which means that violence is a solution for Cletus. It is proven by research conducted by the National Institute of Justice in the US that children who were exposed to abuse or violence as adults will tend to have criminal behavior or be involved in violence. They think it is a suitable method for solving a problem (Jimenez, 2019). That makes the number of violent crimes that occur in America. According to the Pew Research Center, the latest FBI report says that in 2022 several crimes will increase, such as murder, robbery, and assault. However, there are also other criminal acts, such as sexual harassment, simple assault, aggravated assault, vehicle theft, drugs, and others, which still occur, although they have not increased statistically. This statement proves that violent crimes in America are continuing (Gramlich, 2022).

### **The Audience**

Furthermore, regarding that audiences really like films that present violence, here are some comments taken from the Internet Movie Database, "enjoy the show," commented by nogodnomasters, "*violent fun*" from nei-476, "*Carnage is fun!*" from Uniqueparticle, "*the ideal sequel*" from masonsaul, "*a good film with a great humor*" from coombsstephen. From some of the comments above, there is positive interest in this film, although not a few also criticize that the sequel to this film could be much better. However, this indicates that the audience likes and pays attention to the film *Venom: Let there be carnage*. As Macoby & Wilson (1957) said, there are times when the audience becomes a student whose job is to pay attention to, study, and evaluate the characters they see (In Cohen, 2021, p. 254). Also, this film does not contain a small amount of comedy so that the audience does not become

so tense, considering the many sadistic and violent scenes.

### **CONCLUSION**

It can be concluded that *Venom* and *Eddie* are the Hero figures in the film. Using archetypal stories that are displayed in the signs from the four Myths of Violence related to the code of ethics for heroes commonly used in American films and also the pattern that *Eddie* and *Venom* do as Heroes to be able to eradicate crime by using violence, it successfully shows that violence can be used in proper situation and person. This film tries to show that monsters are not necessarily villains. It also shows the sign of the antagonist character of the criminal, that there is a sense of trauma from an unpleasant childhood life. On the other hand, these signs show that the reality of American society is similar. For example, sometimes the authorities do not carry out their duties properly so that a hero appears that society needs, which is portrayed well in this film. The increase in violence in America every year proves that American audiences tend to prefer shows that contain violence because violence is one thing that often happens daily in American society.

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## THE REPRESENTATION OF BULLYING IN AMERICAN FILMS

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### ABSTRACT

The issue of bullying continues to be reported by the media because it still happens everywhere, especially in schools, and needs to be discussed in research. This qualitative research focuses on studying American films with the theme of bullying, namely *Bully* (2011), *A Girl Like Her* (2015), and *Wonder* (2017) as the main source of data. This study aims to identify how American movies portray bullying and to find out what bullying represents by applying Hall's representation theory. Dialogs collected and sorted from the films were treated as signs that would convey more meanings. The results of data analysis suggest that American films with the themes of bullying frequently show bullying through portraits of physical violence, verbal violence, and trauma. Besides, bullying can also indicate a lack of attention from the family, the condition of the social environment, and the powerlessness of humans.

**Keywords:** *American films; bullying; schools; trauma; violence*

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### INTRODUCTION

Living in society certainly cannot be separated from various problems. Every individual must have good or bad experiences when interacting with other individuals. One of the many problems that often occurs is bullying. Cases of bullying are often reported in various countries. It has long been a problem that seems to have never gone

away. It happens anywhere, such as in schools, campuses, workplaces, and other public places. However, most studies reveal that many people have been bullied in their teens (Aalsma & Brown, 2008, p. 101). This explanation seems to be in line with the information or news on bullying in the present time. In 2020, for instance, according to the data reported by UNICEF Indonesia through their website [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org) with the theme



“Bullying in Indonesia”, showed that at least 2 out of girls or boys aged 15 -17 years have been bullied.

The experience of being bullied by other people can impact the victims differently. Therefore, finding a way to end bullying is essential, even if it is not easy (Kustanti et al., 2020, p. 1507). This shows that the issue of bullying is still a concern for many people and needs to be discussed in forums or research.

Bullying is something complicated, and it may happen for many reasons (Swearer & Hymel, 2015, p. 344). However, it is commonly considered a nan adversetion that, iny people experience. One is said to be experiencing bullying when he feels helpless in a state of pressure over the actions done by other people, and he then worries and is scared that the incident will occur again (Akasyah et al., 2018, p. 538). Bullying can be categorized into physical, verbal, and cyberbullying (Nurmalia et al., 2021, p. 247). Even though many people think that bullying in this era is rare, the phenomenon still often happens anytime and anywhere in this era. In Indonesia, for instance, bullying by a group of students is still frequently reported in the media. This is an unfortunate condition because schools should be able to provide education and guidance to students to stop bullying.

Due to the large number of bullying cases that have occurred in American society, which may cause physical and mental injury or even death (Benedict et al., 2014, p. 2), the issue of bullying has been widely discussed in media. It is also often used as a theme in films. American films, for instance, frequently depict the phenomenon of bullying. This issue would be a path for people to see the problems. Many

phenomena or knowledge can be learned by every individual when watching films (Adi, 2011, p. 71; Rudy et al., 2021, p. 43). This shows that the issue of bullying reflected in movies can be something that people need to study. Therefore, a study about bullying reflected in films must be read by people. It is also important because bullying, especially in the school environment, would become a serious concern for everyone. Therefore, the study aims to reveal what portraits are often found in American films about bullying and identify what bullying can represent.

This research theoretically contributes to theory development in relevant fields such as literary and cultural studies, film studies, and other humanities. It can be a reference for other researchers studying a similar issue. Besides, this study can also provide a better understanding and more information about the issue of bullying for everyone so that people can help prevent bullying from occurring in society. This study focuses on the analysis of three American movies with the theme of bullying, namely *Bully* (2011), *A Girl Like Her* (2015), and *Wonder* (2017). These films are also often mentioned in lists of films about bullying from the internet, such as the IMBd website. The phenomenon of bullying depicted in the three films becomes the object of discussion in this study by concentrating on dialogs related to bullying between characters and scenes portraying bullying in the films.

Literature review was carried out by reviewing several journal articles. Most of them were studies on the issue of bullying that previous researchers had conducted. A review of several scientific articles provides information on the issue of bullying associated with the mental health of the victims. For instance, a study by Swearer and Hymel

(2015) argued that bullying, a complex phenomenon, must be overcome with efforts related to individual experience, characteristics, causes, consequences, and others. Other findings on bullying from a mental perspective, such as studies by Fullchange and Furlong (2016), Akasyah et al. (2018), Huang et al. (2018), Kustanti et al. (2020), Lucas-Molina et al. (2022) emphasized the psychological effects experienced by victims of bullying such as fear, sadness, and trauma.

However, a study by Bokhari et al. (2020) talked about the various effects of bullying depending on the condition of victim's condition contribute to the strength of the victims. Apart from that, there are also two journal articles which talked about bullying in films such as the studies conducted by Ningrum and Bahri (2020) as well as Nurmalia et al. (2021) which pointed out the some types of bullying in films entitled *A Girl Like Her* and *Carrie*. Even though this study discusses about the issue of bullying in American films, it is still different from the previous studies described above in terms of approach to data analysis, types of films used as data as well as research questions. Those are the points that can be research gaps filled by this study to become a study with an element of novelty.

Before moving to the results, it is essential to define several important terms used in this study in order to avoid misunderstanding. The first term that needs to be defined properly is bullying. It is perhaps no longer a new term. Many people must have heard of it. However, not everyone can actually understand what bullying is. An individual is said to be bullied when he experiences repeated negative treatment and usually he is unable to defend himself from the bully (Olweus, 1994, p. 98).

According to Jan and Husain (2015, p. 43), bullying is student's behavior that relies on strength that tends to be continuous and damaging such as to hit, to threaten, to insult someone, etc. In addition, Ningrum and Bahri (2020, p. 3) explained that it is an act of using violence or threats to intimidate others.

Bullying is also defined as forms of violent behaviors that contain elements of physical and psychological coercion against individuals who are weak and unable to fight back (Zakiyah et al., 2017, p. 326) and the bullying behavior can result in injury to the victim (Hartati et al., 2020, p. 55). People often equate bullying with aggressive behavior. Regarding this, Aalsma and Brown (2008, p. 102) it is necessary to understand in advance that the basic aspect of distinguishing bullying and aggressive behaviors lies in imbalance of power. It means that if the victim cannot resist the strength of the bullies who are older in age or more in number of bullies, then the victim is deemed to have been bullied. It means that the victim of bullying is usually weaker than the bully, therefore, the victim is unable to defend himself and is forced to accept bullying. As explained in the previous section, in general, many studies have found that bullying can be done in the form of physical violence, verbal violence and bullying in cyberspace (Akasyah et al., 2018, p. 541; Lucas-molina et al., 2022, p. 39; Nurmalia et al., 2021, p. 247).

It is said that bullying is considered to be common in school and an unfavorable school environment will trigger bullying (Armitage, 2021, p. 2; Bokhari et al., 2020, p. 1; Gomba & Tsai, 2012, p. 162; Huang et al., 2018, p. 231; Swearer & Hymel, 2015, p. 347). Acts of bullying are more common in schools although it is also possible that bullying can occur in the

workplace, home, etc. In general, victims of bullying will have problems in adjusting and functioning their emotions (Fullchange & Furlong, 2016, p. 2). So, besides the difference in the level of strength between the bully and the victim, victims of bullying also generally experience emotional stress that will have an impact on their lives. After collecting several definitions on bullying from different sources, this study tries to interpret the term bullying as a physical or words that are oppressive and insulting carried out by a person or group of people to make a weak individual or some people afraid and comfortable in various ways.

## METHODOLOGY

This library research uses films as the primary data to be analyzed to obtain the research results. This kind of research is carried out by collecting information from various materials in library such as books, articles, magazines, journals, etc. related to the research topic (Sari & Asmendri, 2020, p. 44). Thus, this study is also known as a qualitative research and in this case, qualitative research is described by Creswell (2010, p. 16) as a type of research that functions to obtain a lot of explanations from various data source regarding the phenomenon or issue being studied. So, in terms of research objectives, this study can be classified as descriptive research because it intends to explain in detail the phenomenon being studied. This research involves two types of data. The first is primary data. The main data used as the object of study are three American films with the theme of bullying are: *Bully* (2011) directed by Lee Hirsch and produced by Cinereach; *A Girl like Her* (2015) directed by Amy S. Weber and produced by Radish Creative Group; and *Wonder* (2017) directed by Stephen Chbosky.

The data from films are in the form of dialogues.

There three steps for collecting data from the films. First, the three films are watched carefully (for several times) to figure out which dialogues and scene descriptions need to be taken as well as to understand the message conveyed by the films. Second, re-watching the three films while writing out the dialogues and the descriptions of the scenes picturing the dialogues. Although note-taking is often seen by most people as an old-fashioned method, this way is actually helpful. Note-taking helps people to understand information better so that it can be reviewed and studied for the long term (Özçakmak, 2019, p. 581). So, the notetaking technique is used in the process of recording the dialogues from films because it is considered more practical. Finally, after all the dialogues and scene descriptions have been recorded in the notes the sorting process is carried out by placing the dialogues and the scene descriptions according to the keywords provided.

In terms of data analysis, this study can be classified as a content analysis study. It is usually applied to analyze, explain and interpret data in the form of text, media, etc. to obtain ideas, information, as well as definitions about the studied phenomenon (Adi, 2011, p. 144; Pal, 2017, p. 483). All the collected data is analyzed by using the theory of representation by Stuart Hall to construct meanings. This theory is suitable for this study because the dialogues and scene descriptions from the films can symbolize something. Thus, they need to be explored in order to obtain the meaning. According to Hall (1997, p. 19) all studied objects such as words, ideas, views, photos, etc. can be categorized into symbols.

Therefore, the representation theory used in this study is to interpret the dialogues as well as the scenes descriptions in order to form or construct the meanings behind them.

## DISCUSSION

### The Portraits of Bullying in Films

The results of the data analysis showed that American films on bullying frequently show three portraits as follows:

#### a. Portrait of Physical Violence

The portrait of physical violence was one of the images frequently presented in the films with the theme of bullying being discussed. The acts of bullying shown in films about bullying were often identical with physical violence. Violence experienced by students according to Ferrar et al. (2019, p. 3) can be in various forms and one of them is physical aggressive behavior aimed at punishing or bullying which can be done by adults or kids.

Regarding this, Jan and Husain (2015, p. 53) in their research explained that physical violence towards victims of bullying was part of the behavior that was often done by bullies. physical violence has a negative meaning, especially when it occurs in schools, campuses, or workplaces. This condition is indeed concerning because a school is supposed to be a safe, convenient, and quiet place to study and make friends. However, there are any cases of bullying that actually happen in schools. Acts of physical violence committed by bullies can take various forms of treatment. In general, bullies push, kick, water, throw something at the victim or damage their belongings (Nurmalia et al., 2021, p. 28; Sulisrudatin, 2014, p. 59). Similar acts of violence are also shown in films about bullying.

For instance, the depiction of physical violence was portrayed in the movie *Bully* (2011). There were scenes when a student named Alex was hit by a bully:

Philip: What happened this week on the bus? Anything?

Alex: This high schooler was strangling me, but I think he was just messing around.

Philip: That's not messing around.

(00:55:32)

Alex: What? Why are you punching me?

Bully: I'll use my cell phone, bitch. Little bitch. Come on!

Alex: No, no, no. Ow!

Bully: Bitch!

Alex: Why you stabbing me with it?

Bully: Gonna knock your fish lips off!

(01:07:55)

Alex's mother: It's absolutely not acceptable. I mean, they're stabbing him with pencils, and choking him.

(01:10:42)

The film dialog above shows that the bully knew that the victim did not dare to fight him, so he took advantage of the victim's weakness. The film character Alex is described as someone who is afraid of the bully. The fear makes it difficult for him to be honest when his father asked him. This condition is experienced by almost all victims of bullying. In fact, people who are victims of bullying do not have the ability or courage to defend themselves. So, the bullies can freely suppress and commit physical violence to them. There was also a scene of physical violence experienced by a male student named Auggie who had a facial disfigurement in the film *Wonder* (2017). He was pushed by other students who bullied him:

Boy (bully): What are you gonna do about it? Get out of my way.

Auggie: No.

Boy (bully): I said get outta my way!  
Auggie: I said no!

(01:34:53)

Based on several studies bullying with physical violence is often done by boys (Hartati et al., 2020, p. 60; Sulisrudatin, 2015, p. 58). It is also possible that bullying can also occur among female students, although these cases are not as frequent as cases of bullying done by male students.

However, in the film *A Girl Like Her* (2015), there was a female bully who committed physical violence against a female victim



Figure 1. *A Girl Like Her* (2015) - Avery and her friends pushed Jessica into the toilet and flushed her (00:51:13)

The bully named Avery degraded kicked and pushed the victim into the toilet. Such a violent act is considered harmful physical violence.

Bullying with physical intimidation (violence) that happens in schools is similar to dangerous actions that shows power imbalance (Fu et al., 2015, p. 487). The victim's weakness becomes an opportunity for the bully to continue harassing and attacking the victim. Even in a study conducted by Shidiqi and Suprarti (2013, p. 94) showed that physical violence often resulted in injuries to the victims. Even in the film *Bully* (2011) there was a scene depicting a mother who was

angrily disappointed because bullying had taken the life of her child:

Tina: My baby was missing two and three days of school a week because there's a gang of five boys threatening to beat him up at school every single day. It was reported to everyone, and nobody did nothing.

(00:40:44)

There have been studies that show evidence about bullying with acts of physical violence resulting in death, such as news about bullying among crew members, in dormitories or schools as well as in the army with cases of soldiers who died due to bullying (Koo, 2007, p. 109). So, it is right to say that all kinds of physical violence are basically negative. This portrait of physical violence is a depiction that appears frequently in films on bullying because physical violence is identical with acts of bullying. Thus, the emergence of this image can actually reflect a perception that bullying can be interpreted as physical hurting or torture. This is shown in the film with the aim of exposing the impact of physical violence experienced by victims of bullying.

#### b. Portrait of Verbal Violence

The next portrait is verbal violence. This may also be called as verbal bullying or verbal abuse. This depiction was often present in the films discussed in this study. It is indeed true that verbal abuse can occur anywhere and anytime. In schools for example, verbal violence is often done by both male and female bullies. This action becomes the habit of bullies to make their victims feel afraid and diffident. This kind of violence is often pictured in the discussed films. Regarding this, Antiri (2016, p. 132) explained that it has a more serious impact compared to physical violence since negative words can damage a

person's mentality which can lead to psychological and emotional problems such as loss of confidence, feelings of inferiority, etc. Bullying using verbal violence is likely to happen because the bully can simply do it in an easy way for instance by whispering or shouting at the victim in a public place without anyone suspecting (Muntaha et al., 2015, p. 43).

Verbal bullying is generally done by the bullies in the form of threatening and harsh words as well as ridicule to embarrass the victims and to make them leave the schools (Jan & Husain, 2015, p. 43; Kustanti et al., 2020, p. 1512; Putri et al., 2021, p. 792). The use of harsh words in verbal bullying was also portrayed in the studied films. In *Bully* (2011) and *A Girl Like Her* (2015) for instance, the words often used to call the victims were "bitch" or little bitch". The word has an unpleasant meaning, and it degrades one's dignity. There were scenes showing the victims of bullying expressing their sadness such as in *Bully* (2011):

"He calls me b-word."  
(00:55:32)

"He calls me faggot. It breaks my heart."  
(00:14:43)

"He comes to me. I try to get away from him.

"He follows me. And he criticizes me, calling me pussy".  
(00:30:15)

"When I opened my locker, there was a note that said 'Faggots aren't welcomed here. And another teacher told me how they burned fags, and kept talking about it with me in the classroom, and everyone was laughing. And they knew it was hurting me, and they kept going."  
(00:20:10)

In the film *A Girl Like Her* (2015), for instance, there were several dialogs that can be shown as examples of verbal bullying:

Avery: Oh, wow. You have no clothes. Aww, what are you gonna do? That is so sad."

(00:51: 24)

Apart from that, the victim of bullying in the film also received messages sent by the bully that contained elements of verbal violence:

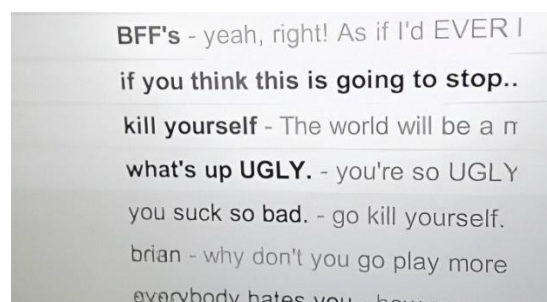


Figure 2. *A Girl Like Her* (2015) - Verbal bullying in the form of insulting words sent by the bully (00:48:13)

In the film *Wonder* (2017), a character named Auggie that had a facial disfigurement became the object of ridicule by a bully:

Julian: Hey, can I sit there?

Auggie: Sure.

Julian: You eat like the Sarlacc monster, my young Padawan.

(00:19:33)

Julian: I actually have a question for Auggie. What's the deal with the braid in the back of your hair? Is it like a Padawan thing?

Charlotte: What's a Padawan thing?

Julian: It's from Star Wars. Padawan is a Jedi apprentice.

(00:18:01)

No one likes to be made fun. Nobody will be happy when he or she is called by an impolite name or with hurtful words. In fact, it is part of the act of bullying and is also the action most often committed by a bully to his victim.



Inappropriate words used by bullies are generally adapted to local traditions and culture, such as calling victims by their parents' names in an insulting tone; uttering threatening words; or comparing the victim to something negative (Asrul et al., 2021, p. 1554).

Verbal bullying is often seen as something normal or a joke for many people do not realize how dangerous it is if it just keeps happening. Teasing someone with jokes over and over again is not funny because it can lead to the unexpected consequences. This is essential because inappropriate and negative words used for bullying can hurt and psychologically disturb the victims (Putri et al., 2021). The emergence of a group of students who like to bully by uttering harsh words or ridicule their friends can be caused by some factors. However, the most fundamental cause is connected to the role of teacher. According to Burger et al (2022, p. 2313) there are still many school teachers who do not consider bullying as a serious problem, so they tend to ignore or pay less attention to the problem.

The films discussed in this study frequently show verbal violence because the simplest way of bullying is to use negative words to insult the victim. This can also indicate that simple acts of bullying must be taken seriously and teachers also need to be active in educating students about the dangers of bullying and be alert when small acts that lead to bullying appear so that they can be stopped immediately.

#### b. Portrait of Trauma

Trauma is one of the images that often appeared in the films about bullying discussed in this study. The scenes showing traumatized

victims of bullying can capture the attention of those who watched the films. In general, the word trauma does not sound like it has a positive meaning. Trauma is usually associated with unpleasant conditions. Basically, according to Anggadewi (2020, p. 2) people who experience trauma will feel mental pressure due to something bad happened to them, deep disappointment or things that hurt them physically.

For example, in the film *Bully* (2011), there is a scene showing that the younger sister of a bullied victim feels afraid of going to school because her brother is bullied at school:

Alex's sister: You're starting to make scared to go to middle school.

Alex: Why?

Alex's sister: Cause if you get picked on, I'm gonna get picked on. I already get picked on at school 'cause you're my brother.

(00:55:32)

There is also a scene portraying a mother sadly tells that her child was trauma:

Tina: My baby was missing two and three days of school a week because there's a gang of five boys threatening to beat him up at school every single day.

(00:40:44)

In the film *A Girl like Her* (2015), a character named Jessica who is a victim of bullying at school expresses her sadness and severe trauma:

Jessica: I can't. I can't. I can't do it. I can't do it anymore; I just can't put up with it. I can't put up with it anymore; I'm done. I can't. I can't do it; I just don't know how much more of this I can take; It's not gonna get better, it's gonna get worse. It's never gonna end; I just feel like, I have no way out.

(00:52:13)

*Wonder* (2017) also shows a scene where a victim of bullying Auggie feels traumatized and even hates his own body because his classmate insulted him:

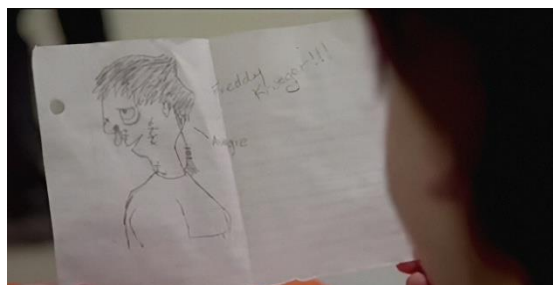


Figure 3. *Wonder* (2017) – Auggie’s face was drawn by the bully for insulting purposes (00:24:10)

Auggie was sad and asked his mother why he had an ugly face. However, his mother encouraged him by telling him that he was not ugly at all. The worries and fears experienced by victims of bullying as shown in the film dialogs above will make their condition worse. An individual who experiences trauma from a bad incident will tend to face more problems and difficulties in his life. Akasyah et al. (2018) revealed that the effects of bullying experienced by the victim can be in any forms and the psychological condition of the victim is also likely to be affected.

Prolonged trauma may cause a person to feel uncomfortable, anxious, and afraid. This is what Sulisrudatin (2015, p. 58) says that trauma can be the cause to the emergence of various psychological disorders in victims of bullying. In other words, the trauma can disrupt a person’s mental stability. The worst thing that can occur as a result of trauma is the act of ending one’s life. News that often circulated in various media shows that traumatized bullying victims who commit suicide is not a lie. This incident will happen because a person with a serious trauma may lose his or her self-control.

Thus, Bullying should not be taken lightly because those who are traumatized by the bullying that happened to them can develop intentions or thoughts to end their lives (Gomba & Tsai, 2012, p. 166; Prasetyo et al., 2016, p. 37; Shidiqi & Suprapti, 2013, p. 91). So, the three portraits that are often shown in films about bullying can basically symbolize acts of violence that need to be solved immediately. This finding can also convey that American film (with the theme of bullying) tend to portray bullying as a condition identical with physical violence, verbal violence and trauma experienced by an individual (a victim of bullying).

### The Conceptualization of Bullying

The theory of representation applied to the analysis of films about bullying has led to the process of interpreting the concept of bullying. It is not only limited to the violent acts toward other people, but the concept of bullying can be explored even more deeply to figure out what is represented by bullying. The results of analysis and interpretation of the data show that basically, bullying can represent three kinds of conditions as presented in the following table:

Table 1. Three Conditions Represented by Bullying

Representation of Bullying	The lack of attention from family
	The social environment
	The powerlessness of individual

From a representational point of view, bullying can construct the three types of conditions above which may also be perceived as factors that trigger for the emergence of bullying behavior in an individual. In other words, when viewed from the perspective of the bully, it can be seen that these three conditions may contribute to the bullying behavior.



a. The Lack of Attention from Family

Attention is generally known as a person's ability to concentrate on someone by involving the learning process for a certain period of time (Fiorentino, 2004, p. 1). The attention discussed in this context is the attention of parents to their children. The link between family and bullying cannot be separated because in reality, family conditions also influence an individual's behavior and way of thinking. Attention from parents in a family, for example in the form of continuous communication is needed by their children during the developmental period (Arifin et al., 2018, p. 934; Asih & Renggani, 2019, p. 180). Family as the smallest community in society is certainly very essential in terms of learning basic values for character building (Iswan et al., 2022, p. 1603). This point provides an explanation that the connection between parents and children is an important key. This means that a good relationship between parent and kids in the form of communication, family discussions, expressions of affection, etc. needs to be taken into account.

For instance, the film *A Girl like Her* (2015) depicts that the bully named Avery regrets her actions and admits her mistake as shown in the following dialog:

Avery: Yeah, but I mean, who would I talk to? I have nobody. My mom doesn't talk to me. My dad doesn't talk. My friends care about real life. They care about shopping.  
(01:19:09)

The dialog reveals that the bully has a serious problem in her family. The absence of care and communication between parents and children is the root of various problems and one of them is bullying. The importance of good relations with family members was also

expressed by Thomas et al. (2017, p. 7) who argued that family relations can be useful to help avoid various kinds of emotional problems such as depression and to form good attitudes. Even though in form, the family is small in society, it still has a very significant function in terms of providing a sense of security, educating children, giving affection, providing moral support, and so on (Dale & Smith, 2013, p. 208).

As an example of the importance of family care, the film *Wonder* (2017) portrays a victim of bullying named Auggie who ends up getting an award from his school emphasizing the role his family plays in giving him strength:

Auggie: My dad does for always making us laugh. And my mom does the most. For never giving up. On anything. Especially, me.  
(01:4:23)

When it is associated with acts of bullying committed by a child against other children at school, the opinion from Thomas et al. can be used as an essential note for everyone to see the significance of parental attention to their children. What a child does at school should be of concern to parents because this shows that there is good communication between parents and children.

Children who are in disharmonious families without proper communication between parents and children, without advice from parents and without good upbringing, can easily learn bad things and one of them is bullying his or her weaker classmates. In addition, from the psychological perspective, as the most important small group in a society consisting of parents and children, family is basically assessed from the interactions between family members (Popov & Ilesanmi,

2015, p. 255). A bully who vents his dissatisfaction, rage or frustration by bullying his or her schoolmates is a mistake. If this keeps happening, the victim of bullying will probably do the same to other people. It will be seen as a vicious circle that will go on and on. Thus, if the meaning bullying is examined more deeply, the role of family in giving attention to their children would become a key behind the concept of bullying.

#### b. The Social Environment

When talking about the conceptualizing the term bullying the role of social environment cannot be ruled out because the fact is that bullying really occurs in society. What is meant by the social environment in this context is any situation, atmosphere or around an individual (outside the family) that can influence him or her to commit acts of bullying. Related to the social environment, people often think whether it can affect the behavior or attitude of an individual. Many studies suggested that there is indeed a close relationship between the social environment and a person's behavior. The social environment can usually be perceived as a dynamic condition formed in a society where a group of people join in bringing different background, thoughts, attitude and activities. (Pinoa et al., 2020, p. 36). This condition may affect the way people to behave or act because of the influence of the people around them, for example, hang-out friends, neighbors, schoolmates, etc.

It is said that the social environment plays an essential role in a person's life because according to Dude (2022, p. 44) all stages of a person's life is always affected by his or her relationship with other individuals in society. A student who gets influence from the social

environment can come from anyone. This is also emphasized by Arifin et al. (2018, p. 932) that bad behaviors such as theft, fights, drug abuse, etc. can be influenced by association with wrong friends. Thus, bullying can also be perceived from the same point of view as explained by Arifin et al.

As an example, in the film *Wonder* (2018), a character named Jack befriends the bully Julian. The bully always makes fun of Auggie and Jack is also influenced by Julian joining him on the insults:

Boy: It really does look like him

Julian: This part right?

Boy: Yeah.

Jack: I mean, he's always reminded me of, like, the shrunken head, you know?

Julian: Or an orc.

Boy: Yeah.

Julian: If I look like him, I'd swear I'd put a hood over my face every day.

Jack: If I look like him, I think I'd kill myself.

Julian: Why do you hang out with him so much, Jack?

Jack: Yeah. I dunno. Tushman asked me to be his welcome buddy and now he just follows me around everywhere.

Julian: Well, that must stink!

(00:45:13)

Jack, who at the first did not show a bad attitude towards Auggie, turned out to be influenced by his classmates and took part in insulting Auggie's appearance. The dialog above may indicate that an individual, especially a teenager, can often get negative influence from his friends and it will have an impact on his or her way of thinking, attitudes and behavior. In fact, an individual can get a lot of influence from his or her social environment, especially those related to his or her psychology. Scientific studies have also revealed that whether or not an individual is

mentally healthy may be connected to his or her relationship with other people as well as support from people around him or her (Prasetyo et al., 2016, p. 37). Perhaps it is true that if someone is in a positive social environment, which means that the people around him or her are always well-behaved, caring, giving advice, and carrying out useful activities, he might be influenced to behave like his or her friends too.

Talking about the social environment, the school is also an environment that can contribute to acts of bullying, especially if the one doing the bullying is seniors or teachers. This can give the bully students an idea that school does not mind it, so they can do it freely. Several scenes in the film *Bully* (2011) show that schools or campuses are often negligent or fail to suppress bullying cases and do not even want to be blamed if the bullying takes its toll. Here are some of the dialogs from the film:

Jackie: You send your kids to school with the assumption that if they're out of your care, they're in someone else's who is just as capable as you of keeping them safe, and I don't feel like that. He's not safe on that bus.

Kim: It's hard. It is hard. And you know what? This was my dad on Thursday. This is my granddaughter and her new baby brother. I'd be sitting there, crying, just like you if anything happened to those two kids. We don't want anything to happen to these babies. Any of them. This is totally wrong, totally wrong that this situation would happen. Absolutely. But ...

Jackie: It just seems to me, if it's a few kids, then you take away the few kids.

(01:10:42)

Kelby: And another teacher told me how they burned fags and kept talking about it with me in the classroom, and everyone

was laughing. And they knew it was hurting me, and they kept going.

(00:20:10)

Kelby: Yeah, you know, I went in thinking it was gonna be a new year, and people were used to me. And I went into class, and the class was already full, and I sat down, and everyone around me moved seats. Like every single person. I was the only one sitting in a little circle. That was enough.

(01:25:19)

The dialogs above reflect that the parents of bullying victims were disappointed that schools did not see bullying as something serious. Schools, in this case, teachers also often fail to act to stop bullying and sometimes they are also unable to do much (Veenstra et al., 2014, p. 1136). In other words, bullying will never be overcome if children continue to see various incidents or experience of bullying in their surroundings and society. Therefore, discussions about bullying cannot simply ignore social environment factor. The phenomenon of bullying is not a simple matter because it involves many conditions that cause it to occur. Thus, if it is interpreted from the perspective of representation theory, it is a negative behavior that happens in society and is strongly related to the social environment they bully lives in.

### c. The Powerlessness of Individual

Various kinds of conditions can be experienced by people in society. Each of these conditions is closely related to one's emotions. One of the conditions that is actually quite often experienced by many people is a feeling of powerlessness. Power is always perceived as something essential. There are people who have power and there are people who are powerless in society. Thus, according

to Overbeck et al. (2006, p. 480) people who have social power can easily influence others who have no power and the powerless people cannot do the same thing.

Based on the opinion of Wilkinson et al. (2010, p. 910) a number of studies from the social and psychological fields have revealed that power can influence the tendency to behave or do something in social context. The statement from Wilkinson et al. may indicate that individuals who in their daily lives experience pressure from a group of people who are more powerful in society and have no power to fight and only accept it are those who are considered powerless. This point provides an understanding that many teenagers in society have experienced the feeling of being underestimated and they think that they need an action to show that they are superior and powerful. One of the things they do is to bully their classmates who they think to have flaws and weakness to be insulted, made fun of and hurt.

In addition to understanding how feeling of powerlessness can affect a person's life, there is a research conducted by Yang et al. (2015, p. 1) which found that individuals who feel powerless believe that they are seen and treated inhumanely by those who have power and they tend to feel ashamed, disappointed, anxious, angry or anything negative. This condition may lead him or her to do whatever to show his or her existence. So, teenagers who are unable to think positively and control their emotions may feel powerless because they have to follow the rules of house, schools and society. As a result, they will express their feelings of powerlessness in many ways which are generally rebellious, destructive as well as violent.

Emotional outburst due to powerlessness shown by teenagers according to several studies may be related to the search for identity. This condition was also explained by Yanwar et al. (2020, p. 596) that adolescence is perceived as a time when individuals are looking for their identity, for example, looking for answers about who they are, what their life purposes are, what their specialties are, what their position in society is, and so on. This point may reflect that those who bully actually vent their frustration and anger over something that limits their freedom in everyday life but they feel they have no power over it.

## CONCLUSION

There are several essential points that can be used as conclusions regarding the study of bullying in American films. First, the issue of bullying still often appears in various media in various places. This is because cases of bullying still occur, especially in schools. Second, cases of bullying are also frequently used as themes in popular American films and for this reason, they deserve to be studied. Third, the results obtained from an analysis of the films about bullying show that there are three portraits related to bullying that often appeared as the scenes of the studied films such as portraits of physical violence, verbal violence (verbal bullying) as well as trauma. Thus, it can indicate that bullying is inseparable from these three portraits. They can be an indication that bullying must be stopped immediately because it not justified and can bring about a bad impact on the victims. Finally, based on Hall's the of representation, American popular culture, especially, Hollywood movies represent bullying as a lack of affection from the family, the social environment and the powerlessness of an individual.

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## ESPOUSING ABORTION RIGHTS: A CASE STUDY ON THE SATANIC TEMPLE

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines how a nontheistic organization called The Satanic Temple (TST) fights for religious freedom for its members, particularly in abortion rights in the US. Ronald Inglehart's secularization framework is employed to conduct a more in-depth analysis of this group's efforts to voice religious freedom for its members, particularly on the abortion issue. Therefore, this study also provides an in-depth examination of TST's strategies regarding the abortion issue. The finding shows that TST has far-reaching implications not only for their efforts against the new abortion law but also for the group's presence amidst the religious majority environment of the US. Furthermore, another finding also reveals that TST's efforts in legal proceedings have yet to be treated fairly. TST has a strong legal argument because TST members interpret their fundamental tenets and have an abortion ritual. However, solid legal opinions are not always sufficient. In response to legal challenges, judges have shown reluctance to evaluate Satanist claims on their merits, preferring to invent procedural criticisms. The ruling did not hinder TST as much as it prevented the problem.

**Keywords:** *religious freedom; reproduction rights; Satanism; secularism*

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## INTRODUCTION

The abortion debate has been never-ending; from the beginning, the conflict surrounding reproduction arose because of the choices made by non-judicial actors and the political and social shifts those individuals confronted. Despite the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe V. Wade* legalizing abortion on demand in the first trimester in 1973, abortion has remained a highly charged, divisive, and even violent topic of debate ever since. Approximately half of all states are on the verge of banning abortion, and if they get the opportunity, politicians could push for a nationwide ban. States have constructed a lattice work of abortion law since the Supreme Court's 1973 judgments in *Roe V. Wade* and *Doe V. Bolton*, codifying, regulating, and limiting whether, when, and under what circumstances a person may obtain an abortion. Conflicts over abortion, school prayer, and other "social regulatory" issues differ from many items on the political agenda; they center on "community values, moral practices, and norms of interpersonal conduct" rather than on the allocation of federal funds, redistribution of national resources, or economic regulation (Tatalovich & Daynes, 1988).

In various state and federal court proceedings, The Satanic Temple (TST) has asserted these arguments on behalf of the pregnant members and sought an abortion when the lawsuits were filed. TST attempts to exempt its members from abortion regulations by using this law and this campaign. TST is one of the religious movements examined in this paper regarding how they voice religious freedom for their members, especially for abortion rights.

This religious group claims that the religious rights of its members are exempted from state laws or regulations that restrict access to abortion. TST has long argued that its members should have the same rights as members of mainstream religions. TST, describing itself as a nontheistic branch of Satanism, wishes to exempt its followers from such rules. TST is a religion that believes in benevolence and empathy among all people, rejects oppressive authority, and advocates for common sense and justice. Since 2013, TST has fought to expand religious liberty notions that the conservative Supreme Court has applied to Christians to its members. These Satanists are on a sacred mission to protect women's abortion rights using the same religious liberty argument as Hobby Lobby. The argument is comparable to that of Hobby Lobby, but it pertains to state abortion restrictions rather than federal insurance requirements. The church also desires to overturn the Supreme Court's "neutral" and "generally applicable" rulings. That precedent has been questioned and eroded, but it remains solid Law. This might change if the Supreme Court hears a case this term. Since the beginning of TST voicing their demands, the State has been trying to frame the TST battle as one of the Satanists versus Christians. However, this polarization is not the case as TST is not protesting against rallying for pluralism and real religious liberty. They are on the front lines of the war against encroaching theocracy.

This magnitude of reversal is almost unprecedented, especially for a case determined nearly 50 years ago. As President Biden asserts, the Supreme Court's decision to invalidate the right to an abortion will deprive American women of control over their own lives, who urged voters to defend their rights

in upcoming elections. President Biden's speech at the White House on June 24 said, "It's a sad day for the court and the nation" (Reuters, 2022). This overturning will undoubtedly have far-reaching consequences for many people, especially women.

Hence, how TST struggles to voice religious freedom for members of their group will be analyzed. The secularization theory by Ronald Inglehart will be applied to understand better how TST advocates for religious freedom for their members, particularly in abortion rights, which are related to secularization in the US.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **The Reproductive Battles by TST**

TST is trying to exempt its members from state abortion laws. This minority problem, at first, is treated as a joke. Still, it is no longer a joke because TST is taking the Christian right's crusade for religious liberty seriously and saying that it has to be suitable for everyone if it's good for Christianity. Only before the Supreme Court answers whether they believe in religious liberty for all. Not surprisingly, in each case decided this year, the dominant Christian religion won in its religious freedom claims. It is thus reasonable to ask whether the Supreme Court would feel the same way about religious liberty claims brought on behalf of minority religions. Because abortion laws in the US are religiously motivated, these restrictions would not exist unless the state imposed their religious convictions. TST, in particular, has fought this war over abortion. "One's body is inviolable, subject to one's own will alone," says the religion's third tenet. TST argues that the same US laws that protect Christian beliefs

should also protect those who support the right to abortion.

Significant difficulties and risks to reproductive liberties lie ahead; abortion restrictions are being imposed around the country at an alarming rate. Despite this setback, TST is hell-bent on fighting back. TST has legitimate religious liberty claims that they will continue to assert aggressively. This paper will provide an overview of TST's current efforts to protect its members' reproductive rights, divided by religious and legal dimensions.

### **Religious Dimension**

The abortion debate, on the other hand, demonstrates the complexities of the relationship between religion and gender equality. Abortion is the defining issue for the women's rights movement: reproductive options exemplify freedom for proponents of women's rights. Throughout history, perspectives on abortion have changed, and religions have contributed to these alterations. Abortion is a legitimate concern for religions, whose teachings exhibit striking similarities and differences. In general, but not unanimously, religions are opposed to induced abortion. Behind such significant other conflicts, as previously stated, one is sure to find a religious perspective conflict. The conflict over abortion is religious in the superficial sense that certain religious communities have been among the most ardent proponents of anti-abortion laws (Badertscher, 1976). Regarding TST's religious efforts, this religious movement has conducted several religious campaigns since their inception, particularly concerning abortion rights for its members.

### **The Satanic Abortion Ritual**

Religions, as the courts pointed out, have rituals. Likewise, TST, which is not at all mystical and often dull, includes the medical or surgical abortion itself and dispels any feelings of guilt, shame, or mental discomfort that a patient may feel when opting for a medically safe abortion. TST made a religious announcement on 5 August 2020; they revealed The Satanic Abortion Ritual (TSAR) that sanctifies a woman's self-worth and freedom from oppressive forces. This religious ceremony entails performing a voluntary abortion while reciting two of the Tenets and making a personal affirmation. Participants can incorporate additional meaningful rites to foster confidence and affirm their bodily autonomy. TSAR is a protecting rite and a dangerous ritual. Its goal is to eliminate the guilt, shame, and mental anguish a patient may suffer from opting for a legal and medically safe abortion.

TST has performed satanic rituals in public to challenge the monopoly of Christianity on the religious landscape; one of the rituals is the satanic abortion ritual. This ritual provides spiritual comfort and affirms bodily autonomy, self-worth, and freedom from coercive forces by affirming TST's Seven Tenets. The pattern is not intended to convince a person to have an abortion. Instead, it sanctifies the abortion process by instilling confidence and protecting bodily rights when undergoing a safe and scientific procedure. Reciting their third and fifth tenets is required as part of the religious ritual developed by TST to end an unintended pregnancy in the first trimester. During the ritual, a personal affirmation provides spiritual comfort while affirming bodily autonomy and self-worth. As written on the main page of their website,

satanic abortions are protected by religious liberty laws.

Following the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), first-trimester abortions are now exempt from unnecessary regulations for all individuals practicing TST's religious abortion ritual. The government is prohibited by this law from interfering with a person's free exercise of religion, including religious rituals. It also exempts Satanists from fulfilling unnecessary medical and unscientific requirements, such as mandatory waiting periods or unwanted sonograms interfering with their ritual practice. Misinformation about abortion and guilt for pursuing that option can be challenging. It can be exhausting and frustrating to shrug off and dismiss internal and external pressures, especially those driven by religious convictions that disregard the beliefs and freedoms of others. Even when recognizing these criticisms are invalid, they can make an already troubling time even harder.

TST contends that because abortion is part of the ritual, subjecting a woman to a waiting period is akin to the government getting involved with baptism or communion. The abortion ritual recognizes that abortion is health care, Greaves says. Religious freedom ensures Satanists access to safe abortions free from unwarranted state interference. The purpose of the ritual is not to encourage someone undecided about having an abortion. Instead, the ritual aids in reinforcing their decision and warding off the repercussions of unfair persecution, which can lead to a deviation from the pathways of scientific reasoning and free will that Satanists try to embody. Jane Essex, the spokesperson for TST's religious reproductive rights campaign, clarified through one of the videos on their

channel on YouTube that they are not claiming that all abortions are satanic, and they are not claiming that all Satanists who get pregnant should have or are required to have an abortion. It is strictly for the Satanists who have chosen to have an abortion and want to participate in this abortion ritual. The ritual is meant for people who identify with TST's religious beliefs and those sincerely interested in their religious practices. Abortions performed as part of TST's abortion ritual are satanic, exempting them from unnecessary and undue burden regulations. Like a ritual in general, this satanic religious abortion ritual also has procedures for its members.

TST's abortion ritual can be used to deal with specific issues or avoid unproductive feelings. As explained above, the purpose of the ritual is not to persuade someone to have an abortion if they are undecided. Instead, the ritual assists in off the effects of unjust persecution, which can cause one to stray from the paths of scientific reasoning and free will that Satanists strive to embody. TST's abortion ritual may be used to address specific concerns or to overcome negative emotions. Because rituals are profoundly personal to people who do them, there are many different ways to perform them. The ritual can be modified based on personal tastes and material availability. There is no need to buy anything special or follow every instruction. What matters is the spirit and overall intention. One can also use their favorite destruction ritual to target any undesired sentiments triggered by difficulty choosing to have an abortion. Feel free to use or remove whatever they like from this one to create their own. The ritual, which includes the abortion itself, spans the entirety of the pregnancy termination procedure. This ritual is intended to alleviate some of these tensions and enable the patient to pursue their

decision using the Third and Fifth Tenets as a guide. TST's rituals adhere to their tenets, which value science and assert bodily autonomy to express their deeply held beliefs. There are steps to be performed before, during, and after the medical or surgical abortion. TST explains how they wrote on their website about preparation before the ritual.

Before performing the ritual, you may choose to review the safety, the debunked claims, and the scientific reality regarding abortion. You may also choose to read stories or listen to podcasts about people who made great sacrifices in the struggle to establish the reproductive rights we have today. These stories can be inspirational and may subdue stigmas you might feel from those who oppose abortion. Your ability to choose to terminate a pregnancy is consistent with the ideals of liberty and freedom. Be proud of pursuing what you want for your life despite opposition (TST, *Religious Reproductive Rights*, 2020).

TST has divided the abortion procedure into two, namely medical abortions and surgical abortions. The first procedure for medical abortions ritual.

Immediately before taking the medication(s) to terminate your pregnancy, look at your reflection to be reminded of your personhood and responsibility to yourself. Focus on your intent. Take deep breaths, and make yourself comfortable. When ready, read the Third Tenet aloud to begin the ritual. After swallowing the medication(s), take another deep breath and recite the Fifth Tenet. After you have passed the embryo, return to your reflection, and recite the personal affirmation. Feel doubts dissipating and your confidence growing as you have just undertaken a decision that affirms your autonomy and free will. The religious abortion ritual is now



complete (TST, *Religious Reproductive Rights*, 2020).

The next procedure is for surgical abortions ritual.

Prior to receiving any anesthetic or sedation, look at your reflection to be reminded of your personhood and your responsibility to yourself. Focus on your intent. Take deep breaths, and make yourself comfortable. When you are ready, say the Third Tenet and Fifth Tenet aloud. You may now undergo surgery. After the surgery is completed and any anesthetic has worn off, return to your reflection and recite your affirmation. Feel doubts dissipating and your confidence growing as you have just undertaken a decision that affirms your autonomy and free will. The religious abortion ritual is now complete (The Satanic Temple, *Religious Reproductive Rights*, 2020).

The last part explains that religious liberty laws protect satanic abortions. Following the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) ensures Satanists have access to safe abortions free from unwarranted state interference. The followings are examples of requirements that cannot be enforced on Satanists.

Table 1. Requirements that cannot be Enforced on Satanists

	Mandatory Waiting Periods		Medically Unnecessary Sonograms
	The Requirement that Practitioners Withhold Certain Medical Information		Mandatory Listening to the Fetal Heartbeat
	Compulsory Counseling Prior to Abortion		Compulsory Burial or Cremation of Fetal Remains
	Required Reading Materials		

The information above is directly taken from the TST official website's original statements. TST's intent in the whole ritual is

to empower and allow patients to feel confident in their choices. They also added the implements for their tenants on their website. In this quiet space, they feel comfortable, allowing them to see their reflection and a copy of TST's Third and Fifth Tenets and their affirmation. Based on the source above, it can be seen that TST is well prepared for everything about supporting reproductive rights. TST raises important concerns about what constitutes a religion. Opponents of the group argue that abortion is a medical procedure, not a religious practice protected under the law.

### TST Asserts the Reproductive Rights Through Billboards

TST has launched billboard advertising campaigns in several states, such as Texas, Florida and Arizona, to promote what they call a "religious abortion ritual." Certain medically unnecessary and unscientific abortion rules, such as waiting periods or mandatory listening to the embryonic heartbeat, are not required of Satanists living in such states. The billboards were also strategically placed near crisis pregnancy centers, which are frequently misconstrued with abortion facilities. To the uninformed layperson, those centers appear to provide abortion services, but they really provide information that discourages women from undertaking the surgery. A billboard from TST along Interstate 30 in Texas proclaims, "Abortion save lives!", the non-flashy billboard, which went up on 14 December 14 2020, may have caught the attention of drivers traveling westbound opposite the Bass Pro Shop. According to members of The Tactical Gym, which shares a parking lot with the billboard, the 10x40-foot billboard, which also reads, "Our religious abortion ritual averts many state restrictions",



has attracted much attention. Garland’s billboard is one of three that the organization has funded as part of a new ad campaign to educate local Satanists about their religious rights about abortion.



Figure 1. The Satanic Temple Billboards in Texas

Concerning the billboard, at least one Christian organization had started an online petition to have it removed before its lease expired on 14 January 2021. Following the *SpectrumNews* website, Greaves called a petition demanding that the billboard’s advertising business remove the ad as “hilarious and greatly misplaced”. “It’s a delusional sense of entitlement that somebody could think that an opinion contrary to their own, that is stated in straightforward terms on a billboard is worthy of some kind of legal intervention”, he added. In addition to Dallas, the organization has posted billboards in Houston and Miami, said Sydney Goodwin, TST’s Religious Reproductive Rights spokesperson. So far, the ads have inspired “overwhelmingly positive” reactions from TST members, she continued. In some states, women are subjected to humiliating and potentially deadly pre-abortion medical consultations and waiting periods before being permitted to have an abortion. The women are even obliged to bury or cremate the fetal remains in four states following the surgery. These government-imposed hurdles and public

humiliation serve no function other than to make abortion more difficult, emotionally devastating, and costly for women. The billboards of TST inform women that they can circumvent the restrictions by simply citing a satanic ritual.

Another billboard from the group outside of Miami depicts two smiling young women from the 1950s drinking bottled sodas and wearing button-down shirts and skirts. “Susan, you’re telling me I don’t have to endure a waiting period when I have an abortion?” says a word bubble over one of the women. “That’s true if you’re a SATANIST!” says the other woman. On the right side of the billboard, below the group’s logo of a horned goat skull over a pentagram, the words “Our Religious Abortion Ritual Averts Many State Restrictions” are printed.



Figure 2. TST Billboards in Miami

Unfortunately, some TST’s billboards, such as the previous billboard in Texas, could not be erected. TST filed a lawsuit against the Lamar Billboard Company for religious discrimination on 30 September 2020, in Arkansas state court, and contract breach after Lamar refused to post TST’s designs announcing its religious abortion ritual. Members are exempted from complying with many state regulations, such as mandatory waiting periods and counseling, that are not medically appropriate and violate TST’s religious beliefs. Religious groups appear to

have played a crucial role in determining how the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe V. Wade* decision was implemented in abortion, a policy issue intensely weighted with moral implications. Religious conservatives, outraged by *Roe V. Wade*, effectively stymied the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendments and began to agitate against abortion rights. TST claims that Lamar Advertising is preventing it from disclosing details of its "religious abortion ritual", which appears to be designed to help women circumvent state restrictions on the procedure (Elliot, 2020). To discourage women from having abortions, the plan called for eight billboards close to crisis pregnancy centers in Arkansas and Indiana. When TST inquired about which explicit elements of the designs Lamar found bothersome, she was told that "all of the content" was "misleading and offensive." TST stated that it is willing to update its designs. However, because Lamar refused to specify any component they assumed was troublesome, TST could not offer revisions. Through the *PRNewswire* (2020), TST asserts that Lamar's actions violate the Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority's (ACRA) nationally applicable anti-religious discrimination laws. Lamar objected to "all of the content" of TST's designs because they contain Satanic imagery.

Furthermore, TST claims Lamar acted in bad faith and has denied TST the ability to advertise its religious abortion ritual because it controls a large portion of the US billboard market. Lucien Greaves, a co-founder of TST and a spokesperson, asserts,

Even though it makes sense to worry about compelling a private entity to partake in speech or behavior that it finds

objectionable, this situation is unique. Lamar initially agreed to collaborate with us, and their apparent reason for rejecting him is his faith. Additionally, they practically control the market in some areas. Lamar can control public discourse in this way, and they are not allowed to exclude only religious voices they disagree with.

### **Legal Dimension**

Satanism has long been brought up as a hypothetical in legal discussions about the separation of church and state. TST was now a known quantity in the legal calculus surrounding these debates. TST, an IRS-recognized atheist church, fights for religious liberty using legal strategies similar to Christian groups. TST has brought numerous legal actions to defend its members' right to abortions by claiming special privileges as a religion. TST believes using the courts to protect its members' rights is essential. TST, which advocates empathy and the "freedom to offend", has filed at least seven lawsuits in many states, challenging the boundaries of religious expression. It claims to be seeking parity in the public sphere. Opponents claim it is simply mocking Christianity while claiming to be fighting for justice. According to Lucien Greaves, who co-founded the church in 2013, believes that the lawsuits will broaden religious equality and freedom of speech to benefit all Americans, regardless of whether they agree with his faith (Larson, 2021). The legal system has traditionally been used to effect social change by establishing long-lasting precedents. This part outlines how TST's ongoing efforts intend to legally challenge some states for violating its members' religious rights related to abortion issues.



## **TST v. TX Health and Human Svc**

Texas' controversial anti-abortion bill, known as the "Heartbeat Bill," went into force on 1 September 2021, after the Supreme Court declined to intervene, prohibits abortions after a heartbeat are detected, usually around six weeks after conception and before many women realize they are pregnant. The law contains a clause that allows people to sue anyone they believe performed the procedure after six weeks or who "aides and abets" it, which has sparked a slew of legal challenges (Kaufman, 2021).

In response, TST announced that it would strike back by bringing up the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, or RFRA, to seek a religious exemption from abortion restrictions. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) of 1993 limits the government's ability to burden religious practices. The Satanic Temple has filed a suit in the Southern District of Texas Houston Division of the United States District Court, claiming that certain state-imposed restrictions on abortion offend the religious convictions of TST members. The Supreme Court ruled that abortion is a constitutional right in the landmark abortion cases *Roe V. Wade* in 1973 and *Planned Parenthood V. Casey* in 1992. The question is how severely states can still enact laws restricting access to abortion. Since *Roe V. Wade*, this is the first time a state has effectively imposed a six-week abortion ban. It is also the first abortion restriction that relies solely on private individuals enforcing the law through civil lawsuits rather than state officials enforcing it through criminal or civil penalties. Laycock, an associate professor of religious studies at Texas State University, describes that the state's new law was intended to effectively ban all abortions while shielding

the state from judicial scrutiny. He also emphasizes a critical point about this law; the bill prohibits abortion after six weeks - the point at which Texas lawmakers claim a fetus's heartbeat can be detectable. Before six weeks, most women are unaware that they are pregnant, and Texas abortion providers estimate that 85% of abortions in the state are carried out after this time (2021).

Furthermore, the act allows public members to file a lawsuit against anyone who performs or facilitates an illegal abortion for a statutory minimum of \$10,000 per abortion, plus court and attorneys' fees (Keshner, 2021). Texas law, such as Texas Senate Bill 8, also known as the Texas Heartbeat Act, places unscientific and unnecessary restrictions on abortion access. The law appears to contradict TST members' sincerely held religious beliefs, and much more notably, it impedes TST members' ability to perform this critical, deeply personal religious ritual. Lucien Greaves (2021) once explained how TST views this matter through one interview.

People frequently need abortion, and particularly in this environment now, where there are really strong efforts to instill shame in people over having to get an abortion or you're trying to talk them out of the decision they make, we felt it was important to set up a supportive environment.

This suit is part of TST's ongoing efforts to secure abortion rights access in the face of anti-abortion legislation and court rulings throughout the US. As pro-life movements and heartbeat legislation gain traction in the US TST is determined to fight back. "We'll develop more elaborate and secure ways to keep reproductive rights accessible to our

membership”, Greaves promises (Carmina, 2021).

### **TST Demands FDA Grants Unrestricted Access to Abortion Drugs**

TST is also moving forward with another new strategy. TST has filed a letter to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) asserting that its members should be able to obtain abortion drugs without having to go through any regulatory hoops. The legal counsel for the religious organization is arguing to the FDA that TST members should continue to have access to abortion-inducing medicine under the state’s religious medical exemption. “Access to Misoprostol requires a prescription, and Mifepristone can only be obtained through an approved prescriber and dispensed in accordance with particular rules” as per TST asserted on its website. The Satanic Temple proposed a solution in which Satanic women could obtain a doctor’s note indicating that these medications are safe to use and then receive medication directly from TST rather than a state-approved provider.

TST's lawyers wrote to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in August last year, requesting that the company be allowed to access abortifacients without being subject to FDA rules. Misoprostol (a first-trimester abortifacient) is normally only available with a prescription, while Mifepristone can only be purchased from an approved physician and dispensed according to strict guidelines. TST, on the other hand, has asked to be able to directly supply these abortifacients to Satanists who want to have an abortion for religious reasons. TST is totally committed to ensuring the health and safety of its members; the issue is governmental control over whether TST members can receive these pharmaceuticals.

According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Academy of Family Physicians' definition of "contraindications" to having an abortion, The Satanic Temple's ritual involves a medical assessment. A Satanist would then go back to TST with a doctor's note stating that there are no contraindications, and TST would then provide the member with the abortifacients so they could participate in the ritual. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) was enacted to ensure Native Americans had unrestricted access to peyote for religious rites. TST wants unrestricted access to abortifacients for religious purposes, which is consistent with this goal. Given that peyote is a Schedule I drug with no recognized medical value, TST's request for prescription medicine access is more likely to be approved under Federal law. The letter makes clear that there is religious ritual associated with Satanic Abortions, as they mentioned it on the letter:

TST’s membership uses these products in a sacramental setting. The Satanic Abortion Ritual is a sacrament which surrounds and includes the abortive act. It is designed to combat feelings of guilt, doubt, and shame and to empower the member to assert or reassert power and control over their own mind and body. The REMS (risk evaluation and mitigation strategy) prescription requirement substantially interferes with The Satanic Abortion Ritual because the Government impedes the members’ access to the medication involved in the ritual (2021).

In other words, the Satanists would not misuse these medications. Anyone who wants an abortion would still have to see a doctor first to ensure there are no health issues, and then the member would return to the doctor for a follow-up evaluation after taking medicine. There is no need to be concerned about health

risks associated with allowing Satanists access to these drugs. TST believed the Court favored subjective religious beliefs regarding medicine over objective scientific facts. On 31 August 2021, TST sent a demand letter to the FDA asking to remove the prescription requirement for TST members who perform the abortion ritual subject to a doctor's examination and medical follow-up.

### **TST Sues States for Infringing on Religious Rights**

TST of Salem is suing Indiana and Idaho in federal court over their abortion bans after the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs* to protect its members' access to abortion. According to the TST's official website, the most recent restrictions on abortion access in the two states make exceptions for severe health risks, lethal fetal anomalies, and cases of rape or incest. However, they do not exempt abortion based on religious beliefs (TST, 2022). The four critical legal arguments in both of these cases are as follows.

- a) Restricting members' ability to use the Abortion Ritual contradicts their religious beliefs.
- b) Forcing a woman who does not want to become pregnant to give birth would constitute an unconstitutional seizure of her property, in this case, her uterus, without compensation.
- c) In violation of the 13th Amendment, forced pregnancy subjects pregnant women to involuntary servitude because the state forces them to provide safety, nourishment, and other services without their consent.
- d) By making abortions resulting from protected sex illegal, the restrictions create a group of people who are subject to discrimination because they are unable to have an abortion after becoming unintentionally pregnant.

The details of each lawsuit are as follow.

### **TST V. Holcomb et al (Indiana)**

TST has filed a lawsuit against Governor Eric Holcomb of Indiana and a near-total abortion ban, claiming that it violates their followers' religious rights and the US Constitution. This action is a response to the State of Indiana's post-*Dobbs* abortion ban on 15 September 2022. The lawsuit, filed on 21 September, claims that a female member of TST who lives in Indiana is being denied the freedom to exercise her religious views by being refused access to abortion under Indiana's new abortion ban. In a press release issued by TST, Indiana's new regulations only allow for exceptions for serious health risks, lethal fetal anomalies, and cases where pregnancy results from rape or incest, but not for religious beliefs.

While several states passed bans before *Dobbs* took effect, Indiana is the first state to pass an abortion ban since the overturn of *Roe V. Wade*. Even in those cases, Indiana law prohibits abortion clinics from performing abortions. W. James Mac Naughton represents this religious organization in the lawsuit filed in US District Court in Indianapolis. "Because you own your uterus in the property sense, you have the right to control its disposition as a matter of property law", he explained. Those named defendants are Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb and Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita. According to a spokesperson for Rokita's office, the US Supreme Court decided earlier this year that the US Constitution does not protect abortion. "This new lawsuit simply provides weaker arguments for the same discredited right", the spokesperson added (Magdaleno, 2022). The new law prohibits abortions in cases of rape or

incest up to 10 weeks after fertilization when the pregnancy threatens the mother's life or long-term health, or in fatal fetal anomalies.

### **TST v. Little et al (Idaho)**

Religious groups have long participated in the debate over Idaho's strict abortion laws, with Catholic priests, evangelical Christian groups, and others frequently lobbying legislators and filing legal briefs supporting abortion bans. TST has now joined the fray. TST has launched a lawsuit against Idaho Governor Brad Little, claiming that Idaho's new abortion law violated its Idaho members' religious freedom, which the US Constitution guarantees. The lawsuit in Idaho was filed to protect religious rights to abortion and reproduction. TST's director of Campaign Operations, Erin Helian, asserted, "Forcing people to go through pregnancy when they do not want to is blatantly an overreach of these extremist officials' religious dogmatism into politics, and TST will not allow that to stand" (TST, 2022). Besides the Governor, TST is suing Lawrence Wasden in his official capacity as Attorney General for enforcing the law. TST further claims that Idaho subjects unwillingly pregnant women to involuntary servitude by compelling them to supply oxygen, nourishment, antibodies, body heat, and other services to an embryo or fetus during gestation (Boone, 2022). Lastly, TST claims that the state wrongfully discriminates against many pregnant women by only allowing abortion for those subjected to rape or incest and not for those who became pregnant unintentionally.

Following the National Conference of State Legislatures, at least 21 states, including Idaho, Indiana, and Florida, have passed legislation prohibiting undoing

government meddling in religious freedom. The laws are not precisely equivalent, but they all state that governments cannot interfere with an individual's ability to exercise religious freedom unless there is a compelling government interest. Whenever there is a compelling reason, interference with a person's religious freedom should be done in the least restrictive way.

Nevertheless, spiritual beliefs regarding abortion and other reproductive health issues are frequently nuanced, even within religious groups. In September, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) also filed a lawsuit in Indiana, alleging that the abortion ban violates Jewish theological teachings and theology, with Islamic, Episcopal, Unitarian Universalist, and Pagan faiths permitting abortions under certain circumstances (Boone, 2022). Thus, according to attorney James Mac Naughton, who represents female members of TST through *Newsweek*, "This is what works for everyone. This isn't the Angels versus the Satanists, good versus evil" (Bartov, 2022). "You must respect everyone's point of view in order for it to work for everyone. I don't want to live in an America where people start using their religious beliefs as a crutch to make everyone else live by them", he continued. TST believes that individuals can only decide about their bodies and that forced pregnancy violates their rights.

### **CONCLUSION**

TST significantly impacts how people discuss "religion", morality, and the characteristics of a religiously plural democracy. By asking for religious rights for non-theistic Satanists and doing so in court, where they must consider their arguments

more seriously, TST forces Americans to think about what “religion” means in a country that promises religious freedom. The separation of religion and state has paved the way for contemporary democratic government. The positive effects of religion are not to be underestimated. Eventually, restrictive abortion laws are the result of political pressure from religious groups that oppose abortion on moral grounds. Such organizations have the right to hold and act upon their beliefs. They are even allowed to impose those beliefs upon their members in a free society, so long as such membership is voluntary. However, they cannot force their views on people who do not share them. Applying a religious group’s moral code through the courts is unconstitutional in a secular and pluralistic state.

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## TRANSLATIONAL CONSTRUCTION OF AMERICAN CAPITALIST IDENTITY THROUGH RELIGIOUS TEXTS: CASE OF “DON’T FORGET THE SABBATH” AND “INGAT HARI SABAT”

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### ABSTRACT

This article investigates the construction of American capitalist identity by translating religious texts. Based on American Studies interdisciplinary method, the paper examines Crosby’s “Don’t Forget the Sabbath” and its Indonesian translation “Ingat Hari Sabat”. The focus of the study is to explore how and why the translation of the song lyric constructs American capitalist identity. The research is based on transnational American studies, poststructuralism, and Kristeva’s notions of revolt and nihilism. Schmidt’s model for conceptual metaphor (CM) translation and Kövecses’ notion of conceptual metaphor in American studies are employed. It is found that the rate of revolt is higher than that of nihilism in the translation. The revolt consists of the subversion of the American work ethic by resisting the concept of the Sabbath as a conduit into which capitalistic individualism is projected. Moreover, it is discovered that only the metaphors that manifest the concept of Sabbath as structure are annihilated because they reinforce evangelical and missionary traditions. The translation is, therefore, done to make American global evangelical Protestant culture fit the Indonesian local taste. Furthermore, it is found that Indonesian nihilism subdues the TT to another American national mythic narrative: manifest destiny.

**Keywords:** *American capitalist identity; CM translation; nihilism; revolt*

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## INTRODUCTION

Before the contemporary globalization phenomenon emerged, American global evangelical Protestant missiology and evangelical movements had spread worldwide. They proliferated American identity ideologies and hegemonic ideals in many countries. Mark Noll contends that since the nineteenth century, the evangelical movements that had expanded within the United States have grown globally (2006, p. 39). This means that global Protestant dynamism through its various cultural artifacts has occasioned the grasping of American identity ideologies among the receiving countries of the gospel.

The American national narrative of capitalism has been variously referred to as the American Dream (Ghosh, 2013), the way to wealth (Franklin, 1758), American capitalism (Hughes, 2018), the mythology of American individualism (Northcott, 2004), narrative of progress (Collins, 2007), and myth of self-made man or social mobility (Paul, 2014). The American narrative of capitalism or capitalistic individualism is in its essence, connected with the postmillennial optimistic vision whereby people are believed to be provided with equal progress and entrepreneurial opportunity to live a better world before the ushering of the Kingdom of God on the land of the United States (Northcott, p. 17). This myth is rooted in the Puritan belief “in the imminence of the coming judgment of the world”. It is a Puritan biblical justification of individualism, for according to the scripture, each person will stand before God to account for his deeds. In the mythology of American exceptionalism, the myth of individualism constitutes the economic dimension of the

exceptional national identity of the United States (Paul, p. 15). It is one of the three dimensions of American exceptionalism alongside religiosity and patriotism or religious and political exceptionalism.

American capitalistic individualism has been historically conceived as the prerequisite for individual success to rationalize the politics of social mobility. It has been conceived as progress or self-improvement whereby the individual becomes “the self-made man” by thriving “from rags to riches” and “from a servant to the rank of a master”. John Winthrop, in “Model of Christian Charity” (1630) states that God universally made it for people to belong in the scale extending from poverty to wealth (Dunn & Yeandle, 1996, p. 1). This means that it is at the disposal of the individual to exercise his free will and talent to better his life in accordance with the holy scripture. In a similar vein, Benjamin Franklin, in his essay “the Way to Wealth” (1758) brings out three variables that are accountable for the social mobility of the individual (2011, pp. 1-14), namely hard work, prayer, and charity. Likewise, Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur makes it explicit in “Letters from an American Farmer” (1782) that the United States is a land where all people are provided an opportunity to rise on the capitalist ladder from servant to master (Moore, 2013, p. 28). In connection with these early discourses, tints of capitalism have colored American stories and texts up to the contemporary period.

In general, the American narrative of capitalism is informed by the Puritan work ethic, whereby hard work is regarded as a means of pleasing God and the resulting prosperity as a sign of divine favor (Mauk



and Oakland, 2009, p. 328). In the Puritan work ethic, it is believed that “hard work and good morals are rewarded in this world and the next” (p. 41). These values are foundational to “self-reliance and self-improvement, thrift, hard work and a belief in progress”. In this article, the concepts pertaining to the American narrative of capitalism that have been identified are hard work, divine favor, progress, self-reliance, thrift, and good morals. They are treated as ideas dictating the conceptual metaphors and expressions in the hymn “Don’t Forget the Sabbath” (1908). The hymn is treated as a religious text that makes part of the SDA theology, for it has been selected and used in the Church’s hymnal.

Poststructuralism is a movement of thought that originated from philosophy in the 1960s (Darian-Smith & McCarthy, 2017, p. 66). It has grown to influence other fields of knowledge, including literature, politics, art, cultural studies, history, and sociology. The main distinguishing feature of poststructuralism is its “dissenting position” with regards to the prevailing sciences and moral values (Williams, 2005,:1). In fact, poststructuralism rejects the stability of the signifier-signified relation. Texts are considered sites of resistance against stabilizing the relationship between the signifier and signified (p. 33). From this primal idea, philosophers have taken different orientations. Lyotard has dealt with knowledge, Levinas with ethics, Althusser with hope, and Kristeva with identity (Davis, 2004). This study follows the post-structural theory of identity by Kristeva. Kristeva inscribes in the poststructuralist logic by her view of “texts as always in a state of production, rather than being products to be quickly consumed”. She considers that both

the object and the subject (reader, author) are being produced or continually produced over the text (p. 33). This means that the subject is conceived as an identity in becoming, oscillating between the self and the other.

Regarding translation studies, Tymoczko (2010) admits that the poststructural theory coincides with the emergence of the cultural and power turns in the historical development of translation studies. According to her, the poststructuralist approach to translation deals with such issues as “cultural and ideological subtexts” and “the relationship of texts and contexts” (p. 46). This poststructuralist view connects translation with intertextuality and denigrates the notion of authorship and originality. The task of the translation analysis is to uncover acts of meaning repression. This is because it is through poststructuralist translation analysis that “out-of-sight prejudices” and “unconscious manipulations” can be disclosed (Gentzler, p. 196). The translatorial strategies and procedures are mainly concerned with “making changes in the translation so that it better conforms to existing literary and cultural norms, smoothing out religious and political differences to make a text more palatable to the receiving audience” and their cultural stereotypes. This means that translation itself becomes a deconstructing act.

In her recent writings, Kristeva apprehends intertextuality in terms of globalization and views translation as a form of revolt. In the article “New Forms of Revolt” (2014), Kristeva adumbrates the issue of revolt and nihilism as alternative ways identity construction operates in the globalization era. She pins down that translation is one of the various forms of

contemporary revolt (p. 2). The apprehension of identity and intertextuality as a revolt in their essence are cogitated in terms of cultural globalization by Kristeva in *Hatred and Forgiveness* (2010/2005). She regrets that people embrace the Western culture through a narcissist and egotist attitude that does not question it. This passive reception without subversion is referred to as nihilism. Nihilism impacts on the identity process because it is the “destruction of values” or “the dismissals of the Concern for Being” (p. 223). While through revolt, subversive poetic or intertextuality the subject can “find and make meaning” (Hansen & Tuvel, 2017, p. 5) and ipso facto attains “social belonging and the capacity to represent”, through nihilism (“new maladies of the soul”), questioning in one’s identity is suspended “in favor of so-called new values” (p.18). Nihilism and revolt will be examined in the present paper by considering the Indonesian intercultural manipulations through the translation strategies and their relation to poles of conservation and substitution.

In his view on conceptual metaphors in American Studies, Kövecses (2005) asserts that cognitive science is a good way to unify “the disparate approaches and methodologies in American studies” (p. 167). He posits that the reconciliation of approaches and methodologies in American studies is only possible when the focus is on “the human mind that creates and understands American culture” (p. 168). By apprehending American studies from the cognitive perspective, it is possible to grasp the content of the American mind, the ways Americans create and make sense of their experience, and the methods that can be used to disclose the substance and structures in American sociocultural

experiences. Studying the language to understand the American culture can pin down the reflections of the mind and yield the same results as analyzing “movies, cartoons, works of art, and various social practices” (p. 169). This means that when American studies are apprehended from the cognitive science perspective, the language becomes “a fairly reliable instrument in identifying general conceptual patterns and the general conceptual patterns” pertaining to the American mind (p. 190). Hence the notion of conceptual metaphor becomes crucial in the study of American culture.

With regard to the translation of conceptual metaphors, in his article “Applying Conceptual Metaphor Theory in Cross-linguistic and Translation Research” (2015), Goran Schmidt presents a six-procedure analytical methodological model. He reconciles Gideon Toury’s metaphor translation taxonomy (1995) and Kövecses’s typology of conceptual metaphor translation (2003) and came up with a six-procedure classification (p. 257). The six procedures can be divided into two categories: retention of the conceptual metaphor in the target language (CM →CM) and substituting the original metaphor for its equivalent in the translating culture (CM →CM1). The first category is twofold. On the one hand, “a metaphorical expression is translated by a metaphorical expression of the same conceptual metaphor with the same mapping and the same meaning” (m →m). On the other hand, “a metaphorical expression is translated by a metaphorical expression of the same conceptual metaphor with a different mapping and a similar meaning” (m →m’). Under the second category are classified five procedures. Firstly, a metaphorical expression can be translated

using “a metaphorical expression of a different conceptual metaphor with a different mapping and a similar meaning” ( $m \rightarrow m1$ ). Secondly, a metaphorical expression can be translated using “a non-metaphorical expression with a similar meaning, ” using paraphrase technique ( $m \rightarrow \text{non-m}$ ). Thirdly, translators can translate a metaphorical expression by using “a zero-element”, that is, by using deletion, omission, or zero-translation technique ( $m \rightarrow \varnothing$ ). Fourthly, a non-metaphorical expression can be translated using “a metaphorical expression with a similar meaning” ( $\text{non-m} \rightarrow m$ ). Finally, a zero-element can be translated using “a metaphorical expression” in the target language culture ( $\varnothing \rightarrow m$ ).

In the analysis, the symbols  $m+$  and  $m-$  are used to be consistent to the revolt-nihilism scale. This is because in the table representing Schmidt’s typology, the cases of implicitation and explicitation in the  $CM \rightarrow CM$  are vaguely included in the formula  $m \rightarrow m$ , standing for the same metaphorical expression in the same metaphorical concepts with similar mappings and meanings. In this paper, cases of similar meanings of metaphorical expressions and mappings of the same conceptual metaphors are categorized under  $m \rightarrow m$  to represent nihilism in manipulating American capitalist thought through Indonesian and translation. Nevertheless, cases of implicitation ( $m \rightarrow m-$ ) and explicitation ( $m \rightarrow m+$ ) within  $CM \rightarrow CM$  have been classified under the revolt culture. This is because they deviate from the Kristeva’s consideration that nihilist ideas refrain from interrogation to consider everything sacred (Lotrings, 2002, p. 112). Likewise, all the cases representing  $m \rightarrow m'$  have been sided with  $CM \rightarrow CM1$  tokens to characterize revolt.

Concerning the construction of human experience through religious texts, Waldo Emerson admits that “the experience of material reality” is connected with the “spiritual and moral language” through “metaphor and analogy” (Marsoobian & Ryder, 2014, p. 348). This assertion means that metaphors draw from what the mind experiences in the natural world to construct the spiritual and ethical world. Regarding American studies, Zoltán Kövecses contends that metaphorical expressions pervade American culture and constitute a good tool to understand its aspects (p. 170). For him one of the main conceptual metaphors underlying American thought is THE LIFE IS A JOURNEY. In relation to this general conceptual metaphor, American capitalist thought and its concept of social mobility, from rags to riches, or self-made man in the SDA religious texts can be stated as: PROGRESS OR SELF IMPROVEMENT IS A JOURNEY FROM HARD WORK TO THE DEITY (OBJECT OF SABBATH). In the hymn object of this study, the American capitalist thought is constructed through the metaphor of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is metaphorically structured to analogize American capitalist thought. This means that SABBATH is the conceptual source domain whereas PROGRESS (SELF-IMPROVEMENT, WEALTH) operates as the target domain. The language of Sabbath is used to talk about progress. In other words, the American reality of progress or capitalistic individualism are constructed through the language and theology of Sabbath. Thus, the hymn makes us see Sabbath as our progress or way to get wealthy. The metaphorical linguistic expressions in the hymn are structured to support this generic-level concept and

specific-level concepts that are based on the core elements of Protestant work ethic including hard work, progress, self-reliance, divine favor or blessing, good morals, and thrift.

Lots of studies have been conducted on the transnational circulation of American culture and ideological narratives through global evangelical Protestantism. Recent works on transnational evangelical Protestant movements and their imbue ment with American cultural ideals include Womack (2015), Hernawan (2016), Edwards (2019), Kirkland (2019), Sawin (2019), Vladimir et Al. (2020), and Mora-Ciangherotti (2022). Besides, research has been conducted on the identity construction through the global translation Protestant hymns and gospel songs. Researchers have pointed out to which extent the local identity is made to interact with the global or sending culture (implicitly American or Western) through the translation of hymns or songs. These include Perigo (2021), Ezuoke and Ijioma (2021), Monteiro (2022), Connor and Menger (2021), Arrington (2021), Ka Lun Chan (2021), Stallsmith (2021), Ka Lun Chan (2022), Steuernagel (2021), Stephens (2022), and Wai-on and Raymond Ng (2020). Despite the variety in issues, approaches, and theories in this existing literature, to the best of my knowledge, no poststructuralist study of hymnal translation has been carried out to use Kristeva's notions of revolt and nihilism

in the investigation of the translational construction of American capitalist identity with a focus SDA hymnal and Crosby's "Don't Forget Sabbath" in Indonesia. This papers purposes to investigate to what extent is American capitalist identity revolted or annihilated through its translational construction in the Indonesian language culture; and to examine why is the construction of American capitalist identity revolted or annihilated through Indonesian translation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The primary data were obtained from the SDA hymnal, more precisely from Crosby's song lyric "Don't Forget the Sabbath" and its Indonesian translation. The hymn was purposively selected to fit in the issue of American capitalist thought and metaphorical representation. For the English ST, the *Seventh-Day Adventist Church Hymnal* (1985) was used. Regarding the TT, *Lagu Sion* (2013) was used. The study focused only on the written song lyric rather than the musical composition and tune. The ST was written by an American poet Fanny Crosby (1820-1915) and was published in 1908. The secondary data of the research include books and articles pertaining to American culture, Seventh-Day Adventism (SDA), and CM translation.

The analytical procedures agree with the interdisciplinary method of American studies.

Based on the interdisciplinary practice discussed in *American Studies: A User’s Guide* (2017, p.6) by Philip J. Deloria and Alexander I. Olson, the research procedures can be listed as follows.

1. Closely reading the ST to correlate identified metaphorical expressions with the American narrative identity with regard to capitalism.
2. Identify the metaphorical expressions in the TT and compare them to the ST metaphorical expressions to establish the translatorial procedures.
3. Account for revolt against or annihilation of American capitalist identity based on the translation shifts.

Compare the ST and TT to make generalizations on the degree of revolt and nihilism and the rationale of American capitalist identity construction through the other.

## DISCUSSION

This section is concerned with the results and discussion regarding revolt and nihilism in the translational construction of American capitalist identity through the Indonesian rendition of the religious lyric “Don’t Forget the Sabbath”. The section considers revolt and nihilism by scrutinizing how metaphorical expressions and their underlying conceptual metaphors in the lyrics are manipulated through translation. Then, based on the translatorial procedures, a comparative analysis is made to make generalizations about the concept of American national capitalist narrative identity and its construction through the other.

In the tables below (table 1), the source text is compared with the Indonesian translated text in order to identify the conceptual metaphor translation procedures used by the translators and ipso facto account them for Kristeva’s notions of nihilism and revolt.

Table 1. Primary Data Source

Hymnal	Title of the hymn	Number	Topic	Publication
<i>Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal</i>				
English	Don’t Forget the Sabbath	250	The Sabbath	Washington: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985
<i>Lagu Sion Lengkap</i>				
Indonesian	<i>Ingat Hari Sabat</i>	347	The Sabbath	Bandung: Indonesia Publishing House, 2013

\* While printed books present the hymns with musical notations, song lyrics were obtained from <https://hymnary.org/hymnal/SDAH1985> and <https://alkitab.app/LS>

Table 2. The Metaphor Translation Procedures

No	Concepts in US Capitalist Culture	ST Metaphorical Expressions	TT Metaphorical Expressions	Back Translation (BT)	Procedure
1	Hard work and divine favor	Don't forget the Sabbath	<i>Ingat hari Sabat</i>	Remember Sabbath day	m → m'
2	Hard work	The Lord our God hath blest	<i>disucikan-Nya Allah</i>	That God has sanctified	m → m1
3		Of all the week the brightest	<i>hari yang terindah</i>	The most precious day	m → m1
4		Of all the week the best	—		m → φ
5		It brings repose from labor	—		m → φ
6		Divine favor	It tells of joy divine	<i>Yang b'rikan perdamaian serta sukacita</i>	That brings peace and happiness
7		Its beams of light	<i>Sinar kemuliaan</i>	Beams of light	m → m-
8		Descending with heavenly beauty shine	<i>turun dari surge</i>	descending from heaven	m → m-
9		Hard work and good morals	Welcome blessed Sabbath day	<i>S'lamat datang Sabat suci</i>	Welcome holy Sabbath
10		Keep the Sabbath holy	<i>Sucikanlah Sabat</i>	Celebrate the holiness of Sabbath	m → m
11		And worship Him today	<i>dan sembahlah Tuhan</i>	and worship God	m → m
12		Who said to His disciples	—		m → φ
13		Progress	I am the living way	<i>Yang jadi Jurus'lamat bagi manusia</i>	Who became the savior of humanity
14	Hard work and good morals	And if we meekly follow Our Savior here below	<i>Dan kalau kita ikut Yesus s'panjang jalan</i>	And if we follow Jesus all the way long	m → m1
15	Progress	He'll give us of the fountain	<i>Kita k'lak akan turut minum air hidup-Nya</i>	We will later partake of His living water	m → m
16		Whose streams eternal flow	—		m → φ
17	Hard work and divine favor	day of sacred pleasure	<i>Hari kesukaan perbaktian</i>	Favorite day to pay homage to God	m → m1
18	Hard work, thrift, divine favor	It's golden hours	<i>suci Jamnya</i>	Its sacred hours	m → m-
19		we'll spend In thankful hymns to Jesus	<i>kita gunakan bersyukur dan puji</i>	We use them for thanksgiving and praise	m → m-
20	Self-reliance	The children's dearest friend	—		m → φ
21		O gentle, loving savior	<i>Oh Jurus'lamat Yesus indahlah kasih-Mu</i>	O Jesus Savior how precious is your love	m → m1
22	Progress	How precious is thy promise To dwell in every heart!	<i>Marilah dan tinggallah di dalam hatiku</i>	Come and dwell in my heart	m → m1

Table (2) calculates the identified translation procedures and their occurrence. Procedures are regrouped under two categories: revolt

and nihilism. It is in a bid to implement Kristeva’s theory of intertextuality and its notions of revolt and nihilism.

Table 3. CM Translation Procedures in the Revolt-Nihilism Scale Poles

Revolt (Subversion of CM)			Nihilism (conservation of CM)		
Strategy	Occurrence	%	Strategy	Occurrence	%
m →m-	4	18.18	m →m	3	13.63
m →m+	0	0			
m →m´	2	9.09			
m →m l	8	36.36			
m →non-m	0	0			
m →φ	5	22.72			
	0	0			
non-m →m					
φ → m	0	0			
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>86.35</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>13.63</b>

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$\varphi \rightarrow m$	0	0			
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### Revolt in Indonesian Translational Construction of American Capitalist Identity

The above table (2) demonstrates that in the Indonesian construction of American capitalist identity, revolt (86.35%) dominates nihilism (13.63%). One of the most dominant procedure in revolt against foreign identity is deletion (22.27%). The metaphorical linguistic expressions “Of all the week the best”. This expression implies that in the conceptualizing mind of American capitalistic individualist life, the working days in the week whereby people engage in works to make wealth are at part of the weekly success journey that culminates in Sabbath day. Concerning the metaphorical expression “It brings repose from labor”, it is inferred that the restoration of life from hard work is Sabbath day. The expression “Who

said to His disciples” is also entrenched in the American capitalistic life experience. It ensures that the instructor of good success morals and pure doctrine is a deity or object of Sabbath. As for the metaphorical expression “Whose streams eternal flow”, American individualist life is projected into the structure of Sabbath to suggest that the one who possesses all that humans desire in plenty is the object of Sabbath. Finally, in “The children’s dearest friend”, in relation to the American capitalist mind, the collaborator of righteous people and hard workers in their way to wealth is conceptually mapped to the object of Sabbath. All these metaphorical expressions are deleted in the Indonesian hymn “Ingat Hari Sabat”.

Although omission in the Indonesian text may have been done for prosaic reasons to



avoid redundancy that is occasioned by poetic repetition and personification, it undermines the American capitalist thought in which the hymn is deeply ingrained. The target text loses the American liberal tone (children’s dearest friend) that accompanies industry adventure and wealth making. In fact, the enlightenment philosophy and romantic belief greatly influenced the American national culture to such an extent that “by 1830 educational theory and practice began to show the influence of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel” (McLoughlin, 1980, p. 117). As a result, the “romantic poetry and Transcendentalist prose emphasized a pantheistic “correspondence” between God, nature, and man”. This transcendental belief in American thought “shift in child-rearing attitudes”. It followed that authors in new gospel hymns viewed God not as an angry father but as “a gentle shepherd and guide, protecting and guarding these “buds” from the hard blasts of the cruel world”. This transcendental view impacted the American Protestant ethic, as evidenced in these metaphorical expressions.

Moreover, the scholastic import of the hymn (Christ-disciples) that connects it to the American jeremiad tradition is resisted in Indonesian translation. Likewise, the deity or object of Sabbath (“Whose streams eternal flow”) as the eternal supplier of blessings and source of wealth is omitted. Therefore, in the Indonesian text, the American capitalist conceptual representation of the week, a seven-day period including a six-day time to make industry and one-day to legitimate works to God and couple work with prayer for the divine favor, is creatively distorted.

The high rate in the rubric  $m \rightarrow m$  1 (36.36%), that is, a case where “a metaphorical expression is translated by a metaphorical expression of a different conceptual metaphor with a different mapping and a similar meaning”, pinpoints difference in the representation of capitalist identity between Indonesians and Americans. Firstly, the conceptual mapping that generates “It tells of joy divine” is peace and happiness  $\rightarrow$  Sabbath. The translation “Yang b’rikan perdamaian serta sukacita” deviates from the underlying specific conceptual metaphorical statement THE CONDUIT OF DIVINE FAVOR FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH IS SABBATH. Even though the personification of Sabbath is conserved, the correspondence of metaphorical expression or mapping is dismantled. The American capitalist thought links Sabbath pleasures with deity (divine happiness). But the Indonesian translation constructs the religious language of capitalism without deity. So the conceptual mapping in the Indonesian translation is perdamaian dan sukacita (peace and happiness)  $\rightarrow$  hari sabat (Sabbath day). In the light of the general conceptual metaphor upon which the American national culture anchors, that is THE LIFE IS A JOURNEY, there is a dislocation of the structure of the ethic underpinning the American narrative of capitalism in the Indonesian translation. Initially, the structure involves the individual American (traveler-poor in rags), society or community (co-travellers), virtues (journey means), deity (guider), and wealth (destination). Deleting the variable deity repels the structure of the Puritan work ethic

in which the source text is inscribed. Actually, in its Americanness, the source text combines the “biblical law”, “moral law” and “the work ethic”, but the Indonesian translation stresses the biblical law and its relevance to Sabbatism only (McLoughlin, p. 103).

Secondly, the change of “I am the living way” to “Yang jadi Jurus’lamat bagi manusia is a subversion of the source text conceptual metaphor THE PROGRESS TO WEALTH IS THE OBJECT OF SABBATH. The metaphor is a biblical allusion to the fourteenth chapter of the gospel of John, where Jesus mentions the other home or land for His followers (14:2) and preaches a word of faith and prosperity message by assuring His disciples that if they abide in Him they will get whatever they ask for (14:13-14). By implication, in “I am the living way”, the genuine way (progress) to wealth is the deity or object of Sabbath (living way → deity of Sabbath). However, the Indonesian text uses a different mapping to capture the same meaning: the Savior of humanity is a deity (salvation, keselamatan → deity of Sabbath, Jurus’lamat). The Indonesian translation uses an evangelical tone that undermines the capitalist dimension of American identity. This translatorial strategy, however, falls into the other myth of American national culture. The text echoes the myth of manifest destiny by emphasizing salvation and evangelization. The American religious culture that is disseminated through SDA has to reach many Indonesian souls as possible. But this new religious culture thwarted the American capitalist mythic dimension. Nevertheless, in relating the translation to manifest destiny, the Indonesian receiving culture is placed at the bottom and peripheral position of the

hegemonic ideological narrative of the United States and its global Protestant movement. It is integrated into the other that has to be evangelized and consequently embrace the American values or civilized before the millennium. In relation to SDA, Gallagher and Ashcraft (2006) contend that “while a degree of cultural adaptation occurred, the American church remained the norm for worship practices, evangelistic methods, and behavioral mores, in addition to doctrine” (p. 53). In other words, despite the translation and localization of American Protestantism into local cultures and languages in other countries, mainly African, Asian, and Latin Americans, the mother churches in the United States always occupy the central pole of power relations.

Thirdly, in “And if we meekly follow Our Savior here below”, the hymn writer conceptually maps the American moral law, which, according to McLoughlin (1980), is based on the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount to the Sabbatical culture (p. 103). In the sermon, meekness is a prerequisite for the individual to succeed in one’s business. The conceptual mapping followed in the source text can be represented as a precondition to success in the way to wealth → mild individual obedience to the object of Sabbath on earth. The Indonesian translation “Dan kalau kita ikut Yesus s’panjang jalan” attempts to conserve the meaning of the source text without retaining the American metaphorical concept and expressions. This Indonesian rendition deviates from the underlying conceptual metaphor WORKING HARD AND PRACTICING GOOD MORALS ON EARTH ARE CONTAINED IN THE STRUCTURE OF SABBATH. The target

text results in the deletion of the materialization of American exceptionalism and the capitalistic individualism linked with it. The source text situates the fulfillment of the precondition to social mobility on the American physical territory (“here below”). In addition, transcendentalism is invoked to represent self-reliance in the capitalist identity. In the TT the romantic innocence image is suggested for the travelers to succeed in the journey to wealth. But the Indonesian translation (s’panjang jalan) considers the Christian journey in general without insinuating its terrestrial character that draws from the Calvinist virtues of “thrift, industry, frugality, scrupulous financial honesty, a horror of debt, and the integrity of credit” that dictate the American capitalistic individualism (McLoughlin, p. 27). Consequently, in the Indonesian song, the journey to wealth takes conversion's spiritual and missionary meaning by stressing celestial welfare rather than highlighting the terrestrial parameter of the American capitalist narrative binomial.

Fourthly, the mapping in “How precious is thy promise To dwell in every heart!” follows the conceptual pattern: the ascertained heart (the needs) of the congregant → the potential abode of the deity. But its Indonesian rendition “Marilah dan tinggallah di dalam hatiku” is based on the conceptualization: the potential abode of the congregant → the heart of a deity. The Indonesian translation does not manifest the concept underlying the source metaphor, that is, **PROGRESS IS CONDUCTED TO EVERYONE BY THE OBJECT OF SABBATH**. In the ST, it is suggested that the object of Sabbath or provider of wealth is assuredly believed to journey from its

celestial realm to the business site of the congregant. But in the target hymn, the congregant must journey to the supplier of wealth, that is the deity. This implies that from the Indonesian perspective, believers are called to ascend spiritually to the celestial destination or abode of the deity.

Fifthly, in “Hari kesukaan perbaktian” (favorite day to pay homage to God or day for great respect and honor to God), the metaphor “Day of sacred pleasure” is resisted. “Hari kesukaan perbaktian” does not manifest the source underlying metaphorical concept **INVESTING BUSINESS TIME IN WORSHIPING THE DEITY IS SABBATH**. The mapping in “Hari kesukaan perbaktian”, favorite time to worship → Sabbath day, supports the concept **WORSHIP IS THE STRUCTURE OF SABBATH**. The American metaphor “day of sacred pleasure” is based on the mental projection: sacred pleasure → Sabbath day. This means that in the source culture, the material daily pleasures associated with the American capitalist culture are projected into the spiritual pleasure ambiance that the seventh day of the week and the Sabbatical worship and holiday provide. This shows that the hymn is rooted in the American Eden myth (Collins, 2007, p. 205). Crosby conceives Sabbath as a container. But, in the Indonesian translating culture, homage, respect and honor to a deity are projected into the Sabbatical worship and church service. Therefore, Sabbath in Indonesia is conceptualized as a structure.

Sixthly, in the translation of “The Lord our God hath blest” to “disucikan-Nya Allah”, there is a difference in mapping between Indonesian and American language

cultures. The ST is based on the conceptual mapping: relief from hard work and to endow workers with divine favor and protection → Sabbath day. This mapping differs from the target mapping: legitimation of works or binding works by divine commandment → Sabbath day. This difference is partly due to the use of the passive verb form *disucikan* (sanctified, consecrated), which opposes the meaning conveyed by “has blessed”. While the American lyric emphasizes the relief and divine favor, the Indonesian expression connotes to divine authority and commands. By underlining the authoritative import of Sabbath, the Indonesian translation deviates from the capitalist fashion of the source text whereby the meek congregant freely joins the sabbatical celebration to partake in the divine favor and protection so that he or she thrives on hard work. Thus, the Indonesian translation deviates from the American conceptual metaphor LIFE RESTORATION AFTER A SIX-DAY HARD WORK IS IN SABBATH RITE. The same consideration goes for the translation of “Of all the week the brightest” into “hari yang terindah”. In fact, in the American mind Sabbath is conceptualized as a conduit or container, whereas for the Indonesian Sabbath is mentally represented as a structure.

Finally, the metaphorical expressions “O gentle, loving savior” are based on the concept of SELF-RELIANCE BEING IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP TO THE OBJECT OF SABBATH. The Indonesian translation “Oh Jurus’lamat Yesus indahlah kasih-Mu” deviates from this pattern by the fact that it relies on the theological love of Christ, that is, the Love of Christ for humanity, love of Christians for Christ and love of Christians for others (John 13:34-45

NKJV). This dogmatism is based on the mapping: love → object of Sabbath. The American thought on the contrary relies on the mapping: intervention and delight in human affairs → object of Sabbath. The idea of meekness is fundamental in the hymn. It is based on the Sermon of the Mount or beatitudes. This is a moral teaching of Jesus-Christ (Matthew 5:3-11). This sermon mentions that the meek will inherit the earth (5:5). This idea is embraced by American work ethic to underline the significance of virtue in business success and social mobility. So, in connecting loving Jesus with meekness, the writer ensures his intervention in human affairs and his delight in it.

The other cases of revolt in the Indonesian translation of “Don’t Forget the Sabbath” are  $m \rightarrow m$  [ $m \rightarrow m-$  (13.63%) and  $m \rightarrow m+(0\%)$ ] procedures (13.63%). Firstly, the translation of “(its beams of light) Descending with heavenly beauty shine” into “(Sinar kemulian) turun dari surga” is a case of implicitation technique. Both the English and Indonesian expressions support the specific metaphorical concept THE CONDUIT OF DIVINE FAVOR FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH IS SABBATH. The Indonesian text stresses the source of light and its spatial orientation and uses a general expression without qualifying the spatial orientation of the deity. It prefers an orientational conceptual metaphor (UP-DOWN) to an ontological-orientational metaphor (quality-direction) by deleting the modifiers beauty and shine that describe the beams. This technique ensures the persistence of the parent (UP)-child (DOWN) hierarchy in the Indonesian cultural system. The deletion of the possessive adjective in

“its beam of light” (Sinar kemuliaan) in the previous metaphor affects the translation of the following metaphor. Therefore, the personification of Sabbath that makes the metaphor ontological is omitted. But the American text uses a romantic tone that requires a combination of spatial orientation and ontological system in the metaphor. The Indonesian manipulation at this point subverts the transcendental tone upon which the American capitalist identity is anchored. Consequently, the Indonesian translation lacks a liberal character. When the song was produced in the 19th century, Americans, contrary to other countries have subjugated the paternalist conception of early Puritans and European world. The second Great Awakening has revived a transcendental spirit that diluted gerontocracy (UP) by emphasizing collaboration between children and parents. McLoughlin (1980) posits that “the generations that came of age after 1800 felt less awe and fear of their parents, more love and respect” (p. 115). The hymn here displays the conceptualization of self-reliance. Individuals like the nation itself are independent from the Old World, free, and capable of social mobility.

Secondly, “It’s golden hours” is interpreted to “suci Jamnya”. In relation to the specific underlying conceptual metaphor, INVESTING BUSINESS TIME IN WORSHIPING THE DEITY IS SABBATH, the Indonesian translation has deleted the modifier golden, which confers to the Noun phrase (NP) golden hours significance in the Protestant work ethic. “golden hours” means the crucial day when business is very productive. This meaning connects the metaphor to American capitalism. In ST it is suggested that the business time on the seventh- day of the week should be invested

in Sabbath celebration. This ensures the signification of both hard work and frugality virtues in the song. Congregants must interrupt their works on Saturday to commodify time with the expectation of achieving a profit. But the import of these virtues in the TT is deleted and replaced by consecration (suci). It is a day whose hours are consecrated to worship. The TIME IS MONEY generic concept is absent in the Indonesian language culture. There is, however, a pastoral tone in the Indonesian text. Thus the mapping in the translation (day’s hours → Sabbatical holy worship) deviates from the American mapping (day’s business hours → Sabbatical holy worship). McLoughlin asserts that in eighteenth century America, “ministers urged upon their congregations the norms of diligence, frugality, honesty, and persistence” (p. 53). It proves the conceptual projection of capitalist individualism into religious language in ST.

Thirdly, the translation of “we’ll spend In thankful hymns to Jesus” to “kita gunakan bersyukur dan puji”, deletes the specific items ‘hymns’ and ‘Jesus’. In addition, the verb ‘spend’ in the capitalist metaphorical expression ‘spend time’ is deleted and replaced by a general verb ‘use’ (gunakan). There is therefore implicitation in the Indonesian conceptual mapping. Contrary to the source mapping: expressing gratitude to and relief in Jesus →Sabbath celebration, the implicitation technique used in the Indonesian translation produces: thanksgiving and praise →Sabbath celebration. Although the TT attempts to conserve the meaning of the source culture metaphor GRATITUDE TO DIVINE

FAVOR IS CONTAINED IN SABBATHAL CELEBRATION, the implicitation technique that is used occasions resistance to the capitalist identity. In fact, the metaphor “spending time” entrenches the celebration of Sabbath in the capitalist morality where time is money and is valued as a commodity. “Thankful hymns to Jesus” represents the transcendental mind of the congregants. In contrast to the Indonesian expression “bersyukur dan puji” which silences the emotional relationship between the hymn singer and the Sabbath deity, the American expression represents thanksgiving for past blessings and actual relief from daily hardship associated with industry labor. Jesus is here made to condescend to the condition of a simple fellow who alleviates the American entrepreneur from past and present hard work distress in order to enable him or her make better advancement in the journey to wealth. Contrary to the American congregants who are investing time through Sabbath celebration, Indonesian congregants leave their business and mundane affairs behind the church door to simply become catechumens who adore and praise the deity of Sabbath.

Last, both “Its beams of light” and “Sinar kemulian” are relevant to the conceptual metaphor THE FAVOR DEITY IS THE ORIGIN OF SABBATH. But the use of the possessive adjective its in the NP “Its beams of light” points out the personification of Sabbath. Sabbath is individualized to have many attributes among others ‘light’. But in the Indonesian translation Sabbath is conceptualized through metonymy. It is represented by its part “sinar kemulian”. In using a part to stand for the whole, the Indonesian translation generalize Sabbath to a divine product. It is nothing rather than a

light descending from a deity. This conception minimizes the capitalist import of the ST. It is silenced using implicitation technique. For the American mind a divine light is one of the characteristics of Sabbath.

The use of the technique  $m \rightarrow m'$ , that is, “a metaphorical expression is translated by a metaphorical expression of the same conceptual metaphor with a different mapping and a similar meaning” accounts for 9.09% of the revolt rate. In the first instance, both “Welcome blessed Sabbath day” and “S’lamat datang Sabat suci” agree with the conceptual metaphor ABSTINENCE FROM WORK AND PRACTICE OF GOOD MORALS ARE THE PLEASURE THAT SABBATH GENERATES. But in “S’lamat datang Sabat suci” it is the structure of Sabbath day that is welcome or pleasingly needed and desired. The word day is deleted to emphasize the structural whatness or quiddity of Sabbath day. However, in “Welcome blessed Sabbath day”, the word “day” is used to highlight Sabbath as the conduit or generator of pleasure and relief and to actualize it in the week time. So in Indonesia the structure of the Sabbath event is welcome because it is pleasingly needed and desired. In the Indonesian mapping, gladly receiving  $\rightarrow$  holy Sabbath, a metonymic metaphor is used to substitute an event for its essential structure. But the capitalist trope of the American song consists in the materialization of the holy Sabbath. It is the needed and desired pleasing rest day. The conceptual mapping is: gladly receiving the content  $\rightarrow$  holy Sabbath. The personification through which it is realized at the sentential level makes the Sabbath celebration consistent to the American

individualism and work ethic. The seventh-day work rest is pleasingly needed and desired by the congregant who responds by pausing from enterprising and spending some golden hours in order to get their business legitimate by the deity.

Another case in  $m \rightarrow m'$  translation procedure is the change of “Don’t forget the Sabbath” into “Ingat hari Sabat”. In the Indonesian translation “Ingat hari Sabat” the word hari (day) is added to the verb phrase (VP) Ingat Sabat (remember or don’t forget). In addition, the interrogative-imperative form changes to an affirmative statement. This is generated by the difference in mapping between the two language cultures. In the Indonesian conceptualization the mapping is: keep in mind [in your life]  $\rightarrow$  Sabbath day (resting from work to worship a deity). On the contrary, the American metaphor is based on the mapping: commandment observance [in your business]  $\rightarrow$  Sabbath (resting from work to worship a deity). Even though the Indonesian mapping is relevant to the underlying conceptual metaphor REST AND DIVINE FAVOR ARE CONTAINED IN SABBATH CELEBRATION, it alters the capitalist thought underpinning the metaphorization. The SDA church converts in the source text are brought back to the memorial of the biblical Sabbath and its observance on the seventh-day of the week. This subversion is inherent to the subjectivity of translation agency. According to Kristeva, “the person in revolt seeks the contradictions, fractures, ruptures, rejections, and negations that are inherent to subjectivity” (2017, p. 26). This means conflictual identity between “us” (Indonesians) and “them” (Americans). Although the word *ingat* may have been

chosen for impersonalization purpose, it cannot reproduce the capitalist cognitive sense that is imparted in the source text.

### **Nihilism in Indonesian Translational Construction of American Capitalist Identity**

In her argument on cultural globalization, Kristeva posits that nihilism is “a dogmatism that stops the process of revolt”. This dogmatism consists in establishing “a value for an object that goes against previous values” and representing the “new product as something absolute that will solve all problems” (Lotringer, 2002:104). In connection with the research at hand, nihilism in the Indonesian translation of “Don’t Forget the Sabbath” is represented by translation technique  $m \rightarrow m$ . This means the translation procedure whereby an American metaphorical expression is translated into an Indonesian metaphorical expression of the same conceptual metaphor with similar mapping and meaning (without implicitation or explicitation). This implies repetition or conservation of the source text metaphor. Cases of  $m \rightarrow m$  translation procedures account for 13.63%, that is, 3 cases out of 22.

Firstly, the metaphorical expression “Keep the Sabbath holy” has the same meaning as “Sucikanlah Sabat”. Both ST and TT metaphors are based on the same conceptual mapping, that is, observing sanctity in the prescribed manner  $\rightarrow$  Sabbath. Moreover, they both relate to the metaphorical concept ABSTINENCE FROM WORK AND PRACTICE OF GOOD MORALS ARE THE STRUCTURE OF SABBATH. This does not, however, mean that American capitalist identity is conserved.

The expression “Keep the Sabbath holy” is conserved because it relates to the image of Sabbath in its conceptual structural system rather than in the cognitive sense of conduit of some tangible things or pecuniary affairs. In other words, it is a retention of the source metaphorical expression that is related to the spiritual wealth.

Secondly, “And worship Him today” and “dan sembahlah Tuhan” agree with the source text conceptual metaphor **ABSTINENCE FROM WORK AND PRACTICE OF GOOD MORALS ARE THE STRUCTURE OF SABBATH**. This means that the Indonesian translation is a nihilism. In Kristevan sense, “dan sembahlah Tuhan” is a productive repetition of “And worship Him today”. The mapping that is associated with the source metaphorical expression, showing reverence and adoration for a deity → Sabbath day, is reconstructed in the target conceptualization. In relation to American capitalism, the repose from labor and the practice of good morals are projected into the structure of Sabbath day. Since Indonesian translation mentally builds Sabbath metaphors in terms of the Structure concept, all metaphorical expressions based on the structure or organization concepts are reproduced. The “the stability of new values” or “suspension of thought” in Kristevan sense shows that the theological and structural conception of Sabbath does not conflict with the local sociocultural ideologies and codes (Margaroni, p. 308).

Thirdly, the metaphorical expressions “He’ll give us of the fountain” and “Kita k’lak akan turut minum air hidup-Nya” insinuates that the deity or object of Sabbath contains spiritual wealth in addition to material wealth. In other words, wealth

journey ends in the deity as it provides its perfect form. In both expressions, conceptualization follows the same mapping. The focus here is the celestial wealth rather than worldly wealth. The source domain Sabbath (deity or object of Sabbath) is connected to the target domain wealth (living water). The nihilism consists in the fact that the TT does not deviate from the projection of the destination of wealth (both material and spiritual) into the deity (fountain of living water). In the Indonesian thought, the object of Sabbath day does not conflict with the self. It is only the content, conduit, and generation concepts of Sabbath upon which American individualism is projected that challenge the translating self or poetic language. Regarding Seventh-Day Adventism, the TT is an orthodoxy of the pessimistic premillennial orientation to American national culture. According to Gallagher, V. E. and Ashcraft, W. (2006), Seventh-Day Adventism ideology oscillates between a pessimistic premillennial orientation and the traditional American postmillennialism (p.277). The metaphorical expression “He’ll give us of the fountain” and its nihilist Indonesian rendition “Kita k’lak akan turut minum air hidup-Nya” allies with the pessimistic tendency.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the translation of “Don’t Forget the Sabbath” into “Ingat Hari Sabat”, the translational construction of American narrative of capitalism through Indonesian language culture is characterized by more revolt (86.35%) than nihilism (13.63%). Revolt is dominated by the subversion and omission of conceptual metaphors pertaining to American traditional Protestant work ethic. To a lesser extent, revolt to this American



postmillennial optimism is also shown by the use of implicitation technique in the Indonesian translation. The resistance is explained by the fact that the American capitalist life experience that is mainly projected into the concept of Sabbath as a conduit or generator of both material and immaterial wealth is tampered in the TT. Additionally, the conduit conceptual metaphor that is conceptualized in the ST through mappings involving transcendental and self-reliance images is construed into TT mapping of the Sabbatical culture through evangelical and missionary conceptual associations that stress conversion, salvation, terrestrial reward, or spiritual fruits of Sabbath observance. In resisting to American capitalist identity, the Indonesian translation boosts another American national myth. The annihilation of the postmillennial optimism and the work ethic linked with it aggrandizes the American manifest destiny mythic narrative. All souls in the corners of the world must be won in order to fully partake of the heavenly fountain that is contained in the object of Sabbath. This is very significant for SDA church that has chosen this hymn to be part of its hymnal. Although Indonesians have incarnated the SDA message into the local culture and language, they are still connected to the American transnational protestant evangelical movement and the hegemonic discourses associated with it.

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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.
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  - h. conclusion, and
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Reid, A. (2011). *Menuju sejarah Sumatra: Antara Indonesia dan dunia*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor.

Zachareck, S. (2008). *Natural women*. The New York Times. Retrieved May 12, 2009, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/27/books/review/Zachareck>

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As Rowe (2014) asserts, „Transnationalism“ also refers to American Studies done by international scholars outside the U.S. especially scholarship that emphasizes the influence of the U.S. abroad” (p. 1)

This research assigns the researcher to be the key instrument in his or her own research (Creswell, 2009, p. 211).

The New York Times (2020) interviewed their gay readers to reveal about the dynamics of gay relationship:

I am in a same-sex relationship, and we are regularly flummoxed by how our heterosexual parent friends don't split nighttime child care and sleep loss...In our house, parents are parents. There is no artificial distinction like fathers do this and mothers do that.

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