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AN ANALYSIS OF POPULAR FICTION MOVIE: FEMINISM IN *MISS PEREGRINE'S HOME FOR PECULIAR CHILDREN* (2016)

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ABSTRACT

Film is one of American popular culture that attracts many people from around the world. America has many movie genres, one of which is a fictional film genre. Fiction works do have very unique characters, from the storyline to the characters in the fictional film. In addition, in the modern era, feminism has been applied in everyday life, starting from education, politics, etc. This article analyzed the feminism of the character of Miss Peregrine in the American fiction film titled *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* (2016) by using semiotic theory. The results show that several scenes in the film represent feminism through Miss Peregrine's character, those are as a hero and as a leader. In addition, there is ecofeminism in the film.

Keywords: *American popular culture; character; hero; Feminism; leader; popular fiction movie; Semiotic*

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INTRODUCTION

Film is one of the popular products that is liked by the public. Film is referred to as a popular product because the film has been widely consumed by the public and film production has generated a lot of profit (in the sense of very large profits), reaching millions and even billions of dollars. America is a superpower country in various aspects, including in the film industry. The film industry of America is liked by so many people in the world. America has a film industry called Hollywood and there are so

many people in the world who become Hollywood fanatics. Hollywood always launches films of various types every year. One of the films made by Hollywood is fiction films. Examples of the film with fictional nuances are *Fantastic Beast* (2016). *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* (2016), *Harry Potter*, *Arrival*, *Alice through the Looking Glass*. Thus, the film that will be discussed in this paper is a film entitled *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* (2016).

The movie “Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children” is a fictional movie. Directed by Tim Burton and produced by Peter Chenin and Jenno Topping, it was released in 2016. The casts include Assa Butterfield, Eva Green, Ella Purnell, Allison Janney, Judy Dench and Samuel L. Jackson. This film is an adaptation of a novel by Ransom Riggs and this film was released in America on September 30, 2016. This film is popular and is a film that is liked by the public as reported in the media. This film never reached the top of the top weekly film at the box office. This film is one of the most successful and popular films with a profit of about 296 million US dollars. This film also received many awards, including 2017 a Saturn Award Nomination in the Best Fantasy Film category, Winner of the ASCAP Film and Television Music Award in the Top Box Office Films category, Nomination for the Costume Designers Guild Award in the category of Excellence in Fantasy Film (Colleen Atwood), Nominated for Globes de Cristal Award for Best Foreign Film (Meilleur film étranger) (Tim Burton), Nominated for Golden Trailer Award for Best Fantasy Adventure, Nominated for Golden Trailer Award for Best Fantasy / Adventure Poster and many other awards.

In analyzing the movie, I will use the theory of semiotics and Feminism. Semiotics is the study of signs. Semiotics comes from the Greek word ‘semeion’, which means sign. Semiotics is divided into three branches, namely syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Two figures who had a big role in semiotics were Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce. Roland Barthes developed the concept of semiotics called denotative and connotative. According to Barthes, denotative is the first level of

meaning. Denotation means the sign is still in the first order meaning or first level, it can be understood as the literal understanding of a sign, commonly or based on the dictionary. The connotation is the second order of meaning or “second level” of the meaning of the sign, it can be also explained that it is the deeper or another meaning that appears in the mind after identifying the sign.

Feminism comes from the word “femina”, meaning ‘woman’. Feminism thus can be understood as the study of women. Besides, feminism is also a kind of social, economic, political, and ideological movement to get gender equality in society. Feminism also explains that woman has the value to contribute in society. There are three waves of feminism and also there are eight kinds of feminism. They are: liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist feminism, gender psychoanalyst feminism, existentialist feminism, postmodern feminism, ecofeminism and multicultural and global feminism.

DISCUSSION

Feminism

Liberal feminism has the belief that every woman and man has the same rights and opportunities. Humans have rationality and reasons that are different from animals, this rationality is emphasized morality and prudence. Individual rights in liberal feminism are emphasized on the "good", where everyone has the freedom to do things that are considered good. Liberal feminism first appeared in the 18th century, then followed in the 19th century, and finally in the 20th century. 18th century liberal feminism has the same theme of education for women, it begins Mary Wollstonecraft’s

A Vindication of the Right of Women. In the book, she wrote that in that year in Europe there were still many women who were prohibited from leaving the house and only at home doing housework. Different from men who have the opportunity to develop themselves. In addition, Wellstone also criticized email, the work of Jean Jacques Rousseau that education between women and men should be distinguished. Men can study science and humanities, while women only study poetry so that they can be loving wives.

Meanwhile, 19th century feminism emphasized the opportunity for civil and economic rights for women and men. At that time, women are not only given the opportunity for education, but also other rights such as organizing, expressing opinions, etc. Meanwhile, in 20th century liberal feminism, based on Betty Friedan's *Feminist Mystique*, women should be able to become career women and housewives, even though it is difficult, there needs to be a division of tasks with their husbands. Suitable jobs for women such as being teachers, nurses, secretaries and cashiers, to become like that of course through education. In addition, liberal feminists want women to be free from sexual violence, etc.

Radical feminism is an understanding that gives a big enough difference between women and men. Radical feminism assumes that women emphasize women's social dominance over men. This radical feminism arises because it is a protest against patriarchy, where patriarchy emphasizes the dominance of men over women. Radical feminism assumes that the patriarchal system has oppressed women. Radical feminism originated in 1960 when women participated

in the anti-war and new left political movements 1960, they were ostracized by men, then these women separated themselves and formed radical feminist groups. Some of the radical feminist figures are Ti-Grace Atkinson, Susan Brownmiller, Phyllis Chester, Corrine Grad Coleman, Mary Daly, Andrea Dworkin, Shulamith Firestone, Germaine Greer, Carol Hanisch, Jill Johnston, Catherine MacKinnon, Kate Millett, Robin Morgan, Ellen Willis, and Monique Wittig. And some radical feminist groups namely Redstockings, New York Radical Women (NYRW), Chicago Women's Liberation Union (CWLU), Ann Arbor Feminist House, The Feminists, WITCH, Seattle Radical Women, and Cell 16.

Marxist feminism is one of the branches of feminism that developed the theory of Marxism. The feminist theory of Marxism is a theory developed by a figure named Karl Henrich Marx. The feminist theory of Marxism has the view that capitalism is the oppression of women. In Marxism, there are social groups, one of which is women who are placed in the working class or workers, which are in an oppressed position, while men are employers or bosses, where men have more dominating power, the power to subdue, and are aggressive. Feminism Marxism assumes that if capitalism is abolished, there will be no oppression of women. Marxist feminism is also influenced by radical feminism. The influence referred to here is that radical feminists who are feminists do not pay much attention to the issue of inequality against women. What distinguishes the feminist theory of Marxism from other feminist theories lies in its assumption that capitalism is the main oppression. Women are considered inferior human beings, have dumber brains and are

structured in the lower classes of society. In addition, female workers are given lower wages and are not even paid. In Marxist feminism, gender inequality in society is caused by oppression in the relations of the production system, which is occupied by women. The relationship between husband and wife is considered a proletarian and bourgeois relationship, thus in Marxist feminism, capitalism is the main problem.

Psychoanalytic feminism argues that women's ways of acting are based on women's psyche or women's ways of thinking. Freud contributed to female pressure. As the Psychology wiki explains:

Psychoanalytic feminism is a social movement based on the work of Sigmund Freud and his psychoanalytic theories. It maintains that gender is not biological but is based on the psycho-sexual development of the individual. Psychoanalytical feminists believe that gender inequality comes from early childhood experiences, which lead men to believe themselves to be masculine, and women to believe themselves feminine. It is further maintained that gender leads to a social system that is dominated by males, which in turn influences the individual psycho-sexual development. As solution it was suggested to avoid the gender-specific structurization of the society by male-female coeducation". (Wiki Psychology).

Psychoanalytic feminism comes from two schools, namely Freudian and Lacanian. Freudian theory, which is mostly Anglo-American, emphasizes male dominance and the role of women as mothers, while Lacanian theory, which is mostly French, analyzes the relationship between gender and language. Some examples of classical psychoanalytic feminism texts are Judith

Butler's *Gender Trouble*, Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering*, Helene Cixous's *The Laugh of the Medusa*, Teresa DeLauretis' *Alice Doesn't and The Practice of Love*) Dorothy Dinnerstein's *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*, Elizabeth Grosz' *Volatile Bodies* Luce Irigaray's *This Sex Which is Not One*, Julia Kristeva's *Desire in Language and Tales of Love*, Juliet Mitchell's *Women's Estate and Psychoanalysis and Feminism* and Jacqueline Rose' *Feminine Sexuality*.

Next is existentialism feminism. Existentialism feminism is a feminist understanding where women can exist and be what they want and can make their position equal to men. Singh describes existentialist feminism as follows:

Existentialist Feminist explains comprehensively women's oppression embedded in 'otherness' as well as emphasizing the concept of women's situation, freedom, interpersonal relationships, and the experience of living as a human body, i.e., the sexual oppression of the patriarchal society. Simon de Beauvoir, Jean Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau Ponty, Mary Daly, and Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi (opposed to De Beauvoir) are the chief contributors of this school of thought.

He then explained further:

this school focus on the need of women's freedom, ones inter-personal relationship, the experiences of one/woman's living body, radical change in the male dominated society, one's self-deception, alienation, angst, anxiety, dreads, and despair. Besides that, their main focus is on the partiality done to ones (women), i.e., Otherness- woman's subordinate role in the society. As in existentialism the Existentialists clear that individual and the experiences of the individual must be the starting point of the philosophical thinking because

both the moral and the scientific thinking are unable to explain the human existence completely without facticity that is governed by the norms of authenticity, such is with Existentialist Feminists in feminism. the experiences of such individuals must be paid attention without any bias- particularly based on sex and gender distinction. Woman must not be seen as a subordinate thing playing subordinate role as 'Other' in the social and cultural construction on the physical and biological grounds. They also must have their intrinsic freedom. They must have their own choice. Let them grow, flourish and become as they want because they too are capable to do all the deeds like the men without any distinction provided that they must be provided opportunities in social, cultural and political areas to maintain their status.

One figure of existentialist feminism is Simone De Beauvoir. She explains existentialism feminism in *The Second Sex*. She begins with the question "What is a Woman?". According to her, four strategies can be carried out by women. First, women can work, second, women can become intellectuals, third, women can work to achieve socialist transformation in society, and finally, women can reject otherness.

Postmodern feminism is a feminist theory that relates to gender, this theory assumes that gender is not formed biologically, but is shaped by social and political systems. According to Simplysociology.com, postmodernism feminism is as follows:

Postmodern feminist theory is a school of thought that emphasizes the importance of social and political factors in understanding gender. Postmodern feminists believe that gender is not

determined by biology, but rather by culture and society. They argue that women have been oppressed not because they are biologically inferior to men, but because they have been socially and politically marginalized. Postmodern feminism began in the 1970s as a reaction to second-wave feminism. Second-wave feminism was based on the belief that women were oppressed due to their biology (i.e. , their sex). This led to a focus on issues like reproductive rights and equal access to education and employment. However, postmodern feminists argued that these issues were not enough to liberate women from oppression. Instead, they believed that women's oppression was the result of social and political factors (Waugh, 2012).

Postmodern feminism is a type of feminism that emerged in the 21st century. This feminism has received criticism because the problems that occur are not in accordance with the state of reality. Postmodernist feminist thinkers are Michael Foucault, Judith Butler and Dona Haraway.

Ecofeminism is a feminist movement that examines the relationship between women and nature. Ecofeminism analyzes environmental problems with feminist theory. Based on Britannica.com, Ecofeminism is as follows:

Ecofeminism also called ecological feminism, branch of feminism that examines the connections between women and nature. Its name was coined by French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974. Ecofeminism uses the basic feminist tenets of equality between genders, a revaluing of non-patriarchal or nonlinear structures, and a view of the world that respects organic processes, holistic connections, and the merits of intuition and collaboration. To

these notions ecofeminism adds both a commitment to the environment and an awareness of the associations made between women and nature. Specifically, this philosophy emphasizes the ways both nature and women are treated by patriarchal (or male-centred) society. Eco feminists examine the effect of gender categories in order to demonstrate the ways in which social norms exert unjust dominance over women and nature. also contends that those norms lead to an incomplete view of the world, and its practitioners advocate an alternative worldview that values the earth as sacred, recognizes humanity's dependency on the natural world, and embraces all life as valuable.

Ecofeminism was born when the state of the earth or the environment has been exploited, damaged, and looted by the capitalist system, which perpetuates the concepts of patriarchy and feudalism. Ecofeminism tries to answer these environmental problems with the uniqueness of women where women have the nature of protecting and preserving nature. Ecofeminism figures include Francois d'Eaubonne and Karen J. Warren. Karen J. Warren expands knowledge about ecofeminism into four things. First, there is an important link between the oppression of nature and the oppression of the environment. Second, understanding nature is important because it is to understand the oppression of nature and the oppression of women. Third, the theory of practice of feminism must include an ecological perspective. And fourth, solving ecological problems must include a feminist perspective.

The last is Multicultural and global Feminism. Multicultural is an ideology about

cultural diversity which includes race, ethnicity, gender, etc. which is expected to foster harmony and complement each other. Multicultural feminism focuses on the view that women, like in America, are not created or constructed equally and equally. Women have differences not only in race and ethnicity but also in gender, education, religion, occupation or profession. In the 1980s and 1990s, Feminism received a lot of criticism, the critical argument was that multiculturalism could weaken strong solidarity. Meanwhile, global feminism argues on the results of colonial and nationalist policies and practices, where the government and big business divide into two worlds: the first world (developed/haves), and the second world (developed/have-nots). Global feminism emphasizes that women must be able to understand the thoughts of other women and other women must also understand the views of others. Global feminism emphasizes social and political issues.

Synopsis of *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* Movie

The story of the film *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* begins in the scene when Jake is at the convenience store. While at the convenience store, he received a message to immediately meet his grandfather. Finally, he headed to his grandfather's house named Abe with his friend. Arriving at his grandfather's house, it appears that his house is locked, so Jake has to break down his grandfather's door. Inside his grandfather's house, there were files of paper scattered everywhere, he looked for his grandfather but did not find him. Finally, he found his grandfather in the back of the house lifeless with his eyes open. Jake was

shocked by what happened. His grandfather's death made him think and not accept the fact. Jake feels odd about his grandfather's death. Then Jake's parents took Jake to see a psychiatrist because Jake's parents felt that Jake's actions were very strange. The psychiatrist finally suggested taking Jake somewhere on vacation.

Later, Jake's parents took Jake to a remote village far from the city, where they stayed at a hotel. Jake without his father's knowledge went to a place that is a cave on the shoreline, where the cave is a barrier to another dimensional world. In the cave, Jake meets the peculiar children. Finally, these peculiar children brought Jake to meet Miss Peregrine in a castle. In the castle, Miss Peregrine takes care of the peculiar Children. These children are very special because they each have their advantages. There is a child who is like helium balls that if they are not held they will fly, there is a child who can expel bees from their mouths, there are also teenagers with the power of fire, there is a girl who is cute but has a mouth like a monster on the back of her neck, there are twins who have strength like Medusa, there are children who are translucent so they have to wear clothes to be seen, there are children who can produce vegetables, and there are children who can project dreams.

The children are looked after and cared for by Miss Peregrine. And it turns out that there are monsters that are after them, call them Barron and his gang. Barron came to Miss Peregrine's castle to take the children, but Miss Peregrine forbade it. In the end, Barron held Miss Peregrine hostage in an aviary. Barron and his friends are targeting children and their eyes because if they eat children's eyes, they can return to their

human form. Jake has the advantage that he can see hollow. Then Jake and the peculiar children try to save Miss Peregrine. Jake and the peculiar children head for a children's playground. On the children's playground, they fought with Barron and his friends, and almost failed, but with Jake's strengths and ingenuity along with the peculiar children, they were finally able to defeat Barron and his friends. Finally, they were able to find Miss Peregrine and save her. The ending of the film is very touching where Jake has to part with Miss Peregrine and peculiar children.

Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children (2016) as Popular Fiction

The movie "Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children (2016)" tells about the effort and life of the peculiar children to attack the enemy, especially the leader of the enemy called Mr. Barron. The story has the setting in 1943 and they use the time machine to come back to the event. The movie started with the death of a grandfather named Abe, who was killed by Mr. Barron's troop. Barron and friends always look for the human's eye to make themselves back to as human body, they especially search for children's eyes, and that's why Barron and friends try to reach the peculiar children. To save the peculiar children, Miss Peregrine always protects the children.

The movie "Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children (2016)" is included as popular fiction because it meets the characteristics of a fiction story. Firstly, it starts with the characteristic of fiction, which is a mystery. In the movie Miss Peregrine, there is something mysterious and there is something that should be solved. The

mysterious thing in that movie is the mysterious existence of Mr. Barron and his friends who want to kill the human, and the problem that should be solved is how to kill Mr. Barron and his friends. Second, the character or the people who play in the story are unique people. The unique characters in the movie are shown by the peculiar children who have unusual abilities like normal people. It can be seen that there is a child with her energy who could make a big carrot come out of the ground, there is also a child who can fly when she wants to help the bird in a tall tree, there is also a child who can produce bees from his mouth, there is also the child who can heat the water only by using her hand, there is also a child who can produce a light to make a movie, there is also a child who eat the meals from the back (she has a mouth in the back of her body), there is also a child who unseen but still can wear the clothes, and there is a child who can make the robot to be alive. All the unusual abilities seem unique, and they can not be thought of in a logical mind. The peculiar children have the ability that everybody cannot do. Third, the story is unreal. The movie is based on the creator's imagination and it is not real. It is also impossible to happen in normal life, and it cannot be found in real life.

Based on the explanation above, the movie *Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children* (2016) is a kind of fiction because it tells about something unreal, and mysterious, and it has the unique characteristics of the player.

Feminism in the movie *Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children* (2016)

In this discussion chapter, the one who will be the center of attention or spotlight is

Miss Peregrine herself. What will be examined starting from her character, her duties, and her demeanor which represents feminism. To begin with, I will first introduce Miss Peregrine herself. Miss Peregrine is a woman who has the task of taking care of, supervising, and protecting the peculiar children. Miss Peregrine lives in a big house where she and the peculiar children live. Miss Peregrine is a “ymbryne” who has the role to keep and save the peculiar children.

The movie represents the feminism of Miss Peregrine herself. In the movie, it is shown that Miss Peregrine has the role of the leader of peculiar children, and becomes a hero for peculiar children, so two points show the feminism in the movie from Miss peregrine’s point of view, Miss Peregrine as a leader and as a hero. Usually, the role of “leader” and a “hero” are owned by men, but in the movie, the role of “hero” and “leader” are owned by women. This role meets the theory of feminism itself. In liberal feminism, it is stated that woman has the freedom to act and behave, and in this movie, there is no boundaries between men and women.

The theory of feminism states that humans are basically created the same, there is no difference in roles between men and women. The goal of feminist theory is to eradicate the inequality of women in politics, economics, education, etc. Historically, feminist theory has tried to change people's views on male domination. As I quote from the book *Contemporary Social theory* written by Anthony Elliot:

If gender roles reflected patterns of sexual inequality, this is because we live in a social order in which men are dominant. On this reckoning,

masculinity symbolizes power and prestige, with women recast by a sexist culture as subordinate and oppressed. The political task of feminism thus emerged as involving not only the critique of men's dominance in the social order but a particular form of politics, concerned with social justice and the transformation of gender relations in modern societies. (Elliot, 2009).

Miss Peregrine as a leader can be shown in the scenes below:



The left picture is the scene that shows Miss Peregrine and the peculiar children having dinner together. The sitting position in the scene shows that Miss Peregrine sits alone at the top of the table, while the peculiar children sit on the right and left sides. It indicates that Miss Peregrine is the leader of the family, and there is no existence of man in the story. Usually, in the family, the person who leads the dinner is a man, but in this movie, it is presented by the woman, so this scene has the theory of liberal feminism, which claimed that women can be free in action and behave and it is shown in this scene. We can know that position of the leader is not only owned by men, but by women. The right side picture is the scene showing that one of the peculiar children named Fiona is late to come to the house. The dialogue is as below :

Miss Peregrine : “You are late 51 seconds, Fiona”.
 Fiona : I am sorry, Miss Peregrine.

The dialog shows that Miss Peregrine has a rule in the house for the peculiar children. Miss Peregrine has her own rules and this indicates that she is a leader in the house. Besides, it can be said as a leader because she applied discipline toward Fiona, she does not want Fiona to do that again, every child in the house should be on time and be disciplined. Miss Peregrine has firm characteristics as a leader in the house with these peculiar children. Usually, the strong and fierce character is owned by a man, but in this film, the strong and fierce character is owned by a woman, this indicates that the feminism theory is applied.

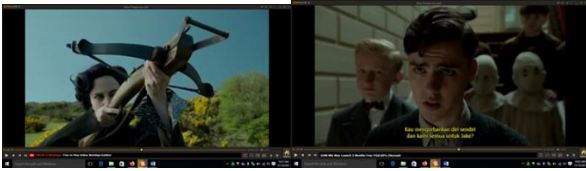


From the dialogue show that Miss Peregrine said:

Miss Peregrine : “Every ymbyne is committed to creating and maintaining places like this”.
 “And that's why we ymbryne are tasked with taking care of the young ones”.

From the dialogue above, it can be interpreted that as a leader, Miss Peregrine has an obligation and duty to maintain their place. A leader does have such a task. In addition to maintaining their place, the dialogue indicates that Miss Peregrine is a leader who loves and protects her foster children. Following the characteristics of a leader, Miss Peregrine has represented him. Miss Peregrine looks after the house and also takes care of her foster children.

The next is the representation of a “hero” from Miss Peregrine is presented in the scene below:



The left side picture shows that Miss Peregrine is bringing the weapon to kill the monster. The scene indicates that Miss Peregrine is a hero for the peculiar children because she fights against the monster to save the peculiar children. Usually, any relation to war, owning a weapon, and killing are the duty of a man, but in this movie, it is presented by a woman, so, owning of weapon and war now is not a duty of men, but also a woman, thus the theory of liberal feminism is applied again. And the right side picture has the dialogue: “You sacrificed yourself and us just for Jake?” The dialogue indicates that Miss Peregrine is a hero for the peculiar children. She sacrifices herself for the children and she is ready to die for them.

The representation of Miss Peregrine as a hero is also presented in the picture below:



The picture above shows that miss peregrine is very sad because they have to part with peculiar children. She said: “It is a privilege for me to look after you.”

From the scene and dialogue above, it can be indicated that Miss Peregrine is a hero. Miss Peregrine at that time will part

with the peculiar children because they must be held by their enemy, namely Barron. Miss Peregrine can be called a hero because she has been willing to sacrifice her life to save the peculiar children. In addition, Miss Peregrine has cared for and taken care of the peculiar children with the maximum possible so that they are safe even though in the end she must be arrested. Miss Peregrine's willingness and sacrifice spirit shows that she is a hero for her children. He has represented the role of a man who is supposed to be a protective hero for his children and fight against the enemy.



The picture shows Miss Peregrine carrying a bird, she seems to love the bird. She carry the bird because the bird was hurt. It indicates the ecofeminism. Ecofeminism seeks a relationship between the woman and nature, and in that scene, there is a relationship between Miss Peregrine and the bird. Nature here is like all the human operation. Ecofeminism emerged in 1970s because of the consciousness about connection between woman and nature.



From the picture above, it can be seen that one of the peculiar children took carrots from the ground. In the picture, it looks like he is

pulling with all his might while holding the carrot. From the picture, it can be judged as ecofeminism, because there is a woman who has a relationship with nature, namely carrots. In the scene, there is also a garden that shows nature as a support for life.

Message from *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*

From the explanation above, we can take lessons or messages from the film *Miss Peregrine's Home for peculiar children*. From the film, the message that can be conveyed is about compassion, respecting the elders, helping each other, and not doing bad things to others because bad things will surely lose to good.

First, affection. From the film, it can be seen that Miss Peregrine loves her foster children very much, so it can be imitated in everyday life that with children who are younger than us, we should love, love, and set a good example for our children. children under us.

Second, respect elders. From the film it appears that Jake and the peculiar children respect Miss Peregrine very much, all are submissive and obedient to Miss Peregrine and no one is against her. This can be exemplified in everyday life that as younger people we should respect and not fight.

Third, help each other. Helping each other here is seen in the film. Jake and the peculiar children have rescued and helped Miss Peregrine. This should be an example in life, we as humans should help each other, friends or relatives, or other people who are in danger.

Fourth, do not commit bad things to others. In the film, evil has been shown by a

character named Barron. This is not exemplary, because crime will harm others. Along the way, bad things will surely be defeated by good. Such are the lessons and messages that can be drawn from the film *Miss Peregrine's home for peculiar children*.

CONCLUSION

Popular fiction film is one of the popular products that interest people. *Miss Peregrine* is one of the popular fiction products because it shows an unusual story. The story in that movie is not that cannot be explained in logic and the characters in the movie itself are unique. There is a child who can fly, there is a child who can take the carrot from the land, there is a child who can reflect the dram, there are twins that cannot be seen, there is a child who can produce bees, and there is a girl who has the mouth in the back of her neck. The fiction has a mysterious plot, and in this movie, there is a mysterious thing that should be solved. This movie also presents feminism, those are liberal feminism and ecofeminism. Feminism in this movie is shown by Miss Peregrine who is the leader and hero of the peculiar children. It can be seen from the scene that Miss Peregrine lead the dinner with peculiar children, she applied the discipline rule for children. Miss Peregrine as a hero uses a weapon and sacrifices herself for peculiar children. Meanwhile, ecofeminism is shown by the relationship between Miss Peregrine and the bird, beside that there is a girl who has a relationship with nature by bringing the carrot.

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Women and Planters during the American Revolution War as Narrated in Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782)

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ABSTRACT

The paper attempts to discover a historical fact of American women's educational achievement and self-image as well as to unravel a psychological fact of American planters' existential crisis in the historical period of the Revolution War by means of the information reported by Jean Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur (1735-1813) in his famous *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782). To make the attempt successful, two literary criticisms are done by the writers of this paper, namely feminist criticism and existentialist criticism. Feminist criticism is carried out to dig up data from the *Letters* and analyze it through a feminist lens, while existentialist criticism is performed to unearth signs of existential crisis experienced by the Southern planters during the Independence War of America. After scrutinizing *the Letters*, it is found that Southern women during the war of independence are well-educated but have an inferiority complex and that Southern planters suffer anguish and despair of woeful political revolution which shutter their existential equilibrium.

Keywords: *Existential crisis; Nantucket women; Pennsylvanian women; Planters; Revolution War; Second sex*

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INTRODUCTION

Letters from an American Farmer is a literary work written by Jean Hector St. John

de Crèvecoeur (1735-1813), a Frenchman who migrated to America and became a successful farmer, a botanist, and a diplomat for the French government in America. The work was

written in 1782, during which American Independence War broke out. In the history of American literature, therefore, it is considered one of the representatives of literature surrounding the American Revolution, besides Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason* and Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, among others (Gray, 2004, p. 73).

Letters are fictional letters, written by two fictional letter writers. *First*, a fictional American farmer named James who sent his letters to a mysterious English recipient named "Mr. F.B." (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 42) and *second*, a fictional Russian gentleman named "Mr. Iwan Al—z" who reported his visit to Farmer James, then the farmer included Mr. Iwan's report in his letter to Mr. F.B. (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 169).

Letters consists of twelve letters, arranged numerically. *Letter I* introduces the fictional American farmer, James, telling the reason why he wrote the letters to the Englishman, "Mr. F.B.". *Letter II* tells how thankful Farmer James is and what makes him thankful as a successful farmer in the US. *Letter III*, which entitles "What is an American?", tells his gratifying description of American land and American people, differentiating them from European people. This letter is the most famous and the most quoted by American Studies students and instructors. *Letter IV* and *Letter V* give an anthropological account of the people of Nantucket Island in Massachusetts; their customs, manners, governmental policy, trade, education and employment. *Letter VI* describes another island located in Massachusetts, The Island of Martha's Vineyard, where whale fishery is cultivated. *Letter VII* and *Letter VIII* supplement the cultural account of Nantucket Island inhabitants already described in previous

letters. *Letter IX* describes a town called Charles Town (nowadays, it is named Charleston in West Virginia) which Farmer James visited; a town "... filled with the richest planters in the province..." whose "... ears by habit have become deaf, their hearts are hardened; they neither see, hear nor feel for the woes of their poor slaves, from whose painful labors all their wealth proceeds." (Crèvecoeur, 1983, pp. 152-153). *Letter X* describes the fauna which people can find in Charles Town such as snakes and hummingbirds. *Letter XI* reports a visit by a Russian named Mr. Iwan to Mr. John Bertram's botanical garden around his house in Pennsylvania. Mr. John Bertram himself is a successful farmer, telling what plants he grew in his garden, and *Letter XII*, the last letter written, describes completely how distressful Farmer James was when American Independence War occurred, and how his family life and political conviction were badly affected by the war.

It is interesting to know how American women in the period of the American Revolution are viewed by Crèvecoeur through his *Letters*. For that purpose, feminist criticism is conducted. Also, it is interesting to know how Crèvecoeur confirms and justifies his human existence as well as expresses his existential anxiety, despair and anguish as an immigrant farmer in a whilst-revolution period of American history through his letters narrator, Farmer James; that's why an existentialist criticism is then carried out. Both feminist and existentialist criticisms hopefully can enrich understanding of American women in the time of revolution and can enhance understanding of the existential crisis faced by planters whose farming lands are badly affected by the war in the southern part of America.

Feminist criticism “examines the ways in which literature... reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women ...,” (Tyson, 2006, p. 83) whereas existentialist criticism analyzes the problem and the crisis of human existence described in literature and tries to discover in it “... the whole spectrum of existence... the actualities of existence...” so clearly identified in literary themes of human freedom, decision, and responsibility (Macquarrie, 1973, pp. 2-4). Psychological oppression of women is hardly identified and scarcely discovered without the use of feminist criticism; sexist lines and patriarchal women representations within *Letters from an American Farmer* cannot be sensed with appropriate sensibility but by its use. Existentialist criticism helps focus on existential problems and crises faced by the main characters of a literary work.

DISCUSSION

Women are Well-educated but Inferior

Women in the work of *Letter from an American Farmer* become as important as men to be discussed. In the early part of the *Letters* (namely, *Letter D*) James, the farmer, has introduced the role of his wife in the discussion. He even mentioned that perhaps his wife is as important as his letter companion by saying that “my letters shall not be sent, nor will I receive any, without reading them to you and my wife” (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 43). The statement that he threw perhaps describes enough that his wife is as important as his letter companion since he drew the analogy so. However, in the text, James is not only describing his wife and typical Pennsylvanian wives but he is also describing another womankind such as the Nantucket women who

have a very different role and status compared to those of Pennsylvania.

The Pennsylvanian woman or wife to be exact is described in the *Letters* as someone who has enough intelligence to know and give her opinions toward her husband's businesses. *Letter I* mentioned about his wife repeatedly. At the beginning of the text, he said “My wife (and I never do anything without consulting her) laughs and tells me that you cannot be in earnest.” (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 38). In the text it is explicitly described that James, in writing the letters, always makes consultations first with his wife. This can be understood that James appreciated his wife and not underestimating her. He acknowledged the intelligence of his wife at the same time. James then continues in the next part saying: “She then read it herself very attentively; our minister was present, we listened to and weighed every syllable; we all unanimously concluded that you must have been in a sober earnest intention, as my wife calls it” (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 38).

From the quotation above it can be observed that James is describing his wife as someone who possessed good intelligence since she was able to read the letter well (Rudy & Adhitya, 2022, p. 338). James even used his wife's choice of words. When someone employs wording from other people, it means that the person agrees with it since it describes the situation well. We may conclude that James agreed with his wife and again he implicitly acknowledged the intelligence of his wife.

However, besides the intelligence that James's wife possessed, it is an irony that she weighs herself less.

... paragraph by paragraph, and warily observe whether thee canst perceive some

words of jesting, something that hath more than one meaning; and now I think on it, husband, I wish thee would'st let me see his letter; though I am but a woman, as thee mayest say, yet I understand the purport of words in good measure, for when I was a girl, Father sent us to the very best master in the precinct (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 38).

From the quotation above, it can be seen that James's wife might be at a higher level of intelligence. She advises James to read each paragraph in a more detailed way because there might be a double meaning. We can see as well that James's wife was learning from a very good master when she was young. She knew that she was good at it. However, it is sad that before she acknowledged her intelligence she said "*though I am but a woman*". When we see further, we can see a very ironic meaning behind that. She said so, which might be because the doctrine of women is already rooted in her that they are useless, as implied in her statement "though I am but a woman". This assumption became clearer because then she added "*as thee mayest say*" meaning that her husband James also always said so.

Women Play Important Roles but Become Sexual Objects for Men

In *Letter VIII* titled "Peculiar Customs at Nantucket", the discussion also puts some focus on a woman as a wife. In the letter, it is described whilst the husbands are away from home and when the sea excursions are often very long, the wives are in charge of their husband's duties. It can be seen from the line:

As the sea excursions are often very long, their wives in their absence are necessarily obliged to transact business, to settle accounts, and, in short, to rule and provide for their families. These circumstances, being often repeated, give women the

abilities as well as a taste for that kind of superintendency, to which, by their prudence and good management, they seem to be in general very equal (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 143)

The quotation above proves that the Nantucket wives are in charge of any accounts including rules and provide any business related to the family. Crèvecoeur further said in the line that "they seem to be in general very equal". It can be concluded that the subject "they" here refers to the equality between men and women.

Another scenario shows the equality between men and women can be seen from the description that Nantucket prevails a singular custom among women there. Crèvecoeur said:

They have adopted these many years the Asiatic custom of taking a dose of opium every morning, and so deeply rooted is it that they would be at a loss how to live without this indulgence; they would rather be deprived of any necessary than forego their favorite luxury. This is much more prevailing among the women than the men... (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 145)

The description of the peculiar customs above shows that women in Nantucket might be having a stronger and bolder position compared to men because women in that place have the culture to take a dose of opium every morning whilst the men did not (Adhitya, Rosmawati & Fainnayla, 2022, p. 69). At least in some patriarchal places, using their point of view, they might think so. However, on the next page, Crèvecoeur writes something which might crumble our thought and the earlier statement about equality between men and women in Nantucket. Crèvecoeur continues with,

I was once invited to that house, and had the satisfaction of conducting thither one of the many beauties of that island (for it abounds with handsome women), dressed in all the betwitching attire of the most

charming simplicity; like the rest of the company, she was cheerful without loud laughs, and smiling without affectation. They all appeared gay without levity. I had never before in my life seen so much unaffected mirth, mixed with so much modesty. The pleasures of the day were enjoyed with the greatest liveliness and the most innocent freedom (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 143)

From the point one discussion, the significance of women's representation concludes that women in that era, in the *Letters from an American Farmer*, were put as an object. Although the status quo seems to show that wives in Pennsylvania were able to express themselves, give an opinion to the husband, and smart enough to advise the husband, but the mindset and doctrine that women are weak and useless already had been planted deeply into them; it is proven by the line as already mentioned in the first discussion, that James' wife weighs herself low "though I am but a woman, as thee mayest say". Not only once, she mentioned it twice, followed by the line "though I am a woman. Yet I know what it is to be a wife" (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 45). The quotation draws a clearer and bolder conclusion that a woman is nothing, weak, and useless. However, to be a wife is a brand new different thing. It shows us that women are treated as an object and as a lower class society and that their status can be changed only when she gets married and becomes a wife. It implicitly shows us that the success of a woman is when she is succeeded to be a good wife. If we go into further analysis, of the text, we can see that the freedom of speech and expression itself is limited only to private or housing areas, not public areas.

The representation of women and wives in Nantucket also brings us to a similar conclusion. Although at first it is described that Nantucket's women are capable of doing many things that their husbands usually did and Crèvecoeur also mentioned that, there in Nantucket, men and women seemed very equal; however, in the last text, the description and wording that he used is breaking down his statement about the equal position. He said that he was satisfied with the island of handsome women. This might be translated as he enjoyed seeing those beautiful women which placed women as an object to satisfy men's desires.

Simone de Beauvoir, in her book *The Second Sex*, writes about "The Married Woman". She said: "There are young women who are already trying to win this positive freedom; but seldom do they persevere in their studies or their jobs for long: they know the interests of their work will most often be sacrificed to their husband's careers;" (De Beauvoir, 2011, p. 641). Beauvoir writes quite in the modern era married women are often sacrificed for the benefit of their husbands. Even nowadays, in this globalization and very modern era, there are still many societies that hold on to that system: patriarchy. There is a term best describing this situation: "mere-exposure effect." It happens when somebody tends to develop a preference that sounds more familiar to them. When we try to make a comparison between today's women and the women of Crèvecoeur's era, it seems so obvious why women accepted their condition as it is without resistance; it happens because they did not have another exposure to challenge their status and it seems that they did not have any choice. Thus, it makes sense when we see many texts from that era we can see women treated as second sex and it seems

that they are also accepting that; one example is those wives of Pennsylvania and Nantucket.

Colonial America in American history showed that middle-class women had a relatively good education, like what is shown from a statement of Farmer James' wife when she said "... when I was a girl, Father sent us to the very best master in the precinct." Huey B. Long discovered in colonial American history there were a lot of well-educated women who were highly educated:

There is sufficient evidence to conclude that even with limited formal public education, a significant number of colonial women were well educated for their day and country. A representative group of intelligent and well educated women would include Abigail Adams, Hannah Adams, Cornelia Beekman, Margaret Brent, Elizabeth Ferguson, Zilpah Grant, Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton, Sarah Knight, Eliza Lucas Pinckney, Catherine Van Rensselaer Schuyler, Mercy Warren, and Meriam Wood of Dorchester whose epitaph notes that when she died "she scarcely left her mate," mate in this instance meaning peer (Long 1975, p. 104).

However, like Farmer James' wife showed in the *Letters*, these well-educated women of colonial America had been patriarchal women whose culture was extremely patriarchal. A Pennsylvanian governor's wife, Esther De Berdt Reed (1746-1780), wrote "The Sentiments of an American Woman" (1780), in which she informed: "... if opinion and manners did not forbid us to march to glory by the same paths as the Men, we should at least equal and sometimes surpass them in our love for the public good" (Reed in Sinopoli 1997, p. 109).

The governor's wife admitted that opinion and the manners which prevailed in her era

forbade the women of Pennsylvania to join the Continental Army, which discriminated against the gender role of women. The patriarchal culture of her era prohibited women to join the Continental Army and joined the men.

Paradisiac Existence of Pre-War Planters of the South

Farmer James' existence is analyzed herein in three states. First, an analysis of the American farmer's existence when he becomes a successful farmer in New York; second, an analysis of his existence among the black slaves of Charles Town; and third, an analysis of his existence amidst the war of the American Revolution.

The research begins with the first analysis of existence. In *Letter I*, it is stated that Farmer James comes from an English parentage:

My father left me a few musty books, which his father brought from England with him; but what help can I draw from a library consisting mostly of Scotch divinity, the Navigation of Sir Francis Drake, the History of Queen Elizabeth, and a few miscellaneous volumes? (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 37).

His father migrated to the US alone, being a bachelor, equipped with "all the arts, sciences and ingenuity which flourish in Europe" (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 61). He arrived on "a new continent... different from what he had hitherto seen... in Europe". In this new continent, James' father enjoys liberty: "no aristocratical families, no courts, no kings, no bishops, no ecclesiastical dominion... no great manufacturers... no great refinements of luxury". He enjoys freedom from feudalism, colonial law, colonial government, religious authority, economic hegemony, and from oligarchical power of Europe. He is a free man; "free as he ought to be... In this great American asylum" (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 61-

63). The liberty he enjoys, however, has a consequence; he must strive hard, and face all dangers to survive in “the unknown bounds of North America” (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p.62). He must survive poverty and get through it so that he can “rank as citizens”. James’ father then plucks up all his courage to survive in this terra incognita and to live dangerously as an existential hero:

... the secret of the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment of existence is: to live dangerously! Build your cities under Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas! Live at war with your peers and yourselves! Be robbers and conquerors, as long as you cannot be rulers and owners... Soon the age will be past when you could be satisfied to live like shy deer, hidden in the woods! (Nietzsche in Kaufmann, 2016, p. 130).

His struggle eventually paid off; James’ father becomes a successful farmer in New York. He married a woman and had children. James reminisced about his father’s victory: “He left me no good books it is true, he gave me no other education than the art of reading and writing; but he left me a good farm, and his experience; he left me free from debts, and no kind of difficulties to struggle with” (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 49). James inherited all his father’s riches, married an intelligent woman, had vast plantation land, had abundant livestock, and owned some loyal Negroes working for his plantation, just like other planters of the South. James becomes an existential hero:

My father left me three hundred and seventy-one acres of land, forty-seven of which are good timothy meadow; an excellent orchard; a good house; and a substantial barn. It is my duty to think how happy I am that he lived to build and to pay for all these improvements; what are the labours which I have to undergo,

what are my fatigues, when compared to his, who had everything to do, from the first tree he felled to the finishing of his house? Every year I kill from 1,500 to 2,000 weight of pork, 1,200 of beef, half a dozen of good wethers in harvest; of fowls my wife has always a great stock; what can I wish more? My Negroes are tolerably faithful and healthy; by a long series of industry and honest dealings, my father left behind him the name of a good man (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 49).

Despite abundant wealth, as a second-generation migrant, James still “have but to tread his paths to be happy and a good man like him.” Luckily, he is equipped with “freedom of action, freedom of thoughts” as a wealthy planter (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 49). He can easily make excursions to many places, like Nantucket Island, the Island of Martha’s Vineyard, Charles Town, etc. without thinking much about the money spent. Farmer James’ depiction of himself in the *Letters* as a wealthy planter of the South mirrors Crèvecoeur’s real life as a wealthy planter whose existence was fully free:

In 1765 he became a naturalized citizen of New York and in 1769 married Mehitable Tippet of Westchester. Three months after the wedding, he purchased 120 acres of uncleared land in Orange County... planted an orchard on the hillside behind his house... Crèvecoeur soon established himself in the society of freeholding farmers, mill owners, and local officials in the county and extended his acquaintance to include Cadwallader Colden, the distinguished scholar who served as lieutenant governor of the colony, and William Seton, a prosperous and well-read merchant in New York City (Philbrick 1976, p. 23).

Charleston Planters' Attitude to Their Slaves

However, his existential equilibrium is disturbed when he visited Charles Town. He found the inhumanity and barbarism of Charles Town's farmers in their treatment of their slaves; "*my mind is, and always has been, oppressed since I became a witness to it.*" (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 161). "Oppressed with the reflections which this shocking spectacle afforded me." (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 162). James eyewitnessed Charles Town farmers' brutality against their black slaves:

I was leisurely travelling along, attentively examining some peculiar plants which I had collected, when all at once I felt the air strongly agitated, though the day was perfectly calm and sultry. I immediately cast my eyes toward the cleared ground, from which I was but at a small distance, in order to see whether it was not occasioned by a sudden shower; when at that instant a sound resembling a deep rough voice, uttered, as I thought, a few inarticulate monosyllables. Alarmed and surprised, I precipitately looked all round, when I perceived at about six rods distance something resembling a cage, suspended to the limbs of a tree; all the branches of which appeared covered with large birds of prey, fluttering about, and anxiously endeavouring to perch on the cage. Actuated by an involuntary motion of my hands, more than by any design of my mind, I fired at them; they all flew to a short distance, with a most hideous noise: when, horrid to think and painful to repeat, I perceived a negro, suspended in the cage, and left there to expire! I shudder when I recollect that the birds had already picked out his eyes, his cheek bones were bare; his arms had been attacked in several places, and his body seemed covered with a multitude of wounds. From the edges of the hollow sockets and from the lacerations with

which he was disfigured, the blood slowly dropped, and tinged the ground beneath. No sooner were the birds flown, than swarms of insects covered the whole body of this unfortunate wretch, eager to feed on his mangled flesh and to drink his blood. I found myself suddenly arrested by the power of affright and terror; my nerves were convoked; I trembled, I stood motionless, involuntarily contemplating the fate of this negro, in all its dismal latitude. The living spectre, though deprived of his eyes, could still distinctly hear, and in his uncouth dialect begged me to give him some water to allay his thirst. Humanity herself would have recoiled back with horror; she would have balanced whether to lessen such reliefless distress, or mercifully with one blow to end this dreadful scene of agonising torture! Had I had a ball in my gun, I certainly should have despatched him; but finding myself unable to perform so kind an office, I sought, though trembling, to relieve him as well as I could. A shell ready fixed to a pole, which had been used by some negroes, presented itself to me; filled it with water, and with trembling hands I guided it to the quivering lips of the wretched sufferer. Urged by the irresistible power of thirst, he endeavoured to meet it, as he instinctively guessed its approach by the noise it made in passing through the bars of the cage. "Tanke, you white man, tanke you, pute some poison and give me." "How long have you been hanging there?" I asked him. "Two days, and me no die; the birds, the birds; aaah me!" (Crèvecoeur, 1983, pp. 161-162).

Although James himself owns some black slaves working for his plantation, he never treats them as brutally as the planters of Charles Town. Here, the second analysis of James' existence must then be conducted.

James' sight of brutality makes him question human freedom: freedom owned by

the white planters who own the black slaves for their plantations, and freedom owned by the black slaves who are owned by the white planters. Do they have the same freedom? Is freedom a natural right of all humans, including the slaves? Must some humans not enjoy, by their wretched destiny, the natural right of freedom? These questions disturb his existential peace. Now James questions the humanity of existential heroes of Charles Town who seem to jeopardize intentionally the existence of their black slaves:

This great contrast has often afforded me subjects of the most afflicting meditations. On the one side, behold a people enjoying all that life affords most bewitching and pleasurable, without labour, without fatigue, hardly subjected to the trouble of wishing. With gold, dug from Peruvian mountains, they order vessels to the coasts of Guinea; by virtue of that gold, wars, murders, and devastations are committed in some harmless, peaceable African neighbourhood where dwelt innocent people who even knew not but that all men were black. The daughter torn from her weeping mother, the child from the wretched parents, the wife from the loving husband; whole families swept away and brought through storms and tempests to this rich metropolis! There, arranged like horses at a fair, they are branded like cattle and then driven to toil, to starve, and to languish for a few years on the different plantations of these citizens. And for whom must they work? For persons they know not, and who have no other power over them than that of violence, no other right than what this accursed metal has given them! Strange order of things! Oh, Nature, where art thou? Are not these blacks thy children as well as we? On the other side, nothing is to be seen but the most diffusive misery and wretchedness, unrelieved even in thought or wish! Day after day they drudge on without any prospect of ever reaping for themselves;

they are obliged to devote their lives, their limbs, their will, and every vital exertion to swell the wealth of masters who look not upon them with half the kindness and affection with which they consider their dogs and horses. Kindness and affection are not the portion of those who till the earth, who carry burthens, who convert the logs into useful boards. This reward, simple and natural as one would conceive it, would border on humanity; and planters must have none of it! (Crèvecoeur, 1983, pp. 152-153).

James further questions the existential authenticity of "the American man" of the South whom he has glorified in his previous letters:

What, then, is man, this being who boasts so much of the excellence and dignity of his nature among that variety of unscrutable mysteries, of unsolvable problems, with which he is surrounded? The reason why man has been thus created is not the least astonishing! It is said, I know, that they are much happier here than in the West Indies because, land being cheaper upon this continent than in those islands, the fields allowed them to raise their subsistence from are in general more extensive. The only possible chance of any alleviation depends on the humour of the planters, who, bred in the midst of slaves, learn from the example of their parents to despise them and seldom conceive either from religion or philosophy any ideas that tend to make their fate less calamitous, except some strong native tenderness of heart, some rays of philanthropy, overcome the obduracy contracted by habit (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 155).

He protested Charles Town planters' brutal treatment of their slaves when the slaves struggle to regain their natural right of freedom:

They are neither soothed by the hopes that their slavery will ever terminate but with their lives or yet encouraged by the goodness of their food or the mildness of their treatment. The very hopes held out to mankind by religion, that consolatory system, so useful to the miserable, are never presented to them; neither moral nor physical means are made use of to soften their chains; they are left in their original and untutored state, that very state wherein the natural propensities of revenge and warm passions are so soon kindled. Cheered by no one single motive that can impel the will or excite their efforts, nothing but terrors and punishments are presented to them; death is denounced if they run away; horrid delaceration if they speak with their native freedom; perpetually awed by the terrible cracks of whips or by the fear of capital punishments, while even those punishments often fail of their purpose (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 156).

Using existentialist vocabulary, James' awareness of his being a rich farmer is called 'being-for-itself' (*être-pour-soi*). With his being-in-itself, James enjoys full freedom of action and freedom of thought—a natural rightfully enjoyed by rich planters of the South. However, when eyewitnessing the brutal treatment suffered by Charles Town's slaves, James begins to be aware of his 'being-for-others' (*être-pour-autrui*) (Gregory, 2012, p. 155-156). With his being-for-others, James voices lucidly his harsh protest against the inhuman treatment of Charles Town planters towards their slaves. He undertook a project for the slaves to make America a better place for the slaves to live. He wrote letters, and sent them to Mr. F.B. in England, hoping that Mr. F.B. would spread the letters and tell the world about the inhuman cruelty the slaves suffer. Like the existentialist Nicolas Berdyaev, James now has existential enlightenment that "human worth is liberation from slavery... from the

enslaving power of ... society, of the Kingdom of Caesar..." (Berdyaev, 1944, p. 27).

Charles Town (nowadays Charleston), is notorious for the export of slaves, especially of colored people; "... enslaved Indians were a major export out of Charleston, South Carolina, through 1715" (Newell in Vickers 2006, p. 185). It is "... one of the principal centers for black slavery ..." (Newell in Vickers 2006, p. 514). At first, Charleston planters allowed their slaves to market fruit, vegetables, eggs, poultry, and other plantation commodities in the 'black market' in their masters' names (Newell in Vickers 2006, p. 219). This gave the slaves some sense of freedom, especially when the slaves even '...gathered during hours when not working...' However, this slaves' freedom '...increased fears over how to regulate them...', so that the South Carolinian government instituted dress codes and curfews over the slaves, and "... the colonial militia was given the responsibility over local slave patrols ..." (Geiter & Speck 2002, p. 109). The slaves responded to the codes negatively and reacted to it with violence:

Tensions finally came to a head in 1739 when a group of slaves stole guns and ammunition from a store at the Stono River Bridge near Charleston. While making for Florida, they destroyed plantations and killed whites. Reprisals from the militia were brutal (Geiter & Speck 2002, p. 109).

If Farmer James' story is well-understood that the slave whom the planter saw on his trip to Charles Town was thus punished "... on account of his having killed the overseer of the plantation ...," the brutality which the Charleston masters did over their slaves is merely due to the slaves' killings which prevailed in the town in the historical period.

The Planters' Existential Crisis in the Revolution War

James' existential crisis finally worsens when New York, his hometown, was ravaged by the American War of Independence; "I am conscious that I was happy before this unfortunate Revolution. I feel that I am no longer so; therefore I regret the change." (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 184). His authentic existence is disturbed. His freedom of action and freedom of thought are denied before inhuman total submission demanded by his countrymen who are divided into two groups: the Patriots and the Loyalists:

As a citizen of a smaller society, I find that any kind of opposition to its now prevailing sentiments immediately begets hatred; how easily do men pass from loving to hating and cursing one another! I am a lover of peace; what must I do? I am divided between the respect I feel for the ancient connexion and the fear of innovations, with the consequence of which I am not well acquainted, as they are embraced by my own countrymen. I am conscious that I was happy before this unfortunate revolution. I feel that I am no longer so; therefore I regret the change. This is the only mode of reasoning adapted to persons in my situation. If I attach myself to the mother country, which is 3,000 miles from me, I become what is called an enemy to my own region; if I follow the rest of my countrymen, I become opposed to our ancient masters: both extremes appear equally dangerous to a person of so little weight and consequence as I am, whose energy and example are of no avail (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 184).

James did not see that the war was the best solution for both political parties; he loves peace. He hates the war very much since it makes his family disbanded; his wife and children departed due to regrettable war:

... the howling of our dogs seems to announce the arrival of our enemy; we leap out of bed and run to arms; my poor wife, with panting bosom and silent tears, takes leave of me, as if we were to see each other no more; she snatches the youngest children from their beds, who, suddenly awakened, increase by their innocent questions the horror of the dreadful moment. She tries to hide them in the cellar, as if our cellar was inaccessible to the fire. I place all my servants at the windows and myself at the door, where I am determined to perish. Fear industriously increases every sound; we all listen... (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 183).

James now questions citizens' obedience to the revolutionary state vis-à-vis human individual freedom. Can humans escape from the political structure that violates their natural freedom? Can humans escape from external power that imposes forcedly everyone to wage war against each other? Is war existentially justified? Can a political aspiration have a right to kill humans who used to be our nearest neighbors? Can Politics deny Existence? These questions shutter his existential assurance.

The innocent class are always the victim of the few; they are in all countries and at all times the inferior agents, on which the popular phantom is erected; they clamour, and must toil, and bleed, and are always sure of meeting with oppression and rebuke. It is for the sake of the great leaders on both sides, that so much blood must be spilt; that of the people is counted as nothing (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 184).

In his "existential heaven", in New York, James was proud of his being an American: "What then is the American, this new man?... strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country," (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 64). while among Charles Town fellow planters, in his "existential Pandora's box", James questions his being of an inhuman, brutal

American: “What, then, is man, this being who boasts so much of the excellence and dignity of his nature among that variety of inscrutable mysteries, of unsolvable problems, with which he is surrounded?” In the Independence War of America, in his “existential hell”, James laments over his being an American with a divided self: “... what is the man when no longer connected with society; or when he finds himself surrounded by a convulsed and a half dissolved one?” (Crèvecoeur, 1983, p. 181).

The Southern planters of New York in the revolutionary period, as depicted in Crèvecoeur’s *Letters*, mourn the insecurity of their existence. The existentialist Nicolas Berdyaev expresses the woeful trait of a revolution:

The destined fate of revolution is that it inevitably leads to Terror and Terror is the loss of freedom, the loss of everybody’s freedom, the loss of freedom for all. At the outset revolution is pure and single-minded, it proclaims freedom, but as the development of its immanent forces goes on, in the power of the fateful dialectic which takes place in it, freedom disappears and the reign of Terror begins (Berdyaev, 1944, p. 195).

All which is described by the fictional Farmer James in the *Letters* happened to Crèvecoeur himself. Crèvecoeur had to ride out suspicions of his patriot neighbors and at the same he faced the threat of Indians who sided with Great Britain. To avoid taking sides, Crèvecoeur escaped to New York, leaving his vast plantation, wife, and children in his friends’ care. When in New York, Crèvecoeur was thrown into prison due to the British garrison’s suspicion of him. This made his health seriously impaired and he suffered from a nervous breakdown. In 1781, Crèvecoeur finally escaped safely to France. King Louis

XVI was impressed by his vast knowledge of America, so he appointed Crèvecoeur to be his official representative. In 1783, Crèvecoeur was sent by the French king to represent him in America. When Crèvecoeur arrived a second time in New York, he was extremely frustrated: “... his plantation had been burned to the ground in an Indian raid, his wife was dead, his children had disappeared” (Stone in Crèvecoeur, 1983, pp. 15-16).

The American Revolution also brought about the financial ruining of the planting class of the South. Eliza Lucas Pinckney, a successful indigo planter in Charleston, got a decimated plantation during the revolution:

When war broke out between the colonies and Great Britain in 1776, Eliza and her family sided with the Patriots. During the southern campaign of the war, British forces decimated Eliza’s plantations in South Carolina, leaving the family financially ruined (Carlisle, 2009, p. 82).

All in all, the grave reminiscence of the Revolution War leaves an irrecoverable wound in Crèvecoeur’s anguished soul. Through Farmer James’ words in the *Letters*, Crèvecoeur told his terrible experience during the American War of Revolution. Desperately, he finally left America, left his most beloved plantation, and died in France.

CONCLUSION

If the data included in the *Letters* were true, it can be concluded that women in two places—Nantucket and Pennsylvania—in the pre-revolution era (the late 17th century America) play important socio-economic roles in their society. However, they do not yet have awareness of their important status; they still consider themselves second sex. This is perpetuated by the general view widespread in society that women are men’s sexual objects.

The *Letters* also mirrors the existential condition of planters of the South before and during the Revolution War. Before the war, planters of the South have existential peace since they have full freedom of thought and freedom of action laboring in plantations inherited from the first generation of Southern wealthy farmers. However, this existential peace was broken when they eyewitness the inhumanity, brutality, and vulgar cruelty of planters of Charles Town suffered by the black slaves. The planters denied humanity and caged the natural freedom of the slaves. The existential crisis even worsens when the planters of New York, including James (and personally, Crèvecoeur himself as a real farmer) face and harshly experience the grave consequences of the Revolution War. They are devastated by their grief to witness their beloved country torn and divided.

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GENDER BIAS & RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION: POSITIVE FRAMING OF NEWS REPORT COVERAGE ON MAUREE TURNER

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ABSTRACT

Mass media plays an important role in our lives and society to a greater degree. As a primary source of information that people tend to go for, the kind of information mass media provides matters. The problem is that every message we see in the media is constructed and that even texts like news reports are not entirely authentic. Previous studies have shown that news media do have their own tendency in writing their news reports, through which the minority communities are usually the ones to receive the short end of the stick. On that account, this study, through conducting critical discourse analysis, attempts to see the media framing in Mauree Turner's 2020 Oklahoma state legislative election news reports and find an underlying motive behind such framing. The finding shows that in general, the media framed Turner positively in their reports and that this positive frame implies an inherent gender bias and religious discrimination within American society.

Keywords: *critical discourse analysis; gender bias; media framing; minority politician; news reports; religious discrimination*

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INTRODUCTION

The ability of mass media to deliver information across a wide-scale audience in a short period of time has made mass media a significant part of our lives. Considering the stretch of its scale, one can even say that mass media plays an essential role in society. People rely on mass media not only for

information but also for both education and entertainment. Accordingly, the information people receive from mass media contributes to developing their perception of the world and the other things in life. One problem is that not every message provided by these media is objective and impartial. First of all, as Paxson (2010) argued, messages

distributed by the media are all constructed in one way or another. The argument is that so many considerations were made along with its production. Questions regarding for what purpose the message was produced and for whom the message was intended or targeted were kept in the mind of the producer so that each message could be delivered as effectively as possible. Needless to say, the process of constructing a message includes major and minor adjustments, such as choosing a perspective or using a particular choice of word. As in the case of news reports, the same process happens. Despite the claim of being objective and impartial, news reports or news ‘stories’—as Bell (1991) pointed out—are still stories after all. Hence, events are not merely recounted or retold but rather written in a certain structure or composition from a particular angle or point of view, similar to how stories typically are.

On top of that, being part of an industry where profit is an undeniably important aspect, there is this urgency for news report channels to attract as many readers as possible to generate more profit. The logic behind this lies in how important readers are to a news channel or outlet’s survival. Generally speaking, this applies to any other media content providers (Napoli, 2003). Specifically, in terms of news media, Picard (2004) noted that “the mission of newspaper enterprises includes both commercial and social facets.” Not only do they act as a facilitator of commerce but also as a facilitator of both social and political expressions of the people. Accordingly, their financial model was based heavily on both buyers (readers/subscribers) and advertisers, through which subscription and advertisement systems were applied. Nevertheless, it is to be noted that in either

case, the readers are the one who pays the bill. The readers paid for subscriptions and used by the news outlet as a ‘product’ for advertisement. With this kind of financial model, garnering more audience would also mean earning more income.

In their attempts to cater to the comfort of the audience, news report channel or mass media, in general, tends to reinforce “common assumptions of the social and economic order of the world” (Paxson, 2010, p. 27). However, an external force like the audience is not the only issue because, as van Dijk (1991) noted after his study involving white mass media and how they cover ethnic and racial-related events, white journalists or news producers themselves were inclined to be subjective due to their white-lens perspective. On that premise, it is safe to assume that news reports are not entirely authentic, contrary to popular belief. The producers made various intentional decisions in tailoring their message to fit the targeted audience. Ultimately, news media contributes to maintaining the existing status quo through biased reports, which puts people from minority communities in an unfavorable position. With this in mind, it is encouraged to be critical of mass media. Instead of taking the information provided by the media as it is, one should also examine how said information was delivered to uncover any underlying messages. On that account, this study attempted to further explore the relationship between mass media and the minority by analyzing how American news sites reported the victory of a minority politician Mauree Turner and investigating how the reports are justified within American society.

Mauree Nivek Rajah Salima Turner is an African American Muslim politician who got elected as a member of the Oklahoma House back in 2020 after winning the state legislative election. Not only that Turner comes from two intersecting minority backgrounds as a Black person and a Muslim, but Turner is also someone who identifies as a non-binary. While it is not uncommon to find minority politicians taking seats within the government these days, Mauree Turner's case is different due to the very fact that their three different identities intersect with one another. Indeed, as a non-binary, Black and Muslim lawmaker, Turner's win in the election had made it into the headlines of some popular news sites in America. Reports regarding Turner's win are interesting not only because of their circumstances but also because of the argument that messages in news media are constructed.

Following the main concern of this study, this study is conducted under the post-nationalist American Studies paradigm. Throughout the decades, American Studies have progressed past focusing on the notion of American identity, which heavily revolved around the Western or Eurocentric point of view (Rowe, 2000). Today, rather than debating the definitions of who are Americans and what is America, scholars are encouraged to widen the scope of their studies—and that is by shifting and putting their attention more on the experience of those coming from minority communities. Since the focus of this study revolved around a minority politician—specifically how the media framed the news reports regarding their win in a state legislative election—the post-nationalist approach is deemed more appropriate than the other approaches.

Furthermore, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used to conduct this study. Briefly, as many scholars have noted, discourse can be referred to as either *the language* that is 'above the sentence'; *the language* that is 'in use'; or *the language* that is seen as a form of social practice. However, according to Cameron and Panović (2014), the first definition is rather limited to linguistics; hence, many social science scholars define discourse using the second and third definitions. Discourse as *the language* in use means that language is the source of information concerning a person or/and a group of people's beliefs and overall attitudes. On that note, a discourse analysis would not only revolve around the texts by themselves but also the way or the manner in which said texts were linguistically formulated. With this in mind, social theorists argued that "social reality is not a set of fixed truths which we will discover if we ask the right questions, but is rather a discursive construct" (Cameron & Panović, 2014, p. 8). This argument is also related to the third definition of discourse which regards language as a form of social practice. Through this particular perspective, Wodak (2014) asserted that various elements in society shape discursive events and that, in return, these elements are also shaped by discursive events. In other words:

...discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned; it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of/and relationships between people and groups of people. (Wodak, 2014, p. 303)

This relationship between discourse and society has pushed for a discussion concerning power—which, according to Wodak, is likely to be reproduced and maintained through discourse. It is because discursive practices, as implied earlier, have

ideological effects that contribute to constituting various elements of society. In support of Wodak's argument, van Dijk, while discussing discourse, stated that:

Discourse is thus defined as a form of social interaction in society and at the same time as the expression and reproduction of social cognition. Local and global social structures condition discourse, but they do so through the cognitive mediation of the socially shared knowledge, ideologies and personal mental models of social members as they subjectively define communicative events as context models (van Dijk, 2014, p. 12).

Referring to van Dijk's statement above, the ideological effects that Wodak mentioned earlier happened through cognitive mediation. That being the case, the cognitive process, thus, is an essential aspect of van Dijk's theoretical framework. His approach particularly focuses on the trio discourse-cognition-society, which made it necessary for researchers to pay attention to the discourse structure, social cognition, and the relationship between discourse and society in conducting a critical discourse analysis.

Other than that, the concept of discursive strategy is important to this study. This one concept is related to the focus of this study which mainly concerns news media and framing. As Carvalho (2008) noted, it is rare for journalists to witness events without a third-person mediation. This mediation is what causes the journalists' (and subsequently the media's) depictions of what is happening in society to be dependent not only on the preferences of the media itself but also on the perspective of the third party that serves as their source of news—someone who witnessed the events firsthand. Therefore, in conducting CDA, one should

also account for any kind of discursive strategy that happened within the process of delivering information. Explaining further about discursive strategy, Carvalho (2008) elaborated that there are four different discursive strategies, and one of them, which becomes the specific focus of this study, is framing. Important within CDA is that one should think of "framing as an action or operation, rather than in terms of frames as (fixed) independent entities" (Carvalho, 2008, p. 169).

Additionally, Carvalho also believes that framing is not optional and is, instead, a necessary process when talking about reality. On that note, the question that researchers proposed in analyzing framing is *how* instead of *whether an actor enacted the act of framing or not*. Referring to Entman (1993), there are two main actions involved in the act of framing; those are selection and composition. The former is about what elements are being included and what are being excluded, whereas the latter is about the arrangement of said elements in question.

Using the qualitative method, this study was conducted to seek an interpretation of the media frame and an explanation of its reasoning. The data were collected from six news articles published by CNN, USA Today, The Guardian, The Washington Post, and NBC News following the win of Mauree Turner as an Oklahoma legislator in 2020. It is to be noted that these news sites were chosen with two specific considerations. First, excluding news aggregators, those five news sites are some of the most popular American news sites (Pavlovskaya, 2021). Second, out of the news sites included in the list, those five news sites are the only ones that write about Turner's win in the 2020 state

legislative election. Furthermore, rather than random articles, only specific articles that focus heavily on Mauree Turner and their win were collected. Given the points above, this study focuses on identifying how the media frame electoral news for the winning minority politician Mauree Turner and finding an explanation of the framing within the context of American society.

DISCUSSION

A close reading of these news articles reveals that these journalists perform the act of framing through two main actions that are selection and composition. Also, through the CDA approach, the way in which these news sites and journalists frame Mauree Turner's win in the election implies an underlying issue within American society. In the discussion, respecting Turner's identity, only the pronoun they/them is used for the sake of consistency and to avoid any confusion.

Media Framing of Mauree Turner

The researcher noted three major tropes of action the media took in their framing of Mauree Turner. The first one is, emphasizing an aspect of Turner—their identity. This finding aligns with previous studies where scholars found that the news media had this tendency to associate minority politicians with one or two specific attributes. Decades ago, the news coverage of minority politicians was not only scarce but also heavily racialized (Chaudhary, 1980; Zilber and Niven, 2000; McIlwain, 2011). In elections where they are up against white politicians, news media are inclined to pay attention more to the racial identity of minority candidates, and such racial references are only less prevalent if there are

no white candidates for the minority candidates to compete against in the election.

Similarly, in studies involving female politician candidates, these politicians also received news coverage limited to their attributes as women (Banwart *et al.*, 2003; Kelly, 2009). As seen in Turner's case, this tendency of narrow-focused coverage persists throughout the years, even until today. What sets these studies apart from the current study is what kind of identity the media focused on, which in the case of Turner, it happens to be their gender and religious identity. In five different news articles from CNN, NBC News, USA Today, and The Washington Post, the headlines were all found to be along the lines that Turner is a nonbinary and a Muslim.

Additionally, following the rule of foregrounding that these news sites have set up in the headlines, the bodies of the articles (or the texts within) were written in accordance with the kind of information that is being emphasized. Take, for example, the opening paragraphs of CNN and The Washington Post's articles where it is reaffirmed that Turner is winning in the state legislative election and becoming the first legislature member who is a nonbinary and a Muslim. Further, the emphasis on Turner's gender identity continues with a brief explanation regarding the term nonbinary in general and what being a nonbinary means for Turner.

Besides the explicit and repetitive direct mentions of said particular information like what the rest of the media had done, The Guardian emphasized Turner's gender identity by comparing them and their political opponent, Jason Dunnington. In the comparison, The Guardian described Turner

in such detailed sentences while only using one phrase *the man* for Dunnington. The phrase in itself would mean nothing if it were not for the efforts The Guardian put in describing Turner. The excerpt below is taken from the article:

When 27-year-old Mauree Turner sat down at Holly Rollers, the queer-owned vegan Donut Shop in Oklahoma City, in July 2020, it was under strange circumstances. First, Turner, who uses non-binary pronouns, had just won Oklahoma's 88th district by a mere 228 votes. Second, sitting opposite was the man they had just beaten. (The Guardian, 2020).

As seen above, The Guardian only put a short phrase of *the man* after a long and detailed description about Turner. The decision of The Guardian to refer to Dunnington through his gender identity subsequently puts Turner's identity, which is mentioned right in the previous sentence and in the same paragraph in highlight. Aside from the emphasis on Turner's gender identity, this particular composition and the strategy that The Guardian had taken to include several different kinds of information regarding Turner compared to Dunnington illustrate a strong in-group representation (through Turner) and out-group representation (through Dunnington). These representations are related to the positive framing of Turner that The Guardian is trying to infer in the next few paragraphs.

Right after the introductory paragraph, The Guardian continues the comparison by bringing up the professional records or on-field experiences of both Turner and Dunnington. Similar to how the description in the opening part of the article, The Guardian, for the second time, put a different effort and strategy into describing the two

politician's works. For Turner, The Guardian lists the works that Turner had previously done before getting elected to the office. The list includes Turner's job description as a regional field director with the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union). On the other hand, in describing Jason Dunnington, The Guardian decided to focus more on the fact that before this election, Dunnington was a three-term incumbent who, for so long, had been facing difficulties in moving forward with his progressive policy proposal in Republican-led Oklahoma House. The composition insinuates this idea of just how unproductive Dunnington is compared to Turner, who has been working on various things.

On top of that, the particular use of the word *struggled* as an adjective to describe Dunnington's difficulties, together with the detail on who dominates the legislature, puts Dunnington in a negative light. As a politician who fights for the well-being of their citizens and the betterment of society in general. And considering that he is a Democrat, the description of his helplessness against the majority of Republicans in the Oklahoma House does not sound reassuring to the people he represented. On the other side, the long list of works that Turner had done during their time before the election insinuates just how productive and passionate they are with their job. The stark contrast between the two politicians conveniently underlines Turner's identity further both as a member of the queer community and as a politician who cares for the well-being of their people in need. The difference between the two continues to be asserted through a comparison of Turner and Dunnington's political spectrum. This time, The Guardian described Turner as a left-leaning Democrat

while describing Dunnington as a moderate incumbent even though both hailed from the same party, that is, Democrats. In this comparison, The Guardian's apparent intention to differentiate the two politicians is illustrated. The readers are expected to be able to distinguish between a left-leaning politician and a moderate politician. Considering that people read certain news sites that fit their political spectrum, this particular detail correspondingly frames Turner positively and, to some degree, better than their predecessor—Dunnington.

Another case of polarization was seen in NBC News article. However, instead of pitting Turner against another individual, NBC News set them against a group of people represented through Oklahoma House. In narrating Turner and their experiences during their time as a new member of the house, NBC News (2020) wrote:

Despite the challenges they've faced in the Republican-led state House, Turner has not been deterred from pushing a legislative agenda born of their own lived experiences.

In the above sentence, NBC News chose to use the word *challenges* to describe Turner's experience. Although the word *challenge* can be understood as neutral with no particular association with negative or positive meanings, the phrase that followed the word in this particular composition makes it different. Following the word *challenges* is the phrase *they've faced*. With *they* as Turner's pronouns, *face* serves as a verb, referring to the very action that Turner did. Citing the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE), the word *challenge* is commonly collocating with the word *face*. In contexts where this specific collocation happens, the meaning of the word

challenge usually takes on a rather negative one as it refers to something unpleasant. Therefore, in this case, for NBC News to use this word suggests the idea that Turner and Oklahoma House are at opposing ends. Because if both have the same goals and ideas, then Turner should not have difficulties in Oklahoma House. Similar to the previous one, this polarization accentuates Turner's identity as a minority politician and a Democrat against the Republican-led Oklahoma House.

In addition to these, some of these media also heavily personalize their whole coverage by adding the narrative of Turner's personal experiences and struggles. Things like how Turner grew up, what kind of environment they lived in, what kind of struggles Turner and their family had to go through, and how such struggles made Turner into the person they are today were narrated in the reports. Ultimately, this kind of coverage made Turner appears to be more 'humanly' and relatable, in a sense, for the people they represented. Through this personalized coverage, Turner's intersecting identity was emphasized more than the other parts of the reports since every identity of Turner—Black, nonbinary, and Muslim—is as equally as significant to them.

Another strategy used in framing Turner is the act of reproducing or echoing the narrative of a history maker. Along with explicitly mentioning Turner's gender and religious identity, some media also used the phrase *the first* in the headlines. The phrase presupposes that no nonbinary person who is a Muslim, aside from Turner, ever got elected and took such an important position in the government. Additionally, some of these media also explicitly claimed that Turner

made history or will make history by winning the 2020 state legislative election. Bearing in mind just how impactful an event should be to be considered as making history, Turner's win is portrayed as something revolutionary and inspiring. The media further illustrated this idea through the quotes they intentionally included in the reports, where an important figure of an LGBTQ organization called Turner's achievement a *milestone political moment*, and Turner themselves a *trailblazer*. On top of that, another individual from the same organization also referred to Turner's win as *breaking the rainbow ceiling*. In either of these contexts, Turner's gender identity and their background as a member of the LGBTQ community are underlined. In the same sense, when the media briefly mentioned a past event that includes Oklahoma discriminating against an imam in 2019, Turner's religious identity is the one that is being emphasized.

Alongside these two strategies, these media also craftily write their sentences in a particular composition where Turner is closely associated with agency and power. It is illustrated through the constant use of active sentences where Turner is the one initiating actions. In a sense, the media emphasize Turner instead of the action. Accordingly, this particular sentence structure frames Turner rather positively than how it frames the other parties. It is because where other parties are written using the same sentence structure—one that focuses on the *doer* or *agent*—they were often written under an unfavorable impression.

The Underlying Motive of the Framing

The way the media framed Mauree Turner presupposes that the most prominent

issue surrounding their victory in the election about Turner's identity. While there is nothing wrong with celebration, this presupposition implies something that is much more unpleasant than what is seen. First, one should question *why*. Why did Turner's identity matter in this election? Why did the media consider Turner's identity—both gender and religious identity—to be the highlight the newsreaders should be focusing on? Through the way the press writes these news reports, readers learn that Turner is the first nonbinary and Muslim to be elected to Oklahoma Legislature, which leads to a question: *Why* is Turner the first to be a nonbinary and Muslim legislative member? *Why* the lack of representation from minority communities? Considering what has been discussed about the media framing in Turner's coverage and where these media put themselves or with whom they side in the reports, there are two implications of the society behind such a positive framing.

The first one is gender bias. Gender, in general, has been the root of many issues in society. As one of the products of social construction, the concept of gender restricts ideas that are not acceptable to fit into the existing social norms or standards. This particular way of view eventually developed gender bias, through which society is inclined to associate particular attributes only to a specific gender and vice versa. For example, in the community where their culture believes in binary gender, gender is divided into masculine and feminine, with said forms based on one's biological characteristic—sex. Therefore, those born as males are naturally assumed as men whose appearance and behavior are then expected to be masculine, following the standard set by their society.

Similarly, this also applies to those who are born females. Along with this grouping are gender roles. It is due to this assumption that different genders should have different attributes that society deems people should have different roles to fit their gender. This abstract concept makes people believe that only men should work outside, attending to public matters, while women are expected to stay home and work on more domestic matters. The same view of gender roles also applied to America for the longest time, where women were not even included in voting because of the Fourteenth Amendment (1868).

Looking back at how the media framed Turner, it seems that the same view still exists in today's America. If Turner was a man, would there even be so much emphasis on his gender identity? The answer would be no because there has never been so much fuss about men actively participating in politics for as long as history has recorded. Following the prevalent gender bias, society deems it natural for men to be involved in public matters; and as such, male politicians who identify themselves as men have never been asked to justify their gender identity. On the contrary, Turner, who identifies themselves as nonbinary, had to face relentless questions about what being a nonbinary means, as if society is trying to place them in the gender binary box. From the repetitive mentions of their gender identity to getting compared to their political opponents while their gender identity is being emphasized, the way the media frame Turner speaks volumes about how much gender matters in society and how persistent gender bias is. And through the positive framing, an attempt was made by these media to resist such inherent gender bias.

The second implication is related to the heavy emphasis on Turner's religious identity. To begin the discussion, mentions of religion or religious topics are not uncommon to find in media due to the role of media in society. Among various information topics that the media provides for people, religion is one of them. As a means of communication, specifically, media at one point serves as a medium for religious communities to preach their spiritual teachings to an even broader and massive amount of audience. In America itself, there was even a time when religion had taken over the media (Stout and Buddenbaum, 2003). Still, the demand for the separation of church from state has been increasing over decades, which slowly decreases the heavy presence of religion in the media. In today's age, where religion no longer dominates the media to the point that it has its own space as before, the perception people developed over religion depends significantly on the kind of contexts under which religion is brought back into public discussion. For example, in situations where some religious individuals are heavily involved, the way people perceive the related religion would be likely in accordance with what said individuals did; it does not even matter if what they do is not relevant to their religion. In this practice, while positive events would favor the image of the religion, negative events would most likely perpetuate harmful stereotypes for the religion and the people who practice related religions—as seen in the case of Islam and Muslims in American news media.

To begin with, as scholars have noted throughout decades, the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the American news media has never been positive. From depicting them solely through the Orientalist view—which is

all about belly dancers and desert savages—to focusing on a specific theme related to the crisis, terrorism, and violence (Adnan, 1989; Said, 1997; Sheikh *et al.*, 1996). These stereotypical portrayals are either inaccurate or exaggerated, leading people who consume such media information to develop misconceptions about Islam and Muslims. With Islam and Muslims framed negatively, a misconception that people develop fuels their negative emotions toward the religion and the people practicing it. Indeed, as demonstrated in the study by Saleem *et al.* (2016), people who rely on media for information about Muslims are likely to be associated with stereotypical beliefs about the religious community, negative emotions, and support for policies that are considered harmful to the community. The study illustrates just how impactful the media is for people to shape their attitudes toward a specific community based on the information they receive from the media. That being said, in discussing the significance of Turner’s religious identity in the media’s framing of Turner, one should consider how the lack of positive framing in American news has negatively affected the image of Islam and Muslims among the American public throughout decades. The emphasis on Turner’s religious identity in these electoral news reports is not coincidental, on the contrary, it is intentional on the media’s part.

However, before drawing on the conclusion for the implication behind the emphasis, another thing that should be considered while discussing the implication behind the emphasis on Turner’s religious identity is the relationship between religion and American politics itself. As much as ones like to claim that Americans separate private matters like religion from public matters like

politics, the reality is that both things are so closely intertwined. Referring to history, the first president George Washington even believed in the idea that a good republic would depend on religion—because it is only within the concept of religion that one can define morality (Preston *et al.*, 2015). Following this argument was the role that religion partakes in advancing political movements. Patrick (2003) noted that religious belief had helped the advancement of the civil rights movement in a way as it was “led by ministers, fortified by the Scripture, exhorted in massive church meetings, and buoyed by gospel music” (p. 15). All in all, religion has always been closely related to politics in one or two ways. The same thing is illustrated through the tendency of specific religious communities to affiliate themselves with a particular political party. In a state like Oklahoma, which is dominated by Protestants who affiliate themselves with Republicans, the lack of representation from the surrounding Muslim community in its politics is expected. With these in mind, the emphasis on Turner’s religion makes sense in that such positive framing was to counter the existing negative stereotype and prejudice against Muslim communities

CONCLUSION

These media—CNN, NBC, News, USA Today, The Guardian, and The Washington Post—framed Turner through both processes of selection and composition, which includes several different acts that can be categorized into three major tropes. These tropes include the emphasis on Turner’s identity, the use and reproduction of the ‘making history’ narrative, and the consistent use of active sentences, putting Turner as the doer of

actions as the focus of the sentences, through which Turner is positively framed. Considering the stance taken by the media in writing Turner and the contexts under which Turner is being discussed in the news reports, a thorough critical discourse analysis reveals that these framings done by the media are justified through the implication of existing gender bias and religious discrimination against minority politicians in American society. This study showed that through the texts produced by these media, prejudice and discrimination toward minority people from the same community as Turner are both implied and resisted. By giving insights into the relationship between discourse and the society behind such discourse, this study helps readers to understand how society 'works'. For future researchers who are also interested in further discussing gender bias and religious discrimination in American society, this study gives additional insight in the sense that it should be taken into consideration that such issues can be observed not only through 'obvious' instances but also subtle instances like texts—or more specifically as in this study, discourse.

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**FEMALE ACTION HERO'S SUPERPOWER REPRESENTATION: AUDIENCE
RECEPTION ON TWITTER IN DISNEY'S *MULAN* (2020)**

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ABSTRACT

The live-action adaptation of the Movie *Mulan* produced by Walt Disney in 2020 sparked heated discussion from the audience after Disney tries to represent a strong female action hero by giving Mulan, the female protagonist, a superpower attribute called 'chi'. In the era of new media, audience expressed their opinion through Twitter. Thus, the tweet responses and reviews on several websites were consecutively taken as primary and secondary data as it is an audience analysis research, applying feminist theory to examine the audience responses to the representation of female action heroes with a superpower. The research found that the majority of the audience, approximately 80%, falls into the opposition audience. They do not like the representation of Mulan with a superpower. On the other hand, less than 20% of audience fall into the dominant and negotiate audience. The high percentage of the oppositional audience indicates that the audience of the live-action Mulan would rather choose the representation of Mulan who came from a humble background instead of someone who was born great.

Keywords: *audience analysis; female action hero; Mulan; superpower; Twitter*

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INTRODUCTION

The emergence of feminism makes many young girls seek personal empowerment from popular culture. Many young girls in third-wave feminism put emphasis on individual choices, sexual freedom, personal empowerment, consumerism, and cultural diversity (Stuller, 2010; Adhitya & Lasari, 2019, p. 35). Therefore, girls get satisfaction from consuming women's empowerment messages in popular culture.

Movies can be a medium for young girls to fantasize about being powerful and capable. They love to see Buffy from *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*, Katniss Everdeen from *The Hunger Games*, or Wonder Woman use their power and kick some asses. Marlina (2015) argues that strong female characters allow the female audience to see a reflection of themselves in fiction. The Hollywood industry finds this growing market of the female audience and commercializes off of their fantasy. In recent years, there is a rise in strong female-centered blockbusters produced by Hollywood production companies. Modern female action heroes are often depicted as physically and mentally strong and in control of their own narrative (Brown, 2011). However, The portrayal of women in popular culture also has a problem of often being stereotyped. Cocca (2016) argues they are often represented as white, heterosexual, cisgender, and non-disabled. Another problem is that women are often sexualized and suffer from the male gaze.

Several studies have been conducted to find how audience resonate with the representation of female characters they see

in media. The audience tend to find more sense of connection from a character who shares the same social attributes as theirs, whether it be gender, race, ethnicity, etc. Hall (2020) finds that when audience are presented with two male and female characters who are equally appealing, there is more probability they would identify with the character of the same gender. Hoffner and Buchanan (2009) as well as McClearen (2015) find that female audience identify with female characters who are smart, successful, resourceful, competent, attractive, and admired by others. Having a positive representation of someone who looks like them in the media can also help marginalized groups feel validated for who they are (Rudy & Adhitya, 2022, p. 336). Collier, Lumadue, and Wooten (2014) observe that the portrayal of same-sex relationships in *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*, and *Xena: Warrior Princess* helps the lesbian audience feel confident in their identity. It helps them feel empowered and safe to explore their sexuality.

Another previous research finds that audience do not always like the representation of female action heroes they see. Fimbianti (2020) examined that the representation of Captain Marvel received some backlash from the audience. The portrayal of Captain Marvel being dirty, difficult, and temperamental are hardly acceptable to the audience. Captain Marvel is represented to be anti-patriarchy yet her characteristics resemble another male character Marvel has released, Tony Starks. Moreover, Budirská (2021) argues that the man-hating tone of the movie implies “women are better than men,” and “all men are evil” further stereotypes feminists to be

man-hating individuals. There is still a lot of room to explore in audience studies, thus, this research is trying to fill in the gap on how the relationship between female action heroes' strength and superpower in the live-action movie of *Mulan* is being accepted by the audience.

The live-action version of *Mulan* which was released in 2020 is another attempt from the Hollywood industry to produce a strong female action hero. The live-action of *Mulan* (2020) is not an original story, it is a tale that has gone through so many adaptations from different perspectives and even cross-cultural interpretations that makes *Mulan* have so many layers of representations. For instance, Kingston rewrites *Mulan* from the perspective of a Chinese American. In *The Woman Warrior*, *Mulan* is breaking the accustomed pattern of women's life, she refuses traditional femininity and pursues women's personal values instead (Yang, 2018). On the other hand, San Souci tries a more adaptive approach toward *Mulan*. He created a free adaptation of *Mulan* instead of being faithful to the classic tale (Hsieh & Matoush, 2012, p. 217). "San Souci saw *Mulan* as a model of 'courage and filial piety' but places emphasis on her ambition to become a 'woman warrior.'" (Hsieh & Matoush, 2012, p. 218). San Souci's picture book later became the blueprint for the Disney animated version of *Mulan*. *Mulan* (1998) borrows the oriental narratives and repackages them to be globally acceptable (Wang & Yueh, 2005). The Disney animated version of *Mulan* puts aside filial piety and emphasis on individual freedom and finding oneself. These are Western values that conflicted with East Asian nature (Hsieh & Matoush, 2012, p. 219).

The live-action of *Mulan* (2020) is influenced by the emergence of superhero films from Marvel and DC. Over the past decade, superhero films have successfully dominated the Hollywood market and they do not have plans to slow down anytime soon. Disney takes note of the success of superhero films and implements superpowers into *Mulan*'s narrative. *Mulan* was born as a prodigious warrior instead of learning from scratch (Lailawati et. al., 2020). The live-action of *Mulan* (2020) started with the protagonist, *Mulan*, who was born with a special superpower called *chi*. In this movie, *chi* is explained as a power that is only possessed by warriors, or precisely men. As quoted by *Mulan*'s father in the movie "chi is for warriors, not daughters". *Mulan* is struggling to conceal her power because women are not supposed to have such power. As a woman, *Mulan* should bring honor to the family by marrying a reputable man. Niki Caro, the director of the film describes *Mulan* to be a powerful girl, but being too powerful can be taboo for girls (Flint, 2020). It can be reflected in *Mulan*'s father's reaction when young *Mulan* secretly used her power. Her father told *Mulan* to conceal her power because she is a girl, not a warrior. Through her persistence, *Mulan* slowly realized that a girl could also be powerful and unleash her true potential. The movie thus tries to deliver a women's empowerment message of how girls should embrace their power.

Mulan is a popular character that has become a global role model for many girls after its animated adaptation by Disney in 1998. Many audience who have watched *Mulan* resonate with *Mulan*'s character because of her hard work and perseverance to gain her power and achieve her success.

Therefore, adding a superpower to the live-action of *Mulan* is such a risky move. It can be a make or break for the movie as *Mulan* no longer starts from zero, she is already at a hundred. Her struggle is that she does not know how to utilize her power. Many of them notice this change and express their opinions in so many different ways, including writing reviews on websites such as IMDb or rotten tomatoes, posting videos on Youtube, or sharing it on their personal social media accounts. With the growing technology, these comments and criticisms can be easily accessed with the help of the internet. One of these platforms includes Twitter, a microblog that allows its users to post 280 characters short messages. Twitter lets researchers observe the audience's experiences and conduct content analysis without personally being involved. Twitter provides a space for new audience studies that are cheap and easy to access (Bilandzic et al., 2014). Thus, this research aims to analyze whether a superpower can be a template to answer young girls' desire for empowerment in today's era and find out what type of representation they would like to see in *Mulan* as a strong female character. This research is also intended to explore new audience research, especially using the social media platform Twitter.

This research was conducted by using qualitative content analysis. This research also used the audience's opinions from the tweets they posted on Twitter as primary data and reviews on several blogs as secondary data. The data was taken using Twitter's advanced search by entering the main keyword "Mulan" with secondary keywords such as "power," "superpower," and "chi".

The data were limited to the tweets sent from 7 to 27 September 2020. A total of 204 tweets were retrieved from the search. After the data were retrieved, they were analyzed through a few steps. The first step was condensing the tweets without changing their meaning. Then, the data were labeled based on the code that represents their position. The next step was to organize them into categories and their positions, the dominant, the negotiation, and the oppositional. Lastly, the data were analyzed with audience reception theory and feminism theory.

Hall's audience reception theory offers a theoretical approach for researchers to how media messages produced by the producer are being interpreted by the audience (Hall, 1973). He argues that audience decode media products differently based on their individual experiences, cultural background, or even economic status. He classifies the audience into three types: the dominant audience, negotiated audience, and the oppositional audience. This paper then uses feminist theories to explain the background of the responses.

DISCUSSION

The result of using Twitter's advanced search from 7 to 27 September 2020 is a total of 204 tweets. From table 1, 9.3% of audience fall into the dominant audience, 3.9% of audience fall into the negotiated audience while the majority of audience, accounting for 86.8%, fall into the oppositional audience. The audience expressed their reason for liking or disliking the movie for various reasons which can be concluded into 8 categories as seen in table 1.

Table 1. The distribution of *Mulan*'s audience

Position	Category	Number of Audience
Dominant Audience	The movie promotes women's empowerment	11
	The movie teaches women that they should also be able to live in their power	8
Negotiated Audience	They get the women's empowerment message the producer tried to express but the execution is a little forced	8
Oppositional Audience	comparing Mulan to other characters/movies with similar power	20
	giving Mulan a superpower undermined the message of the original story	8
	Mulan is inferior to men without her superpower	6
	Mulan is supposed to be a regular young woman with a smart brain who trained and worked hard to become strong instead of the chosen one who is born with superpower	108
	Mulan lacks character development	9
	they could not accept the existence and/or concept of chi, it felt forced and weird	27

The dominant audience celebrates Mulan as a character because they can feel the women's empowerment message reflected in the movie. They use empowering words such as "female spirit," "women's independence," "the awakening of female power," "on fleek," "empowering," and "strong women rock" to describe Mulan. They also expressed their love for the fact that Mulan is powerful whether it is from her wit or her inner strength. Mulan's strength and badass personality draw audience into watching the movie. Mulan is breaking gender stereotypes as her strength is able to be on par with her male peers in the army. In expressing this point, the audience use words like "great power," "an amazing person," "magical," "cool," and "capable."

The negotiated audience takes on this movie can be summarized into one point, the superpower addition is a little bit forced. The audience does not strongly reject the movie. They are able to appreciate the movie, but

they expect the producer to have done it better. The words used by the negotiated audience are "a little forced," "suppress," "too much expectation," "could do better," "able to appreciate the message," and "concealed." Some audience find Mulan's strength to be concealed. Although she has a strong chi that is probably stronger than her male counterpart, Mulan is struggling with having to hide her true power because she is a woman.

The oppositional audience express their rejection of Mulan's superpower for several reasons. They perceive superpower as a foreign concept as it was never mentioned in any of the previous adaptations. "Stupid," "weird," "unnecessary," "annoying," and "random" are used to describe how they feel towards the live-action of *Mulan*. They also argue that Mulan lacks in character development. They did not see Mulan grow as a character in this movie as she was already born special from the very beginning.

Their ideal portrayal of Mulan is determined,” “strong,” “smart,” “witty,” “courageous,” and “hard worker.” Another thing the audience pointed out is the chosen one and the Mary Sue trope that is prominent in the story. Following that, they also compare Mulan with other characters with similar tropes such as Harry Potter and Rey from *Star Wars*.

Audience responses on *Mulan's* superpower

The live-action of *Mulan's* cinematographer, Mandy Walker described Mulan as “a character who comes from a normal family and realizes how to use and harness her inner power and strength [...] everybody has that potential to find what they're good at, to find their passion” (Weiss, 2020). Hence, the live-action of *Mulan* (2020) focuses on how Mulan finally utilizes her superpower to its fullest potential after she embraces it as her strength. Since childhood, she has been suppressed because she lives in a patriarchal society where it is not acceptable for women to have it. Mulan owning her superpower becomes a part of her journey to figuring out her true self. Mulan is finally able to slowly accept her chi as a gift when she takes her father's position in the army. However, Mulan does not get the freedom to utilize her power in one go. She still has to disguise herself as a man because it is not acceptable for women to become a warrior. Although Mulan is a capable warrior, her achievements are all credited to Hua Jun, her male name, instead of Hua Mulan. Therefore, by adding a superpower the producer tries to convey a message that girls and women do not have to hide their power away, they can also have fierce strength and be feminine. Mulan learns

that she can never be powerful unless she loses that disguise (Caro as cited in Potter, 2020). Other girls should also be able to do the same and just be themselves.

Based upon these encoding messages from the producers, the audience are split into three positions. The first position is the dominant audience. Dominant audience are the ones who accepted the intended meaning shared by the producer (Hall, 1973). In this regard, they accepted Mulan as a strong and powerful woman from a normal family background who utilizes her superpower for good and finally finds her true self. Mulan has a women's empowerment theme.



Figure 1. tweet from the dominant audience



Figure 2. tweet from the dominant audience

The audience in figure 1 celebrates the movie because it shows them what a great power a woman can possess. They love to see Mulan as a woman who is powerful, strong, and confident. This shows that women in the position of power have a place in the audience's hearts. Many girls in the twenty-first century grow up consuming women's empowerment media. Young women love to consume women's empowerment media where the narrative revolves around a strong woman who can do anything (Timson, 2005; Wentz, 2004; Wilson, 2004 as cited in Doull & Sethna, 2011).

User @kjt_loveCC in figure 2 pointed out that *Mulan* is breaking the gender stereotype. They acknowledge *Mulan* as a character who does not conform to traditional femininity but she is a choice-making agent, she fights her own battle without fear. She shows the audience that she can also be as powerful as men. She empowers the audience that women are not inferior to men.

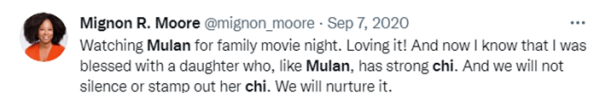


Figure 3. tweet from the dominant audience



Figure 4. tweet from the dominant audience



Figure 5. tweet from the dominant audience

Many young girls seek a representation of someone whom they can resonate with from popular culture. As a response in figure 3 shows, *Mulan* can resonate with her because she has a daughter, a strong daughter who will fight for herself. People can find a source of connection with a fictional character for so many reasons, and one of them is when they find a sort of similarity in the character's identity. The live-action of *Mulan* was able to poke the audience's heart because her story is relatable to how girls are being underestimated and set aside because of her strength. Yet, *Mulan* shows them that girls can also stand up for themselves. Figure 4 shows that *Mulan* can inspire women. They find *Mulan*'s strength admirable, they wish

to have the same strength as her. The audience in figure 5 also finds that the live-action of *Mulan* can be watched by young kids because it tells a story about bringing honors and the producers are able to portray women in a respectful manner.



Figure 6. tweet from the dominant audience

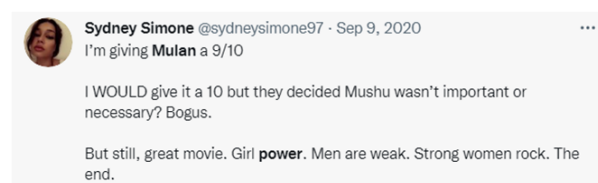


Figure 7. tweet from the dominant audience

On the flip side, some audiences like the live-action of *Mulan* because *Mulan* portrays a woman who is superior to her male counterparts. The audiences in Figures 6 and 7 emphasizes "men are weak," "strong women rock," and "you are their help," which similar to one of the slogans of girl power is "GIRL KICK ASS!" For women who have been suppressed by the patriarchal society and lack of power, it is easier for them to feel empowered when they can fantasize about a world where women can overpower men. This form of escapism gives women a false sense of security and empowerment that we have achieved gender equality. However, this representation oversaw the problem where women still experience gender oppression in real life.

The second position is the negotiated audience. Negotiated audience agree with some of the values and messages that the producer tries to express but they disagree with the other messages due to several

reasons including but not limited to their cultural and economic background (Hall, 1973). The negotiated audience of *Mulan* feel that the overall movie was okay, they can accept *Mulan*'s empowerment messages. They also appreciate the fact that the producers make one of the villains to be a woman. Thus, they not only have one representation of a powerful woman, but they also show the possibility of having a great superpower but using it the wrong way. However, the way the producer unfolded the chi as *Mulan*'s source of power and strength failed to grab the audience's heart.



Figure 8. tweet from the negotiated audience



Figure 9. tweet from the negotiated audience

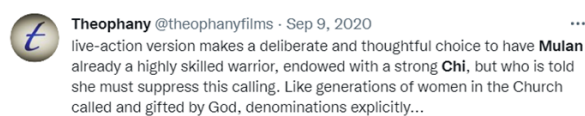


Figure 10. tweet from the negotiated audience

Some audiences find themselves appreciating *Mulan* for her strength and power. User @blesseidreylo mentioned that *Mulan* is a “powerful and strong woman on her own”. User @deachachai in figure 8 expresses her take on the movie, “I love the idea of the witch.” The audience appreciates Disney's choice for creating a villain who is also a woman. It gives the audience a variety of representations of women in movies. The portrayal of women does not always have to be a protagonist with a good moral compass.

A villain with an in-depth story and character development can also draw the audience to love a movie. In spite of these aspects that they like, negotiated audience could not value *Mulan*'s superpower the way the producer expected. The producer failed to integrate *Mulan*'s superpower in a way that makes sense within the story. “I expected to see more than a superpower girl with a sword“ as user @deachachai expressed. *Mulan*'s storyline falls flat because the audience expects the story of an empowerment journey, yet the producer failed to deliver. Another reason the audience pointed out is that they do not like the way *Mulan* has to conceal her superpower. User @theophanyfilms expressed, “who is told she must suppress this calling.” Women should not have been ashamed of their superpower. They should be able to utilize it just like everyone else.

The last position is the oppositional audience. The oppositional audience is the group of audience who disagree with the intended message given by the producer and decode the message differently. In this category, the live-action of *Mulan*'s audience hardly accept superpower as a part of *Mulan*'s journey. They disagree with the way the producer tries to explain her superpower as empowering when she hardly does anything to earn it. Additionally, *Mulan*'s superpower is portrayed as magical, which also goes against the traditional concept of chi where the power needs to be cultivated.



Figure 11. tweet from the oppositional audience



Figure 12. tweet from the oppositional audience



Figure 13. tweet from the oppositional audience

The animated version of *Mulan* released by Disney in 1998 has inspired a lot of women to work hard and achieve their dreams. *Mulan* resonates with a lot of women who start from a normal humble background but have the determination to find their true selves. The spirit of *Mulan* can be seen anywhere, *Mulan* can be anyone of us. The story of *Mulan* successfully captured the audience's heart with her hard work, determination, bravery, courage, and wit. Therefore, giving *Mulan* a superpower without letting her experience the hardship of training and set back makes the audience feel like the producer oversimplified the message of *Mulan's* journey. It is unavoidable that the success of *Mulan* (1998) left the audience comparing it to the new adaptation. The producer failed to meet the high expectations of the audience.



Figure 14. tweet from the oppositional audience

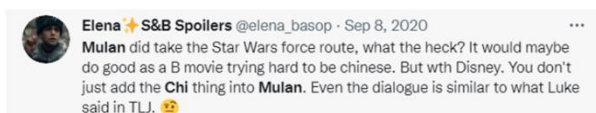


Figure 15. tweet from the oppositional audience

The statement of user @LigaoNavala in figure 13 that “writers can no longer make

female protagonists weak,” reveals the problem in the representation of female action heroes. Many production companies want to push out women’s empowerment movies with strong female characters yet they end up using similar tropes over and over again. *Mulan*, for instance, is being compared with other movies including Rey Skywalker from *Star Wars*, Elsa from *Frozen*, Wonder Woman, and Captain Marvel. These characters have strong abilities that are above human reach. They also share similar tropes which are the chosen one and/or Mary Sue. The chosen one is a trope where someone is chosen to do the mission. The Mary Sue trope, on the other hand, is when a female protagonist is already perfect and does not have any flaws. *Mulan* is the chosen one, she is born with a special superpower that makes her stronger than anyone else without training. She is chosen to be the one saving the emperor with the help of the witch. *Mulan* is already perfect from the beginning, and thus, makes her a Mary Sue. These character traits are well-liked by many people and it has proven to have worked in some other movies. Movies with the chosen one trope and the Mary Sue trope are among the most-grossing movies of all time. Audience love to fantasize about being the only person who is able to save the world or having a perfect ability. Yet these tropes do not work well with *Mulan's* audience.

Audience could not relate to *Mulan* because she is basically a superhero. *Mulan* falls into the Type II superhero proposed by Northrop Frye. A type II superhero is someone who has an ability that is unachievable and greater than normal people, but they are still human and have some relatable human virtue (Worcester et al.,

2013). Superheroes type II can be found in many Marvel superhero franchises. Marvel stories are another example of the successful chosen one trope. Stan Lee was able to shift a common trope with a realistic approach. Marvel superheroes have characteristics that can resonate with the audience. For instance, They live a normal mundane life when they do not do crazy stunts saving the world. They struggle with failing, breaking up, bullying, or even having disabilities (Mills, 2013, p. 106). They show the characters experiencing some setbacks and learning from them. They show how even a superhero can have a vulnerable moment. This is the part where *Mulan* lacks. *Mulan* does not seem to experience major character development. *Mulan*'s character development appears to be superficial and one-dimensional. Audience simplify *Mulan*'s struggle as "she has to hide her superpower." *Mulan*'s superpower is already unattainable for many audience, and they can not find any other characteristics that they can connect with.

Female Action Heroes' Representation in the live-action of *Mulan*

As previously mentioned, women in the 21st century grew up watching women's empowerment messages in the media as feminism has become prevalent in popular culture. Many women find themselves engaged in strong female-centered movies because it lets them fantasize about being in a position of power in contrast to how powerless they are in reality (Stuller, 2010, p. ix). Seeing someone who shares the same identity as us can lift our self-esteem (Cocca, 2016, p. 3). We can feel appreciated and validated as a part of something. For young girls, popular culture media texts that they consume can also affect how they construct

their identity. Thus, an inclusive representation of women is extremely important for the development of the female heroes genre. The stereotyped portrayal of women in movies is to be more supportive, more interested in romance, and more sexualized (Cocca, 2016, p. 4). Many times, women are often portrayed in skin-tight costumes to appeal to the male gaze.

The representation of *Mulan* in the new live-action adaptation does not live up to the audience's expectation of what type of strong female character she is supposed to be. *Mulan*, who has a superpower, becomes out of reach for many audience. The audience prefer *Mulan* to be someone who comes from a humble background. The audience want *Mulan* to be a regular girl who achieves her goal through determination and hard work. Many young girls may not be gifted with special talents when they were born. They have to climb up step by step. The audience expected *Mulan*'s character development to be a girl who was terrible at fighting to a strong warrior who can be in the same position as her male peers through practice. Johnson (2020) expressed, "where the movie misses the mark is that it doesn't allow *Mulan* the opportunity for character growth. She's not quite a struggling Jedi, nor is she your everyday girl like she was in the animated film."



Figure 16. tweet from the audience

Mulan is strong, she can fight, and she is as capable as her male peers. She is physically and mentally capable, which is a textbook definition of a female action hero. Stuller (2010) describes a female action hero

as someone who has strong capabilities that are achieved through innate abilities, intense training, or a combination of both. The previous strong female action heroes in Hollywood films can be seen in *The Hunger Games*, *Wonder Woman*, *Captain Marvel*, *Black Widow*, and *The Bird of Prey*. The live-action of *Mulan*'s audience identify with some of these action heroes as something foreign. User @mudidaya mentioned, "Captain Marvel is an alien, and Wonder Woman is a goddess." Gramuglia (2020) wrote a review on CBR.com, "If *Mulan* is a super-soldier who is practically unbeatable and earns the respect of the army regardless of years of ingrained sexism, then her actions carry no weight." *Mulan*, *Captain Marvel*, and *Wonder Woman* are similar in the way their superpower is unattainable for humans and better than men. The danger of the overly strong better than men's movies is that they will make women engrossed in their fantasy and think that women have achieved equality with men and can do anything (Brown, 2011, p. 155). Fudge noted, "Girl Power tricks us all into believing that girls are naturally powerful and therefore ignores the many ways their power is contingent on adhering to cultural expectations of female behavior" (2006, p. 160 as cited in Brown, 2011, p. 155). This makes women's empowerment and feminism become commodifications that can be taken on and off.



Figure 17. tweet from the audience

The live-action of *Mulan* could have been a breath of fresh air in the oversaturated female action heroes market. women's

empowerment is not only limited to being physically strong by possessing innate power. Power can also come from perseverance, empathy, sisterhood, families, and love (Cocca, 2016, p. 215). *Mulan*'s story could have been better written with an in-depth character development about overcoming human restraint as @NickJennings2k9 mentioned. It is okay for *Mulan* to show some vulnerability and grow from it. Moreover, in recent years, many female action heroes are portrayed by white women, and women of color are still underrepresented in the Hollywood industry. *Mulan* could have been a successful blockbuster that can resonate with Asian American or Asian women who still explore their identity and seek a role model who looks like them in popular culture. Diverse representation is especially needed since the U.S. has a diverse demographic, there are so many groups of minorities that wish to see someone with whom they can identify with on the big screen.

CONCLUSION

This study answers how *Mulan*'s audience on Twitter react to the superpower addition in the live-action movie *Mulan* (2020). The results show that *Mulan* audience can be categorized into dominant, negotiated, and oppositional audience. Dominant audience agree with the encoded message of *Mulan* having a superpower because *Mulan* embodies women's empowerment spirit. They love it when *Mulan* is seen kicking asses and is better than men. Negotiated audience can also see the women's empowerment message in the story, however, they are disappointed with how the plotline develops. On the other hand, the oppositional audience of *Mulan*'s audience

do not like the idea of having a superpower in the movie. Oppositional Audience do not like the idea of turning Mulan from a regular woman into the chosen Mary Sue. Mulan's strength should come from determination and hard work. The representation of Mulan who is born great also undermines the idea of women being able to be equal to men through hard work. The oppositional audience account for the majority audience with more than 80% percentage. This high percentage indicates that as women's empowerment movies have become a popular genre, the majority of the audience feels that the live-action movie Mulan is merely a show-off for strong women kicking men's asses. It fails to deliver a strong women's empowerment message. The audience can not resonate with a female action hero with a superpower. They prefer to watch female action heroes who are regular women achieving their dream with perseverance, wit, patience, and hard work.

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A STUDY OF THE INDIVIDUALISM ACCOUNTS ON AMERICAN LITERATURE THROUGH READER RESPONSE CRITICISM

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ABSTRACT

This study is by no means a comprehensive account of individualism or more accurately, individualism, in America. It is intended to be more suggestive than comprehensive though it is characterized by more summery than controversy. Many ideas as well as some of the highlights of American manifestations of individualism and modes of individualistic thought and philosophy have been added. What follows, then, is merely a look at some of the high-water marks of literary American individualism and an attempt to offer some cursory explanations for this American phenomenon in theory and practice. This study was under an exploratory qualitative method supported by an interdisciplinary approach of American Studies. Reader-Response criticism is used to make perspective and interpretation without a doubt. The sample was 28 students taking the American Society and literature course at the Universitas Islam Sultan Agung Semarang. The completion of this research shows the students have creativity and freedom to express their innovation in learning American literature. The cornerstone of individual conscience has to be their credos for changing into a better life through the social, political, economic, and moral autonomy of each individual.

Keywords: *American Literature; Individualism; Reader Response; Transcendentalism*

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INTRODUCTION

Individualism lies at the very core of American culture. Hence the most important thing to understand about Americans is probably their devotion to individualism. The stereotypic images associated with American individuality are not only abundant but

abundantly well known the world over. The American cowboy counts among the most powerful and proliferative of these images (Kleinfeld & Kleinfeld, 2004), (Yaquinto, 2020), (Kimmel & Gardiner, 2017) He is most frequently depicted as the only human in a vast landscape. He is a loner, a free soul, a man

who finds his strength in the solitude of vast stretches of uninhabited countryside. In some cowboy films, his rugged individualism and go-it-alone approach allow them to overcome the odds and not only survive but triumph. His victory is portrayed not only as a personal one but also as a practical and moral victory for all of society and ideals, such as justice and humanity.

Consequently, what is the meaning of American individualism? Some scholars give different perspectives and interpretations about the definition of individualism. Most Americans said it tends to any responsibility by themselves. American children are trained from very early in their lives to consider themselves as separate individuals who are responsible for their own situations in life and their own destinies. They are not trained to see themselves as members of a close-knit, interdependent family, religious group, tribe, nation, or any other collectively (Althen, 1998).

At root, the ideal of individualism regards each individual as a moral, political, and economic primary, meaning that each person in a civil society is by right an independent and sovereign being and that he or she should be free to choose his or her associations voluntarily and not have obligations or duties imposed by society without consent (Daniels, 2011). Moreover, Emerson's "Self-Reliance", has given a great contribution to depicting the American cultural identity that is still held by most American nowadays. It is individualism.

Definitions of individualism are also influenced by some eras as the spirit of the age. In short, there is any distinctive characteristic of the definition in line with the changing era. It was as Renaissance era (Martin, 2004), for example, connected with a philosophy called

humanism (Cohen & Kim, 2020). Included in this worldview was support for the idea of the central role and dignity of the individual; the development of all of the human faculties, especially the artistic ones, and not merely the intellectual ones (Kohl, 1992).

Recently, the term individualism is associated with some issues considered representative of individualism itself in America. In America, each individual has the freedom to take a part in his life. He is free to decide what to do now and in the future. American government or constitution guarantees its people without interference. They are free to speak, get material wealth, and profess a religion. This means **individual freedom**.

As for the historical data, before the Civil War of the 1860s, the American ideal of the free individual was the frontiersman and small farmer. It then developed in a different setting like entering the wilderness for getting gold. There they were to be individuals, who were responsible for themselves. The frontier mythology is an integral part of scholarly writing on the West, where the dichotomy of wilderness and civilization had been considered the key to the genre. Besides, Frederick Jackson Turner's "the Wilderness" was the most famous one (Stiglegger, 2022).

In the 19th, Ralph Waldo Emerson popularized the famous essay entitled "**Self-Reliance**". He developed a doctrine of what he called self-reliance, which meant to marry inner self-knowledge and self-trust with pursuits of self-culture (Plotica, 2018). Americans believe that individuals must learn to rely on themselves or risk losing freedom. To be in the mainstream of American life-to have power and/or respect—individuals

must be seen as self-reliant. Self-reliance pushes everyone to jump into competition.

In simple, **competition** may take the form of rivalry between individuals within a group, competitive efforts of social groups to gain their objectives, racial rivalries, or a contest of culture and institutions for pre-eminence. The competitive effort may be expended to achieve sheer existence and survival, or it may be devoted to a struggle for prestige. Today, the struggle for diverse identities testifies to the triumph of individualism (Davydov, 2022). And competition is seen by most Americans as encouraging hard work.

Hard work is the price of material wealth. American people claim that material wealth can be obtained through hard work only. To get it, they try to expand from one place to another place. Hard work has been both necessary and rewarding for most Americans throughout their history. Because of this, they have come to see material possessions as the natural reward for their hard work. Most Americans believe that if a person works hard, it is possible to have a good standard of living (Jon, 1997).

This research was methodologically descriptive qualitative research by gathering the data qualitatively and presenting them descriptively (Rudy & Adhitya, 2022, p. 338). Therefore, qualitative research is most suitable for addressing 'why' questions to explain and understand issues or 'how' questions that describe processes or behaviors (Cooper et al., 2012). A major characteristic of qualitative research is to get a descriptive focus. The data are collected in the form of words or pictures, rather than numbers. The written result of the research contains a quotation from the data to illustrate and substantiate to presentation. The

primary data of this research were from American literature related to individualism and some samples of 28 students at the Faculty of Language and Social Science, Universitas Islam Sultan Agung. Meanwhile, some books, articles, essays, newspapers, websites, and other theoretical writings concerning the topic of analysis or research were used as secondary data (Adhitya, Rosmawati & Fainnayla, 2022, p. 69).

Since this research is a product of American Studies, it follows the characteristics of American Studies which has the mainstream as an interdisciplinary study (Smith, 1980). Furthermore, Individualism is a phenomenon in American society. It is not only an American intellectual mind but also a hemispheric mind. Therefore, this research also uses a 'trans-national' approach from John Carlos Rowe. He states that "the multicultural and multi-ethnic US cannot be understood adequately without considering its transnational sources, hemispheric interests, and global relations" (Rowe, 2012).

To get a better understanding of it, the Reader-Response approach is used to learn by demystifying literature and connecting it to individual experience (Collective, 2020), (Singh, 2020). Reader-Response criticism does not provide us with a unified body of theory or a single methodological approach for textual analysis. But believing that a literary work's interpretation is created when a reader and a text interact or transact, these critics assert that the proper study of textual analysis must consider both the reader and the text, not simply a text in isolation (Bressier, 1999). Then the researcher analyzed those scripts using the relevant theories that the researcher made before. In addition, the method of analyzing the

data is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Warren, 2020).

DISCUSSION

American Literature class was initiated six years ago at the Faculty of Language and Communication Science, Universitas Islam Sultan Agung Semarang. I was very impressed when my students gave an analysis of American literature about Emerson's "Self-Reliance" and Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry". The students with their background and foresight explored the individualism values related to their lives as follows:

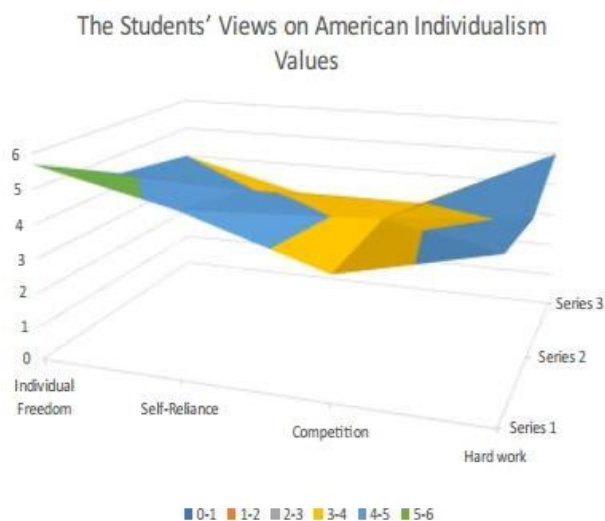


Figure 1. Students' accounts of American Individualism

American individualism leads to students' preferences and behaviors. If individualism is broadly defined as the process leading to a behavioral change in an individual through experience, then it will not be wrong to state that instructing students about value individualism. Figure 1 showed that the students highlighted individual freedom with the highest rank.

Such kinds of literature teaching programs aiming to raise students as independent individuals who involve being active in the teaching-learning process without being under control of the others should be designed around these skills. Here the main duty of a lecturer is only to be a facilitator. By now, he can facilitate their students to be students' actuaries.

Lecturers firstly should give the purposes of learning as well as the definition of it. The students with their curiosity will embrace the course through their experiences. In addition, they will inevitably forge strong connections with the plots, themes, and ideological assumptions of literature and will become active learners that embrace critical thinking.

The study of American literature is amenable to student-centered activities that offer opportunities for debate, discussion, and interpretation. Therefore, the choice of texts and activities is crucial because these selections will make the difference between passive reading and active involvement with a literary text. Hence, the PjBL (Project-Based Learning) combined with ML (Multiple Literacies) method is the right choice. It involves a dynamic classroom approach. The students can acquire deeper knowledge through active exploration of real-world challenges and problems. Moreover, it also engages all students in sense-making and supports students to solve problems, to think critically, to develop creativity and to improve innovatively (Miller & Krajcik, 2019).

The lecturer is an important facilitator and guide when it comes to offering a choice of texts and ways to interpret them. He or she

must plan and prepare to involve students in lessons and encourage them to express their viewpoints. And American literature has the power to create opinions and individual meanings for students; hence, they will typically be the ones to initiate and sustain activities based on the literary themes that resonate with them. This will help students become active classroom participants and will lead to autonomous learning.

Individualism in Philosophy

Individualism in philosophy perspective tends to political philosophy dealing with liberalism. Liberalism encompasses political, social, and economic doctrines that emphasize individual freedom, limited government intervention, gradual social process, and a free market economy (Rohmann, 1999). As a political philosophy, it is a basic principle that individual liberty is an ultimate value for human beings. The primacy of this basic freedom determines the individual position in every social and political arrangement.

Liberty is an essential attribute for human beings in the state of nature. Liberals believe that, first, humans are naturally in a state of nature/freedom (nothingness). Locke had on eliciting a meme that assumed individuals had the freedom and the capacity for ‘figuring it out on their own so to speak, using their own mind, which he redefined as consciousness. This has been deemed the democratization of mind as it displayed Locke’s confidence in individuals’ ability to acquire knowledge and construct meaningful identities from the intellectual materials made available to their minds through sensation and reflection (Heath, 2019).

Second, as freedom and equality are normatively basic, any limitation of them

should be based on rational justifications. As rationality in modern liberal tradition is an individual attribute that is essential to the concept of justice, political authorities, and laws that limit the liberty of citizens must be justified rationally, such as by social contract. The principle of equality arises as an extension of Kant’s categorical imperative regarding punishment. It is to the imperative itself, however, that he turns for his ultimate justification of juridical punishment as a requirement of natural law (Sarver, 1997).

Classical contract theories have an original aim to legitimate political obligations and to show that acceptance of obligations could be justified by rational individuals. In Hobbesian tradition, it is argued that persons are primarily self-interested, and by their rational assessment, they will find the best strategy to maximize their self-interests that, then, it will lead them to give consent to governmental authority. For Hobbes, the central issue was how to control violence and the internecine strife that attended man in his natural state. In this setting, the social contract rested on the individual’s renouncing those capacities he possessed in the State of Nature (Shaw, 2006).

Meanwhile, Kantian tradition argues that rationality requires respect for persons, which in turn requires that moral principles be such that they can be justified to each person. Thus, individuals are not taken to be motivated by self-interest but rather by a commitment to publicly justify the standards of morality to which each will be held (Cudd & Eftekhari, 2021).

The Renaissance era was also associated with the development of American individualism. It was a cultural, social, or

political rebirth referring to the historical period in Europe around the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that followed the period known as the Middle Ages. During that time there was a break with the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church and the rebirth of interest in classical Greek and Roman art forms.

The easiest place to draw a quick terminus of originating literary depictions of American Individualism is with the writings of Benjamin Franklin. As a true Renaissance man, Franklin was quintessentially an individualist. The witty aphorisms proffered in his widely successful journal, *Poor Richard's Almanac*, admonish the reader to industry, thrift, self-sufficiency, and personal virtue: "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise"; "Would you live with ease, / Do what you ought, and not what you please"; "God helps them that help themselves". There were several cultural and geographical factors at the time of Franklin's Autobiography that lent the American character to greater receptivity to individualist ideas and breaking away from the communal pressures of the old Puritan influence.

Individualism had also flourished during the Age of Reason, or the Enlightenment. It is the name given to an intellectual and philosophical movement that developed in eighteenth-century Europe and is characterized by its belief that reason, and not superstition or the authority of unexamined tradition, can solve all of the problems of humanity. Enlightenment thinkers rejected the idea that religion can be a source of truth and believed instead that the application of reason to the evidence of the senses is the sole source of the truth. This attitude toward God and religion, characteristic of much Enlightenment thought,

is called deism. In fact, Enlightenment's declaration of itself as "the Age of Reason" is predicated precisely upon the assumption that reason could only come about as a result of the maturity in a white Europe (Eze, 2002).

Thomas Jefferson was a distinguished figure in that period. The spirit of individualism is rooted in the radically humanistic view that each man is free and has an equal right to any other man. Individualism in this period was known as rational individualism for its affirmation of reason in one's life. Thomas Jefferson as quoted by Allan Nevins and Henry S. Commager (1986) wrote:

A certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness, That to secure these rights, Government are instituted among men, deriving their just power from the consent of the governed that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the people to alter or to abolish such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. (p. 85)

Meanwhile, Romanticism has any correlation with American individualism. It referred to a style of art and a way of thinking, and to the historical period during which the style developed in Europe, the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. Many romantic ideas were derived from the works of the Swiss-born French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (pp. 1712-1778). He contrasted nature, which he believed to be pure, innocent, and virtuous, with society, which he felt encouraged deceit, hypocrisy, and the reign of self-interest needed to maintain an unequal distribution of wealth. In the state of nature, a person's genius can flower and his or

her childlike innocence reveals the creative self free of hypocrisy. The American writer Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson can be considered romantic writers and thinkers.

Individualism in American Literature by Reader Response Criticism

The following paragraphs sketch the analysis of American literature both Emerson's "Self-Reliance" and Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" by Reader Response Criticism. "What Emerson means when he said "whose would be a man must be a nonconformist" (p. 1162). Self-reliance itself has a meaning identical to the idea of individualism. At the beginning of the essay, Emerson stated that our soul always hears something, which is original, not conventional, whatever the subject is. Therefore, we have to speak of what we, not what other people think. "to believe your own thought". In that address, Emerson would urge his audience to throw off the shackles of tradition and conformity. Emerson says "to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men, that is genius" (p. 1160).

Emerson also courageously points out that in every man, there is a unique power, which enables him to face his destiny. Man has to do his own best else this power will lose its strength, and he will have no peace nor can he achieve any success. A man is a being to whom God has given the ability or inherent strength to trust himself. "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string" (p. 1161). If a man realizes this and develops self-trust, he will have a new power. On the other hand, if a man is always governed by society in his every action, he becomes weak, turns into a dependent person, as well, and will never be

satisfied with himself. Emerson writes "Society everywhere is in a conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members" (p. 1162).

A man can keep his genuine thought as long as he is in solitude, but it slips away as soon as he enters society. To become a real man, one must be a nonconformist, "whose would be a man must be a nonconformist." (p. 1162). The most important thing in the world is the integrity of one's own mind. If the man absolves himself and promises to himself that he will be good, he will then have the suffrage of the world.

As for conformists, Emerson says that the sacredness of traditions is useless since what the tradition explains is good and bad. The only sacred law is that of one's own nature. To do well is to go upright and be vital, and to tell and act the truth in all ways. Someone's life is for the life itself, not for the spectacle. It should be genuine and steady rather than glittering and faltering. Someone has to be himself and must go alone without any conformity to anyone else "I actually am, do not need for my own assurance or the assurance of my fellows any secondary testimony" (p. 1163).

Besides that, Emerson believes that conformity makes us false in every way. A person should have greater trust in his nature and God, than in the laws made by men or in the opinion of society. Furthermore, Emerson argues for not imitating what other people do. Insist on yourself, we can do what we like to do with our own gift since we have the whole possession of it, whereas, of other's adopted talents, we only get a partial and temporal possession. He takes as an example traveling abroad to adopt and imitate what we see and

find. It is the result of a lack of our self-reliance. Some educated Americans think that American culture is poor compared with that of ancient countries so they travel abroad to search for culture, and then imitate what they have found without realizing that their own country has a culture no less than such action, according to Emerson, really shows a lack of self-reliance.

When the Romantic movement flourished in America in the nineteenth century, some people became increasingly dissatisfied with the idea of rationalism, which dominated intellectual life in the eighteenth century. From the above discussion, it is seen that Emerson's individualism in his 'self-reliance' was influenced by romantic individualism which proclaimed that feeling and imagination were central. Individualism or self-reliance was connected with the idea that the dignity of man requires that a man has to insist on himself and never imitate others.

Having pointed out Emerson's man idea in his 'self-reliance'. It concludes that he believes in individualism or non-conformity absolutely. He has a strong belief that a man has to trust himself since he has his power, mind, and originality of thought. It is very interesting to compare Emerson's "Self-Reliance" and Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry". Both of them are from the Romantic era and their work supports each other. But in Whitman's work, his poem contains a wider meaning about individualism in dealing with society. He stresses the idea of personality. An individual does not stand alone. An individual has to be a member of society. This membership involves both the rights and duties that accompany freedom. Whitman wants to identify the principle of equality and

individuality. He admits his self-identify clearly in section 7:

Closer yet I approach you
What thought you have now, I had as
much of you-I lasid in my stores in
advance
I consider'd long and seriously of you
before you born
Who was to know what should come
home to me
Who knows but I am enjoying this
Who knows, for all the distance, but I am
as good as looking at you now, for all you
can not see me

He also stresses to breakdown resistance to friendship in section 6:

It is upon alone the dark patches fall
The dark threw its patches down upon me
also
...
I too knitted the old knot of contrariety
Blabb'd, blush'd, resented, lied, stole,
grudg'd
Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared
to speak

After reading this poem, there is the idea of transcendence. Whitman is one of American Romanticism's greatest names. So he was also one of the transcendentalists like Emerson in that era. Most of his writings and poets were still influenced by romanticism such as sentimentality for nature, stress over relentless change, and the domination of all by the individual. One aspect of his poem, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" that adheres to the American Romantics' characteristics was the idea of transcendence. Here, Walt Whitman differed from other Transcendentalists in regard to the fact that he did not take himself out of society like Thoreau, nor did he completely submit to a higher Divine Power like Emerson. The important idea of Emerson's "Self-Reliance" was the relationship between the "Soul" and the "Divine Spirit", which Emerson expressed:

The relations of the soul to the divine spirit are so pure that it is profane to seek to interpose helps. It must be that when God speaketh, he should communicate not one thing, but all things; ... All things are made sacred by relation to it. (p. 1168)

In this statement, Emerson emphasizes that mankind would build up a direct relationship with the Creator. No church is necessary. For Emerson, all things in nature became the center of thought. All things become sacred. All things in nature become important instruments, bridging the relationship between a human being and his Creator. In applying Emerson's suggestion, Whitman relates an incident from their own life in nature, i.e. "What gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand, and with voices, I love call me promptly and loudly by my highest name as I approach?" (Sec. 7, line 95), which hastens his communication with God.

Furthermore, in "Self-reliance", Emerson contrasts between individual and nature. The individual has traditionally acquired knowledge of God indirectly, based on the experience of other people through religious teachings and religious ceremonies. Yet, the thing of nature, like the rose or grass, trust themselves perfectly to God. He says:

This should be plain enough. Yet see what strong intellects dare not yet her God himself, unless he speak the phraseology of I know not what David, or Jeremiah, or Paul ... If we live truly, we shall see truly. It is as easy for the strong man to be strong, as it is for the weak to be weak. When we have perception, ... When a man lives with God, his voice shall be as sweet as the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn.

Compared to Emerson's essay, in Whitman's poem, we find that he took the human factor and social issues into

consideration in his poetry. If we have ever read Whitman's poetry, it can be seen that Whitman's poetry can be separated into three modes of transcendence or dialogue: (1) A dialogue between the self and the external world; (2) A dialogue between the self and another; (3). A dialogue between the self and the spirit. They are illuminated in the following stanzas: "Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you?" (Stanza 8). It describes the communication between the writer and the reader. The writer and the reader to nature "Flow on, river flow with the flood-tide, and ebb with the ebb-tide!" (stanza 9). In stanza 2, "Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from shore to shore". He uses images of people going from shore to shore on the ferry. All of the people who take the ferry to one side will always take it back again. In this case, Whitman tried to establish a relationship with humanity regarding the circle of life and human existence. His writing style permits the inclusiveness of all human beings. Inclusiveness works because it is a poem about 'me, i.e. individualism.

CONCLUSION

Emerson's "Self Reliance" has the sole purpose is the want for people to be non-conformists. He believed that for a man to truly be a man, he was to follow his conscience and do his own thing. In teaching American literature of Emerson and Walt Whitman by LM-PjBL, the students discovered one's true selves and attain their true independence. They got the freedom for actualizing their capacities and knowledge in class. It is like an aristocrat-democratic class. They have personal responsibilities and nonconformity to be able to achieve the level of individualism. Moreover, the students could

improve the condition in which they studied by taking positive action instead of passively accepting the lecture as they came. In this case, they are the students' actuaries who can maximize their potentials in making innovative and creative in the class. They try to have the greatest freedom of action and thought. They choose their activities and make their own decisions, deciding that they do not have to be influenced by other students. It is the students' autonomy. Moreover, the students want to avoid conformity in the class and focus more on distinguishing themselves from others than on their resemblance with them. So, they prefer to see themselves as unique. The students also decide and act more on the basis of whether an action leads to personal gain rather than collective gain. It is by how they market themselves in a positive way.

Having completed teaching American literature, indicated students' positive attitude toward literature and suggested that they would continue to read American Literature in the future.

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**THE ANALYSIS OF RACISM TOWARD AFRICAN–AMERICAN AS SEEN IN
SELECTED PHILLIS WHEATLEY’S POEMS**

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ABSTRACT

The issues of race, racism and discrimination always become the center of the study of the African-American community, for example in literature. An example of African-American Literature that described those things is written by Phillis Wheatley. In her poems that were influenced by the Neoclassicism era, entitled: “On being brought from AFRICA to AMERICA” and “To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth”, she delivered the issues of race and racism. This paper aims to analyze racism toward African-America as described in Phillis Wheatley’s poems. The researcher employed a qualitative descriptive method in which the collected data were analyzed, interpreted, and described to answer the objective of the study. The primary data in this undergraduate thesis are two selected poems by Wheatley and the supporting data were taken from books, articles, journals, online sources, and other sources. The researcher applied African-American criticism to answer the objective of the research. The Researchers use three basic tenets of African-American criticism (Everyday Racism, The Social Construction of Race and Voice of color). The findings show Wheatley’s poems portray the life of an African American who experienced racism first-hand. The concept of racism in the two selected poems from Wheatley’s has correlation with 3 concepts of racism of African-American criticism, those are: *Everyday racism, The Social Construction of Race, Voice of color*.

Keywords: *African-American Criticism; Critical Race Theory; Phillis Wheatley; Race; Racism*

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INTRODUCTION

Phillis Wheatley, an important figure in Afro-American literature. Wheatley spent her whole life close to the revolutionary era. She was born around 1753 and came to America in 1761. In the middle of the eighteenth century, a young girl has brought by the traders and became a little girl who was sold as a slave. “She saw her mother in a small village, worshipping the sun at dawn. That was her only memory before the slave traders came, carrying casks of rum. How many casks to buy for a young girl? Not many at all.” (Keteer & Malaspina, 2010, p. 11). Then, the little girl was so young at that time covered by a dirty carpet and caught a woman in a good dress named Susanna Wheatley. Susanna gave her name Phillis after she brought her from the trades.

Although Wheatley spent her day as a slave at Susanna’s house, she got some special spaces that other slave may cannot has that opportunity. She could write in English and Susanna taught her not just English, but Latin, too. She loved every beautiful word and made her poems. “Phillis Wheatkey’s poems were about many things—heroes, hurricanes, God, the ocean, Africa, and freedom.” (Keteer & Malaspina, 2010, p. 16). Her writing is mostly about her experiences, her life, and all of the things she ever heard from the guests at Susanna’s house.

Her poems also describe the condition of the revolutionary period. One of the most popular writings by her is seen in her letter to General Washington. The book, written and illustrated by Keteer & Malaspina, told that Wheatley’s poem for General Washington had a bold impact on him. Not only for that

but the letter also led General Washington to reply and invite Wheatley to meet him. Wheatley was recorded as the first black American poet and writer. Her poems were well known throughout the city, not only because of her poems, but also her book. In 1773 Wheatley’s book entitled *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* was officially published in England. Then, in the same year, Mr. Wheatley set her free.

This paper analyzes two poems written by Phillis Wheatley entitled “On being brought from AFRICA to AMERICA” and “To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth”. The first poem was published in London, in 1773 from her poetry collection entitled *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*. It is the first collection of poems published by the first African American woman to describe the experiences when she was taken away from her home in Africa to America, to be sold as a slave to white American. Through her poems, she also describes her dreams as a black African American who wanted to be free from Slavery like white Americans who also wanted their freedom from the British.

Wheatley’s poem mostly comes in the era of Neo-Classicism. Neo-classicism refers to the art movement that was inspired by the classical art culture during the ancient Greek and Rome eras. Neoclassical literature emerged at the height of the Enlightenment, which manifested between the late 17th and 18th centuries in Europe (enlightenment era) and spread all over the world, especially in the early 19th century. This art movement also changed cultural, political, and social factors in the Western world.

The Neoclassical style is based on order, symmetry, and simplicity. Neoclassicism embraced all art, including painting, sculpture, decorative arts, theatre, literature, music, and architecture. Styles generally include the use of straight lines, minimal use of color, and form. It can be identified by its simplicity and, of course, its adherence to classical values and techniques. Those things are the key concept of Neo-classical. In his book, entitled: "A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present (2005)" M. A. R. Habib wrote: "Most fundamentally, neoclassicism comprised a return to the classical models, literary styles, and values of ancient Greek and Roman authors. In this, the neo-classicists were to some extent heirs of the Renaissance humanists." Those Neo-classicists also rejected the dominant styles during the 18th century that were known as Baroque and Rococo. The latter, with its emphasis on asymmetry, bright colors, and ornamentation is typically considered to be "lavish" the direct opposite of simplicity in Neoclassical.

The life of black Americans in this era of literature which is in the neoclassical era especially in the year of Wheatley' life still struggling to fight racism. According to the paper written by Smethurst, over the past two decades studies by such historians as David Roediger, Matthew Jacobson, Theodore Allen, Noel Ignatiev, Eric Lott, and Karen Brodtkin have investigated the complex political, social, and cultural processes by which various groups of immigrants to the United States became "white" through complicated, and sometimes contradictory performances of "whiteness" and "blackness," constituting their class, racial, and national identities as "Americans." At the same time, much of the new scholarship

on slavery in the United States has emphasized the binary relationship of racial classification in which black slavery stood in linked opposition to white freedom – with both categories enabling each other. (Smethurst, 2010)

There, the researchers find that the condition of Black Americans and White has its gap. Not only for the social, political, even cultural but also for the equality for getting all of them were different. Black Americans did not get the same position and opportunities at that time. Hence, as seen from Wheatley' poems and her historical background the researchers find some data that correlated to African-Americans' condition around the late eighteen century.

Those poems were famous in the neoclassical era as quoted from Grey's book, It was with their help that her Poems appeared in 1773 in London, the first volume of poetry known to have been published by an African-American. The Colonial and Revolutionary Periods the neoclassical norms of the time. It also sometimes paints a less than flattering picture of Africa, the land from which Wheatley was snatched when she was still a child (Grey, 2011, p. 76).

Moreover, Wheatley was the first African-American succeeds to publish her literature. a research by MaryCatherine Loving (2015) entitled: "Uncovering Subversion in Phillis Wheatley's Signature Poem: "On being brought from AFRICA to AMERICA". Loving analyzes Wheatley's poem by using rhetorics, semiotics, and grammar as reading strategies to find issues such as: slavery, and Christianity. The research above has similarities and differences with research topics. Both research will use selected Wheatley's poem, but the researchers would

like to analyze the influence of neoclassicism in selected Wheatley's poems and how racism toward African-America is described in Wheatley's poems. This research will examine the topic about racism toward African American that is portrayed in Wheatley's selected poem that can be seen in various definitions. The researchers will analyze Wheatley's selected poems using African-American Criticism. According to Tyson, there are six basic tenets of critical race theory. They are:

- *Everyday Racism*, Tyson described as “Many white Americans still think that the word *racism* applies only to very visible forms of racism, for example, physical or verbal attacks against people of colour;
- *Interest Convergence*, Tyson described this by using the definition of Derrick nell. He wrote: “ Derrick Bell uses this term to explain that racism is common in our country because it often converges, or overlaps, with the interest—with something needed or desired—of a white individual or group (*Brown v. Board of Education* 20-29). For example, racism is in the financial interest of upper-class whites who exploit black laborers by paying them less than their white counterparts” (Tyson, 2006, p. 371)
- *The Social Construction of Race* defines race as a matter of physical features when the physical differences between light-skinned blacks and dark-skinned whites, race has always been a matter of definition constructed by society for example : during the slavery, people

believe the white race are superior to others. (Tyson, 2006, p. 372-374)

- *Differential Racialization*—Differential racialization refers to the fact that “the dominant society racializes [defines the racial characteristics of] different minority groups [in different ways] at different times, in response to [its] shifting needs. (Tyson, 2006, p. 375)
- *Intersectionality*—No one has a simple, uncomplicated identity based on race alone. Race *intersects* with class, sex, sexual orientation, political orientation, and personal history in forming each person's complex identity. “Everyone has potentially conflicting, overlapping identities, loyalties, and allegiances” (Tyson, 2006, p. 376)
- *Voice of Color*—Many critical race theorists believe that minority writers and thinkers are generally in a better position than white writers and thinkers to write and speak about race and racism because they experience racism directly. This positionality is called the *voice of color*. (Tyson, 2006, p.377).

Based on the statement above, researchers would like to analyze racism issues in Wheatley's selected poems by using three basic tenets of African-American criticism: *everyday racism, the social construction of race, and the voice of color*.

DISCUSSION

1. Neoclassicism Analysis Toward Phillis Wheatley Poems

Through the poem “On being brought from AFRICA to AMERICA”, it can be seen that it is a kind of neoclassicism category

where there are elements that influence the writing style of Wheatley's poetry in that period. First, this poem was written in 1773 when Neoclassicism emerged in America. Second, the characteristic of neoclassicism is depicted in a simple style where the poet clearly expresses her messages without using too much emotion. Third, neoclassicism emphasizes freedom and rejects the dominant theme. It is proven through this poem where Wheatley voices the freedom of blacks in carrying out their daily activities and opposing the existence of differences in the dominance of the white race over blacks. Hence, it can be concluded that the neoclassical period influenced the writing of Wheatley's poetry in voicing issues of resistance.

Moreover, Wheatley wrote her poem based on her historical background which spent her life as a black American and slave who lived with Bostonian white Americans. According to the book Masplain & Keteer, she was growing up slightly different from other slaves during her life. She had the opportunity to learn English, Latin and Greek from Sussana Wheatley. Not only for that but also, she read the poems written by Alexander Pope. There, her poems also slightly have the same stylistic characterization as Pope. (Keteer & Malaspina, 2010, p. 16).

Furthermore, according to the book *Introduction/What is Neoclassicism?* It stated that;

Neoclassicism was a revival of ancient forms and ideas that emerged in late 18th Century Europe and North America. Then, this literature period stood at the centre of humanistic learning, public symbolism, and revolutionary political thought. Also, the literary mostly is

telling about Americans that borrowed and reshaped Roman government and civics in their political self-interest, in the process creating a modern republic. Neoclassicism also is used to describe works of art that are influenced stylistically or thematically by Classical Greek and Roman sources. (Sewall, 2006)

There, neoclassicism has connected with mostly Wheatley's poems. She used her ability for making poems and letters to voice out her feelings and speaks up for her political thought. Moreover, Wheatley as a poet of the neoclassical era also made a poem entitled *To The Honorable William, Earl of Dartmouth* for William Legge in October 1772. The poem told about her attention to the colonists that want to separate from the British, about freedom, and humanity. The poem was written by Wheatley and she chose the words wisely for William Legge. Then, quotes from Boren's journal said that

. . . On the surface, for example, what has become Wheatley's representative poem, "On Being Brought From Africa to America," appears to condemn a pagan Africa and does so in neoclassical (educated white) style. . .

Related to the statement, it is proved that Wheatley's literature into neoclassical literature. Then, seen from the letter that she wrote for General Washington, she was trying to create a modern republic and telling him through her poems that Black Americans must be free and get the same equality as white Americans. (Boren, 2004, p. 40).

As a Black writer, Wheatley made the poems to voice up her thoughts as a black America. There are not many African-American that can write, she uses her privilege to describe the condition of African Americans during that time. Hence, the

researchers would like to analyze those two poems written by Wheatley.

Racism toward African American as Seen in Phillis Wheatley's Poems

In this section, the issue of racism against African American can be seen in Wheatley's selected poems titled: "On being brought from AFRICA to AMERICA" and "To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth". According to Tyson:

Racism refers to the unequal power relations that grow from the socio-political domination of one race by another and that result in systematic discriminatory practices—one has to be in a position of power as a member of the politically dominant group, which in America usually means that one has to be white (Tyson, 2006, p. 360).

From that explanation, racism is an understanding that is here conveyed by justifying inequality against a group in which white race Americans are the exclusive dominant group and feel superior to the minority group of African Americans. Therefore, there are three basic tenets of African-American criticism which will be discussed below.

- **Everyday Racism**

Wheatley's poem appeared since she acknowledges that white Americans still did not consider black Africans as part of American society. In the 1700s, it was a time when Americans wanted to be independent of British rule, but they did not even recognize the freedom Africans and considered them to be "property" as slave because of their black skin. Deborah Kent (2004) even describes that,

In the early 1770s, many people on England and the British colonies had begun to argue that slavery was immoral. Those who favored slavery insisted that Africans were not equal to people of European heritage. They justified slavery by claiming that black people were less intelligent and less capable than whites (p. 24).

It means that everyday racism has become the 'rule' in most of the white American society since they acknowledge blacks are not equal with whites. This can be seen from lines 5 to 6 by saying, "Some view our sable race with scornful eye / Their colour is a diabolic die" (Wheatley, 1773, p. 18)

They looked down on the physique of Africans. White Americans showed their nobility and dignity by understating black Africans as *sable* that is a "small animal with black fur". It can be defined where the word "*sable*" means dark or black and the word choice is used by the poet as an emphasis that black people were considered as pets of white Americans at that time. Another common everyday racist behavior expressed by white people whenever they meet black by rolling their eyes or being *scornful* at blacks since people view blacks as negatively. Those words "*sable race*" and "*scornful eye*" really indicated how white people see African Americans as different or even not human. Those words in Wheatley's poem shows African-American slave as 'other' that rely on their white owner (white European) to live. It also indicated how superior those white people see themselves and often see other races scornful eyes.

Emotionally stressed from trying to cope with being the everyday target of racism, Phillis emphasizes her feelings for whites who give them evil looks by putting quotes

in her lines of poetry. The next stanza in line 6 “*Their colour is a diabolic die,*” indicates the mean look often gets on their skin tone. Although black is just a color, it is also often associated with an evil color in *diabolic* meaning. Also, it refers to ugliness and death as it can be represented in the word “die”. Therefore, through this poem mostly white Americans understand the black race as evil. These stereotypes, definitions, and description toward African-Americans is really common during the slavery era. Racism is one of the reasons why slavery exists at that time.

The Social Construction of Race

Talking about the social construction of race, as Tyson (2006) states:

...the dominant culture claims that “races” are fixed categories. Throughout our history, moreover, many Americans have belonged to more than one race (p. 372-373)

proves most white Americans justify in their mind about the black racial inferiority and the only one who can be a part of American society is the whites. Moreover, Don McLeese (2005) asserted, “*Slaves had to work without being paid and did whatever their white owners told them to do*” (p. 4) means it is explained that there is a social structure by classifying Americans according to race that the white race is more dominant than the black race at that time.

Hence, Wheatley showed that issue through her poem by presenting from the beginning of the first poem that she employs capitalization in the title by writing “*AFRICA to AMERICA*” emphasizing that Africans and Americans should be equal as part of the American society. Moreover, it can be identified that Wheatley acknowledges the

idea of America's superiority over the American black race. However, she rejects the idea of racial categorization by describing it in this poem by capitalizing on AFRICA and AMERICA. The first line of her poem also indicated the same things, Wheatley wrote, “*TWAS mercy brought me from my Pagan land, /Taught my benighted soul to understand*”.

The usage of the words “pagan land” really indicated how racism during colonialism perspective is being constructed and used toward the African Americans during the slavery era. The words “Pagan” according to *Anglican and Episcopal History* is “...by the fact that African people were variously called Pagans, heathens, and savages” (White, 1999, p. 398). Based on that, “pagan” is used to describe African-Americans as a community that is uncivilized and amoral, because they are not Christian. From European or white people's perspective, their religion is seen as the only justified religion. On the other hand, those African-American are described as other or sinner. This perspective is strengthened by the next line, where Wheatley wrote “*Taught my benighted soul to understand*”. This indicated how those white Christian people saw African Americans during that time as sinners whom they needed to convert to Christianity and guided them to the “right path” as they are “other and uncivilized people”.

Voice of Color

Voice of color according to Tyson is the minority writers who can express the issue of racism more clearly by improving their ability to speak and write about racism as they experience racism more directly (Tyson,

2006, p. 377). Also, McLeese (2005) said that most African whether men or women rarely went to school during the period of the revolutionary war. Thus, at that time blacks were considered less intelligent people. As previously explained Wheatley is a slave who gets the opportunity to study, read, and even read the Bible. Even though she gets some special treatment and “privilege” as a slave, she is still part of a black slave who has a white master.

Therefore, she tries to give the color voice of her to tell others about their racial issues which also influences based on her experience as a slave and the understanding she gains while studying. Through her works, she portrays the life of an African American who experienced racism first-hand. It is proven from lines 7 to 8, “Remember, Christians, Negroes, black as Cain / May be refin’d, and join th’ angelic train” (Wheatley, 1773, p. 18).

At that time, mostly white masters who owned slaves were American Christians. Since she knows about the dogma of the Christian religion, she emphasizes in the poem the existence of contradictory behaviors between Christian principles and Christian practice. According to the Bible, the first murder was committed by Cain when he killed his brother Abel. After Cain was punished by God for this sin, God showed mercy by giving Cain protection. God placed a “sign” on Cain to warn others who might have motives to harm Cain. By creating an allusion “black as Cain”. Wheatley, drawing a comparison between Africans and Cain, she suggests that Africans deserve the same mercy and forgiveness as what God gave to the first murderer (Spacey, 2020). Because in most white Christian

during that time, they see black people as someone that their sin is unforgivable because they are uncivilized, and even they are converting to Christianity they are still being described as other, especially during the slavery period.

Also, Kent (2004) said that whites justified slavery was the right thing as they even quoted from the Bible to affirm their idea. It could be seen “*black as cain*” emphasizing that Christian slave owners do not acknowledge the remission of sins from the black race even though they have been baptized and still treat the blacks as filled with evil or sin regarding their skin color. Also, the power of baptism to remove sin in “*may be refin’d and join th’ angelic train*” stresses the Christian dogma that blacks and whites in Christianity have equal values in the sight of God. Thus, all Christians should be having the right to live free from slavery and join heaven in “*th’ angelic train*” regardless of skin color and race. As explained in the previous section, the forms of racism against African Americans depicted in the previous poem are racist behavior expressed by white people whenever they meet blacks by giving them an evil look, not considering blacks as part of American society, and describing them as sinners.

In this part, this racism against African Americans can also be found through the poem “*To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth*”. It is known that this poem was written by Wheatley to the Secretary of State of the colony, William Earl of Dartmouth to assist African Americans in achieving their freedom. Hence, the writers would like to analyze

racism issues by using two basic tenets of critical race theory.

Everyday Racism

First, as can be seen from racism theory in the part of *everyday racism*. It may be said that racism has become the 'rule' in most white American societies. It is proven from the first verse that Americans dream of independence from Britain but turn a blind eye since they are blacks to the fact that African Americans also dream of freedom from slavery.

"HAIL, happy day, when, smiling like the morn, Fair Freedom rose New-England to adorn: / The northern clime beneath her genial ray, / Dartmouth, congratulates thy blissful sway: (Wheatley, 1773, p. 73).

From lines 1 and 2 in the first verse, Americans believe the idea of freedom in "*freedom rose in New-England*". Also, lines 2 and line 4 indicate that Americans celebrate Dartmouth as the newly appointed in America since they acknowledge that Dartmouth was a British statesman who defended America. At that time, Americans lived in unrest under British rule from the words "*long lost to realms*", but the arrival of Dartmouth brought a glimmer of hope to liberate themselves from Britain's rule in "*freedom's charms unfold*" as pointed in the first verse, line 8 to 9: "The silken reins, and Freedom's charms unfold. / Long lost to realms beneath the northern skies" (Wheatley, 1773, p. 73). Then, this Wheatley's poem alludes to the fact that although white Americans acknowledge the freedom idea, they still decline the idea of black African American freedom. It is proven from the second verse, lines 15 to 17.

"No more, America, in mournful strain / Of wrongs, and grievance unredress'd

complain, / No longer shalt thou dread the iron chain, (Wheatley, 1773, p. 74).

She states that America will no longer be in the situation of mourning "*strain*" since freedom will be on America's side. Also, America will be freed from the iron chain in line 17 that bound them because of British rule. However, ironically, "*the iron chain*" is still in the life of American society at that time, especially black Americans as slaves to white Americans. Hence, these explanations identify that black people experienced racism at that time through the view that black Americans were not considered part of American society and had no right to their freedom.

The Social Construction of Race

Second, from the racism theory of *the social construction of race*, it is explained that there is a social structure by classifying Americans according to race that the white race is more dominant than the black race. It is presented from the third verse Wheatley lines 20 to 21, "Should you, my lord, while you peruse my song, / Wonder from whence my love of Freedom sprung (Wheatley, 1773, p. 74)

"*My lord*" is addressed to William Earl of Dartmouth as a white man who has the power to hear her voice in the words of my song. Phillis Wheatley, who represents her nation as part of the black African American race also wants the same freedom as the whites, whose hope is that William can fulfill her dream since he has a position of power. Yet, it emphasizes that the position of the black race in the eyes of white Americans is inferior and unequal to whites and she realizes that William as white will be effective to give freedom to blacks. Hence,

racism can be seen in this second poem where she shows the white American ideal of freedom must also apply to everyone, not just to white Americans.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, through selected Wheatley's Poem entitled "On being brought from AFRICA to AMERICA" and "To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth", those poem arises because of freedom discrimination where white American want freedom from British rule but they do not consider black Americans as part of the American nation so they behave racist against blacks during that period. It can be seen in various ways. First, Wheatley describes white Americans as considering black with a bad attitude since their skin tone is often associated with an evil color. Whites create a social construction by marginalizing the black skin of African-American no more than as a tool to elevate the image of the white American as a dignified community. Second, whites do not consider black Americans as part of American society for most white Americans are justifying in their mind about black racial inferiority and the only one who can be a part of American society is the whites.

In addition, the issue of racism against African-American as outlined in Wheatley's poetry is still manifested in various ways to this day. This can be found in some popular culture products that increasingly lead one to be clueless that racism is still manifested in white American society. As illustrations, Hollywood movies often pair black actors as thieves or lower-class crime. However, once whites are used as criminal actors, they will be positioned in international crime that

requires a high-level strategy. This shows that racism is still manifested in a refined way which will create society's thought that the whites are still superior and have sharper thinking ability than the less educated blacks.

APPENDIX

On Being Brought from Africa to America

Phillis Wheatley

*'Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too:
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
"Their colour is a diabolic die."
Remember, Christians, Negroes, black as Cain,
May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.*

To the Right Honorable William, Earl of Dartmouth

Phillis Wheatley

*Hail, happy day, when, smiling like the morn,
Fair Freedom rose New-England to adorn:
The northern clime beneath her genial ray,
Dartmouth, congratulates thy blissful sway:
Elate with hope her race no longer mourns,
Each soul expands, each grateful bosom
burns,
While in thine hand with pleasure we behold
The silken reins, and Freedom's charms
unfold.*

Long lost to realms beneath the northern skies

*She shines supreme, while hated faction dies:
Soon as appear'd the Goddess long desir'd,
Sick at the view, she languish'd and expir'd;
Thus from the splendors of the morning light
The owl in sadness seeks the caves of night.
No more, America, in mournful strain
Of wrongs, and grievance unredress'd
complain,*

*No longer shalt thou dread the iron chain,
Which wanton Tyranny with lawless hand*

*Had made, and with it meant t' enslave the land.
Should you, my lord, while you peruse my song,
Wonder from whence my love of Freedom sprung,
Whence flow these wishes for the common good,
By feeling hearts alone best understood,
I, young in life, by seeming cruel fate
Was snatch'd from Afric's fancy'd happy seat:
What pangs excruciating must molest,
What sorrows labour in my parent's breast?
Steel'd was that soul and by no misery mov'd
That from a father seiz'd his babe belov'd:
Such, such my case. And can I then but pray
Others may never feel tyrannic sway?*

*For favours past, great Sir, our thanks are due,
And thee we ask thy favours to renew,
Since in thy pow'r, as in thy will before,
To sooth the griefs, which thou did'st once deplore.
May heav'nly grace the sacred sanction give
To all thy works, and thou forever live
Not only on the wings of fleeting Fame,
Though praise immortal crowns the patriot's name,
But to conduct to heav'ns refulgent fane,
May fiery coursers sweep th' ethereal plain,
And bear thee upwards to that blest abode,
Where, like the prophet, thou shalt find thy God.*

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**CELEBRATING THE EAST: THE CONTESTATION OF WHITENESS AND COLORED
IN JOHN M. CHU'S *CRAZY RICH ASIANS***

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ABSTRACT

Crazy Rich Asians is regarded as one of the movies that successfully represented Asians, regardless of all the controversy. One of the topics clearly presented in the movie is the contestation between the west and east. The dichotomy is resulted from the social construction of the western culture to maintain its superiority over the east culture. Since the movie seems to celebrate the east by portraying the Asian-Asians differently from the old stereotypes or old images of the eastern culture, but at the same time, this research finds that this movie overtly portrays the west as loveable or likable culture. The movie depicts the contrast between east and west through the story. This article is intended to analyze the contestation between east and west which is depicted in the movie. The movie is examined in how it depicts America as the west and Asia as part of the east. Therefore, deconstruction is used as the reading method to see what is behind it, the things that are not seen, related to how the Asians are portrayed in the movie. The finding of this research shows that there are double roles in the movie. The power of whiteness in the American movie industry somehow still brings impacts toward the contestation of whiteness and color.

Keywords: *America; Asia; Contestation; East and West; Deconstruction; Whiteness*

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INTRODUCTION

In 2018, *Crazy Rich Asians* becomes one of the Hollywood movies that bring about a lot of controversy, especially for those who are of Asian descent. When the movie was launched for the first time, there is a huge interest coming from this group since it becomes the first modern story with an all-Asian cast and Asian American lead in twenty-five years, the first after *The Joy Luck Club* in 1993 (Ho, 2018). Many people are very excited to see that Hollywood seems to make a step forward in representing American diversity. Considering that all this time, Asians only have minor participation in the American film industry, therefore, this movie seems to bring fresh air for Asians. It can be seen from the number of actors, the roles given to them and also the number of filmmakers that contribute to the film industry. Benschhof and Griffin stated in their book that Asian Americans in Hollywood are always related to the stock Asian character which is always marginalized into supporting roles like villains, laundry workers, cooks, servants or railroad workers (2009, p. 160). Based on this statement, it explains that besides the number of Asians participating in the American film industry, the roles given to Asian actors are also very limited, usually all those roles that are regarded as accommodating whiteness ideology or old stereotypes.

In line with the previous statement, some scholars found the same pattern of stereotypes attached to Asian Americans. Those stereotypes mostly are negative. Asian characters often related to the stock characters like Fu Manchu and Charlie Chan types, conniving businessmen, gang members, brutal military officers, laborers,

cooks, dragon ladies, oriental detectives, drug kingpins, and Geisha girls (Marchetti, 1991, 1993; Wong, 1998). Some stereotypical characters can be seen from the development of Asian characters in some films such as in *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960) Suzie Wong is acted as an illiterate prostitute. Michelle Yeoh portrays a Bond Girl who is depicted as steely and controlled (1997). Meanwhile, in the 1985 *Year of Dragon*, Tracy Wu is portrayed as a seductive and mysterious woman. Another stereotypic character is played by Zhang Zhi Yi in *Rush Hour* (2001) as a henchwoman and a dragon lady who is dangerous, seductive and ruthless. Lastly, in 2013 *Wolverine*, Tao Okamoto is depicted as Mariko who seduces Wolverine and tries to separate him from his past love. Not only limited to the stock characters, but the participation of Asian Americans in the American film industry was also limited based on the genre of the film. Wong mentions that Asian Americans are often limited to a certain kind of film genre, those are adventure, crime and mystery, war and western (1998, p. 197). Based on this condition, it can be seen that the American film industry has a role in constructing the negative image of Asian Americans through the lens. Hollywood's ethnic representations were (and are) 'damaging, insulting, and negative' (Lopez, 1991, p. 404).

Concerning the negative construction of Asian Americans in the film industry, White Americans use it to put Asian Americans as "the other", meaning they emphasize the differences between White Americans and Asian Americans as a form of visual and narrative racism that privilege whiteness (Wong, 1998, pp. 73–75). By doing this, white Americans can protect their superior position and maintain Asian Americans in an

inferior position. It shows that the American film industry which is dominated by white Americans has strongly imposed Asian Americans' Other-ness through the narrative racism that privileges whiteness in visual form. Taking one of the famous quotations from W. E. Dubois saying that the problem of this era is the problem of color line (Brown, 2003), the power relation between White Americans and Asian Americans is rooted in the existence of whiteness norms. The norms of whiteness are everywhere and because of it, those who do not fit into it are considered "the other" (Dyer, 1997, p. 3). The influence of these norms in the American film industry has built barriers for the people of color to participate in this industry, either from their physical participation or from their representation on screen. The social construction of whiteness defines and limits people (Foster, 2003, p. 2). Therefore, the effect of whiteness toward the representations and also participation of the ethnic minorities in American movies is significant.

Another reason why White Americans put Asian Americans as the Asian other is that they feel insecure as they see Asian Americans as the mysterious Orient, a site of desire, violence, and intrigue, therefore becomes a threat to democracy and the principles of American capitalism (Browne, 1989, p. 29; Marchetti, 1993, p. 27; Wong, 1998, p. 174). The term Orient here is taken from the word Orientalism which is often used to explain the relationship between the west and the east. The term east and west is often used to describe the power relation between developed countries which refers to the west and underdeveloped countries which is called the east. This term was used formerly by Edward Said in his book which talks about postcolonialism (Said, 1977). In

his concept, he underlines the differences between the west and the east which can be seen as binary oppositions such as west vs east, strong vs weak, good vs evil, modern vs primitive as well as rich vs poor with the previous ones referring to the west. This concept also includes the categorization that based on skin color. The concept of color differences is also used to refer the differences between the east and the west, in which the east which related to exoticism refers to the people of color and the west which refers to the whites. This concept previously always attached to explain the effect of European colonialism which discuss the relationship between European countries and the colonies. However, after the *Empire Writes Back* (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2002), the influence of postcolonialism in the United States has started to be questioned although it still becomes a debate until nowadays, whether the concept of Orientalism can be applied to read the power relation between the United States and England kingdom or The European settlers with the native Americans or the power relation between White Americans and African Americans during the slavery era. Nevertheless, there is an argument stated that the major components of this debate are the applicability of the term postcolonial to the US postcoloniality as well as ethnic studies in general dan more recently the questioning of center-periphery models because of globalization and transnational capitalism (Schueller, 2004, p. 163). Therefore, the discussion on ethnic studies and center-periphery models is applicable in this context. Since this research concerns on the power relation between White Americans and Asian Americans, it is suitable to borrow the

concept of binary opposition especially those related to the position of west vs east.

Regarding the previous explanation, it can explain why there is a high expectation for the release of *Crazy Rich Asians*. It is regarded as a ground-breaking point of changes made by the American film industry in presenting diversity in American films (Adhitya & Kurnia, 2017, p. 25). This research is intended to see American society through a product of its popular culture, a film. It is conducted inductively since it started from an issue portrayed in the movie, and not to test any hypothesis. This research applies qualitative one because it deals with the data in the form of words, pictures and sound, not in the form of numbers; it is descriptive; it focuses on the process rather than the result, and it emphasizes interpretation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 29–32). By emphasizing interpretation, Denzin and Lincoln state that this kind of research is suitable to be used in investigating social problems (2005, p. 2).

Data collection was based on data collection techniques according to Creswell (2007, p. 276–284; Rudy & Adhitya, 2022, p. 337). The first step is to process and prepare data. Then, a close reading of the film is undertaken to find data that are related to the topic, which means film scenes related to the representation of the east and west and their contestation in the movie. *Crazy Rich Asians* is used as the primary data source, while also relying on secondary data in the form of other films, news, articles, books and other sources related to the topic of discussion. In this essay, data analysis is done based on Derrida's method of deconstruction: this method suggests analyzing data by finding binary oppositions in the text, then reversing

binary oppositions to diversify the meanings of the text.

Based on the previous explanation, the analysis of this research is started by finding the binary oppositions that show the relation between east and west. The discussion is continued by analyzing the reversal of the binary opposition. In this step, the process of analyzing also includes the use of the old structure to be compared with the new structure which is depicted in the movie. The analysis is ended by formulating the undecidability as the result of the discussion. Undecidability brings a new construction of meaning which cannot be included either in the old or new structure. By using this method of analysis, the research is intended to show that meaning is not single, and that there will always be a different way of interpreting a text. As it is stated that media culture provides a form for the reproduction of power relations, in which very fluid and the contestation leads to the space and resource for struggle and resistance (Dirks & Mueller, 2007a, p. 116), this research focuses on the contestation between the east and west which is portrayed in *Crazy Rich Asians*. The discussion becomes very interesting since there have been high expectations from ethnic minorities group toward this movie because it is made by mostly Asians. This research intends to discuss how far ethnic minorities are celebrated in this movie to see the contestation between whiteness and color throughout the story.

DISCUSSION

Crazy Rich Asians is a movie adapted from a novel with the same title. This movie tells the story of an Asian American woman, Rachel Chu who is New York native born.

She is depicted as a beautiful woman with an astonishing achievement, being a professor at NYU and having a handsome boyfriend, Nick Young. The story is mainly about the clashes she has to face when she goes to Singapore to see Nick's family. The clash does not only related to the different classes but surprisingly also to the different cultures they hold. As a descendant of a Chinese American, Rachel has to accept that there are many differences between her family and Nick's family. Through the love story between Rachel and Nick, the movie carries the theme of east and west from the depiction of the characters and also the dialogues that appear in the movie.

Several binary oppositions can be found in the movie related to the theme, east and west. This theme refers to the contestation between east and west. The binary oppositions are good vs bad and beautiful vs ugly. In the old construction, the west is always regarded to be superior than the east. The west is always placed as the center, while the east is always at the periphery. Those binary oppositions are usually used to maintain the west position, as the one that is regarded to be superior.

Centering the East, Decentering the West

Concerning the previous discussion, differently, *Crazy Rich Asians* the movie presents the theme of east and west contrary to the old construction. The reversal of the binary oppositions showed by centering the east and decentering the west. America, as the representation of the west, which is always depicted to be superior is shown to be the bad one, on the other hand, Asia, which is usually related to inferiority, is depicted as superior to the west. Previously, Asians in

American films always lack representation or are attached to negative stereotypes. To know more about the negative portrayal of Asians in American movies, it is needed to put more discussion on the old structure of representation that is attached to Asian Americans. With the representation of Asian Americans portrayed in American Films, Asian Americans are often attached to some static images which are related to the practice of speaking broken English and "mysterious" customs, Asian women are depicted as dragon ladies, dominant women or prostitutes, while Asian men often portrayed as math whizzes, geeks or non-masculine character except when they have roles as martial artists (Nagaraj & Wen, 2020). This kind of depiction confirms the old structure that always put the east as inferior and the west as superior. *Crazy Rich Asians*, on the contrary, portray some Asian characters with bold characterization in contrast to their old stereotypes. In this movie, some Asians' portrayals represent good rather than bad.

The notion of how this film portrays Asians in this movie has started from the very first beginning of the movie. The depiction of Asia or the east as superior can be seen in this movie through the following quotations: "Let China sleep, for when she awake, she will shake the world (Napoleon Bonaparte)". The movie is opened with this quotation taken from Napoleon Bonaparte. From the quotation, it can be seen that Napoleon acknowledged the power of China, as he mentioned that the world will be shaken if the Chinese awaken. The quotation implicitly shows that China has great power and can bring a great influence on the world. The quotation can also be used as a clue that this film will show the power of China. The film provides some alternative portrayals of

Asians as it contrastingly differs from the old stereotypes. This research finds that the film shows some reversal of the binary opposition. The explanation of the reversal of the binary opposition is described as follows:

- **Good vs Bad**

The first reversal of binary oppositions that stands out in this film is seen through how this film depicts the different perceptions of American values. It can be seen from the scene that shows the first meeting between Rachel and Eleanor, Nick's mother.

Eleanor: self-made woman. She must be so proud of you. (Eleanor continues fiddling and fussing with the table, inspecting the food, coldly turning her back on the couple).

Rachel: well, she knows that I'm passionate about what I do, and she's always wanted that for me.

Eleanor: pursuing one's passions. How American. Well, your mother is very open-minded, not like here where parents are obsessed with shaping the life of their children". (Chu, 2018)

The quotation above shows the different perceptions between Rachel and Eleanor on American values. From this quotation, it can be seen that there are two different perceptions of American values, which is related to being a self-made woman, pursuing passions, and being open-minded. They mention these values when they talk about Rachel's mother. Rachel, who is an Asian American, finds that there is nothing wrong with American values. She thinks that American values have brought her to become what she is now. It can be seen from her statement "well, she knows that I'm passionate about what I do and she's always wanted that for me". Here, Rachel refers to her mother who let her decide what is best in

her life. She mentions proudly how hard her mother worked and also successfully raised her into what she is now. Contrastingly, this scene also shows that Eleanor differently sees American values negatively. It can be seen from her statement that seems sarcastic. Her statement "Self-made woman. She must be proud of you", can be seen as a satire toward the way Rachel was raised by her mother. Being a successful professor at NYU, Rachel's mother is regarded as ignorant, as in China, parents have an absolute role in raising their children. It can be seen from the words "Well, your mother is very open-minded, not like here where parents are obsessed with shaping the life of their children". Eleanor compares the word 'open-minded' and 'obsessed' with the way they raise their children. She uses the two words to overtly satire the values believed by the American people. The way Eleanor said "how American!" can be seen as a satire of the Americans' way of thinking.

Another quotation that also portrays the negative view of American values can be seen as follow: "Eleanor: You're a foreigner. American. And all Americans think about is their happiness." This quotation is taken from the scene when Eleanor explicitly refuses to accept Rachel as Nick's girlfriend. The reason why she sees Rachel negatively is that Rachel is an American. It shows that Eleanor has a negative belief toward All Americans as she said "and all Americans think about is their happiness". From this statement, it can be seen that Eleanor believes that all American values which are usually regarded as positive contrastingly mean negative for her. Pursuing passions, being a self-made and open-minded woman are usually seen as a strength by Americans to pursue their happiness. But here, in this movie, these values which are

related to individualism are depicted negatively as they are compared with Asians' values which center on family. To Eleanor, pursuing dreams, and being a self-made and open-minded woman is seen as a form of neglect or selfishness of a woman toward her family. It is also in line with Tocqueville's concerns about individualism. He stated that individualism in the long run will attack all others and lead to selfishness (Tocqueville, 2010). Instead of having a warm welcome for Rachel, Eleanor, therefore, shows her dislike toward Rachel. It happens because Eleanor thinks that although Rachel is a Chinese descendant, American values and culture have already brought a great impact on Rachel, especially on the way she behaves and thinks. From the dialog above, it can be seen that this film provides different perceptions of how America is seen by the outer world. American values that are usually portrayed as grand values are contrastingly depicted negatively in this movie. Although it is conveyed through the characterization/ portrayal of Rachel Chu, it gives more emphasis on how great are American values. It shows that Rachel is the only Asian descent woman who is portrayed as lovable or likable.

- **Beautiful vs Ugly**

The second reversal of binary opposition that stands out in this movie is beautiful vs ugly. This movie turns out to bring different meanings to the word beauty. One scene in the movie depicts this different meaning of beauty from the dialogue between Wye Mun, Peik Lin's father and her sisters when they have lunch with Rachel. The dialogues show the children want to get permission to leave the table.

Wye munah: "you haven't finished your nuggets yet, sweetie. Okay, there's a lot

of children starving in America, right? I mean, take a look at her. She's American. Huh? Really skinny. You wanna look like that? Twin girl: No. Wye Mun: "Then eat your nuggets" (Chu, 2018).

From the dialogues above, it is found that Peik Lin's family have a different perception of the meaning of beauty. It can be seen from the words "She's American. Huh? Really skinny. You wanna look like that?". This statement does not explicitly mention that being skinny is bad, but the way Wye Mun says it to threaten his twin daughter becomes a hint that being skinny is not good. It can also be related to the previous sentence that mentions "there's a lot of children starving in America". The word "starving" can be seen as a representation of poverty. Although he uses these words to threaten his granddaughters, so that they finish their meals, the message that skinny is not good is well delivered. It is proved by the answer of the twin that said "no" and directly finish their meals. Here, Wye Mun relates the word "skinny" with the word "starving" to decentering the word "skinny". Being skinny becomes not important for them. Instead of wishing to be skinny, the twin are shown as afraid of being skinny. Therefore, they then finish their meals. If it is related to the existence of the beauty myth that has influenced women around the world on how women accept the concept of beauty.

Concerning the previous discussion, it has already been mentioned that being skinny normally becomes one of the standards related to women's body goals, known as the beauty myth. Wolf stated that "the ideal was someone tall, thin, white and blond, a face without pores, asymmetry, or flaws, someone wholly "perfect" and someone whom they

felt, in one way or another, they were not” (2002, p. 1). The quotation mention that one of the standards of beauty considered perfect is thin. In this quotation, Wolf uses the words “someone whom they felt, in one way or another, they were not” to implicitly shows that there are some criteria that construct the concept of beauty and those who do not fulfill the criteria will be said as not perfect or not beautiful. This standard has already become the base construction of the meaning of beauty. Usually, being thin or skinny is important for women. Therefore, many women strive very hard to be thin by doing diet programs. It becomes one of the women’s body goals that is important so that they will be accepted as perfect. From this explanation, it can be seen that it is contrary to how Wye Mun and his two daughters’ concept of being skinny. When for most women, being skinny is very important, Wye Mun constructs skinny as a threat to his granddaughters. Rachel’s body is considered the representation of the beauty myth as she has a thin body. Rachel is assumed to be greatly influenced by the beauty myth as she has fulfilled some of the beauty myths.

Based on the previous discussion, it can be seen that this film provides some reversal of center-periphery on the relation between west and east. The west, in this context, America which is usually in the center contrarily is put on the periphery position. On the other hand, the east which is usually on the periphery, in this film seems like the center of the story. It can be stated that the reversal of binary oppositions as an alternative representation of Asians, is a form of resistance that was intentionally brought up by the minority film workers. It appears as a protest to their old structure of representations that are mostly negative. As

stated by Foucault “where there is power there is resistance”(1978, p. 95). Hence, the effort of minority film workers to create alternative representations for them is counted as their resistance toward the whiteness ideology that greatly influences the American film industry. Dirks and Mueller also added “without a critical resistance against these images, we can have no hope for racial equality in the United States or globally” (2007b, p. 126). This finding answer the question of why there are many positive responses toward the new construction of the east which is portrayed in the film. It can be seen from some responses on social media and also from the web. Some of the audiences see this movie as an answer to their prayers to have an alternative view of their portrayal in movies. However, besides the reversal of the binary oppositions, this research also finds that this movie still portrays old stereotypes related to Asians.

Undecidability between East and West

The undecidability shows that besides those of the reversal of binary oppositions, there are some points from the movie that cannot be easily put into the division of the binary oppositions. As has been discussed previously, *Crazy Rich Asians* is one of the movies that provide an alternative representation of Asian through the story. It can be seen from the discussion on the reversal of the binary oppositions found in that movie. However, after several times of readings, it turns out that instead of only criticizing the old stereotypes, this movie at the same time also maintains the superiority of America. It can be seen from several data taken from the movie.

When American values are questioned in the movie through the dialogues between Rachel and Eleanor, it is seen that American values are put into the periphery since it is regarded as not good. The thing is that when it is seen closely, the movie also provides a hidden message from the representation of Rachel and other Asian women. This movie strengthens the difference between being Asian American and Asian. Starting from the different perceptions of the values they believe in, this movie looks like put America as the periphery, but overtly shows the superiority of this country. For example, regardless of the existence of binary opposition reversal, the movie depicts Asia as a very rigid society which hard to accept different values. It can be seen from the way Eleanor refuses to accept Rachel as her son's girlfriend. From the previous discussion, it can be seen that Eleanor dislikes Rachel regardless of her achievement as a young professor at NYU. Eleanor says "you will never be enough" (Chu, 2018). This quotation shows that Rachel's success is not important to Eleanor. No matter how hard Rachel works, Eleanor will always see her as a foreigner that has been raised with different values of life. By creating such kind of relationship, this movie wants to bring the fact that the relationship between Rachel and Nick who comes from different social class will be only accepted in America. It emphasizes the American value of "equality" as it has been stated in the Declaration of Independence, which becomes the basis of their belief that men are created equal. Therefore, everyone deserves to be successful in their life. By contrasting these values, this movie also wants to underline that only in America that Rachel's success is appreciated as her achievement. She is seen as someone

that has already succeeded to change her life with her hard work. Thus, it can be understood that Rachel's characterization is built actually to highlight American values by depicting Rachel as part of America.

How this movie portrays the Asian women characters also needs to be criticized. The way this movie depicts Asian women is very in contrast to Rachel's characterization. While Rachel is depicted as a very independent, smart, elegant woman, Asian women in this movie are portrayed as women who like gossiping, bullying and money oriented. It can be seen in several scenes in the movie. For example, the scene when the news about Nick that will take his girlfriend to Singapore spread in only seconds. Coming from a different social background, Rachel's identity becomes a target of Asian women in Singapore. They are gossiping her as they thought that she does not deserve Nick Young. This also leads to another scene that shows Rachel getting bullied by some girls when they have a bachelor party for Araminta. What makes it interesting is that the way Rachel reacts toward them is surprising. All of these scenes underline Rachel's characterization as a smart, independent and elegant woman. Rachel becomes the only lovable Asian woman in this movie. Hence, through the contrast portrayal of Rachel and other Asian women, this movie seems to emphasize the differences between Asian women and Asian American women. Similarly, how this movie depicts an Asian mother and an Asian American mother is also full of intrigue. Although this movie seemingly resists American values. In the end, the portrayal of Eleanor and Kerry, Rachel's mother, is contrastingly interesting. Asian mother is portrayed as dominant, over-ruled, and

overprotective mother meanwhile, Asian American mother is depicted as a more open-minded, liberated and supportive mother.

From the two points above, it can be seen that although at first impression this movie brought a new alternative to Asian representation, in the end, it turns out that this movie still cannot resist the influence of whiteness ideology. This movie resists the old stereotypes but at the same time, it also maintains the old stereotypes of Asians. The discussion in this part shows that there is no clear division between the binary opposition, good vs bad. The one that is depicted as good at the same time shows the quality of bad. On the other hand, the one that is portrayed as bad at the same time also depicts the quality of being good. Hence, it can be concluded that this movie shows an undecided quality that leads to the notion that although made by the majority of ethnic minorities, this movie still cannot totally escape from the influence of whiteness ideology. It is seen from the way this movie covertly highlights American values although seemingly it resists them. This situation can be explained with the following quotation: “Nevertheless, resistance in this schema remains contained in the sense that one system of domination is substituted for another. The framework is the same - only the details differ” (Jadallah & El-Khoury, 2016, p. 232). The quotation mentions that the effort in resisting the old structure will lead to another kind of domination system. In this movie, it can be seen from the way this movie elevates the Asian American characters by lowering the quality of other Asian characters. For example, this movie only presents the Chinese as part of Asians that can be successful financially. Other Asians like Melayu and also Hindi are less represented in

this movie. The only Hindi characters in this movie appear as Nick's house guards (Adhitya & Wulandari, 2021, p. 28).

From this point of view, it can be concluded that this movie plays two roles for the audience. The first role is that it becomes the realization of the dream of Asian Americans to see an alternative to their representation in a movie. At the same time, this movie still also accommodates white taste since it turns out that this movie covertly elevates American values (Adhitya, 2015, p. 100). It proves that American popular movies are still greatly influenced by the white patriarchal ideology. In addition to that, this movie also underlines the difference between being Asian and Asian American in terms that Asian American characters being portrayed as more lovable than all the Asian characters. As Indriani (2015, p. 63) concluded that movies are intentionally made to create a conception that it will clean up the black history of the relationship between white Americans and minorities and confirm that Hollywood is still powerful and thus able to determine market demands. Therefore, the result of this research underlines that although there have been some improvements in the structure of Asian representation in the movie, the impact of whiteness norms in the American film industry cannot be denied.

CONCLUSION

After having the discussion, this research findings underline the double roles of this movie as part of American popular movies. Since this movie provides some scenes that seemingly reversing the binary oppositions, it can be claimed that this movie is regarded as a form of resistance toward the old structure of Asian representations in American movies.

It plays a role as the realization of the dream for Asians to have different representations in American popular movies. However, after a deep analysis done on the data, it turns out that this movie also shows a great influence of whiteness ideology. Although in some parts it seems like giving hope for the ethnic minorities of new alternative representation, in the end, this movie still plays its old role by maintaining some old stereotypes covertly. It also creates a new domination model by depicting the distinction between the characterization of Asian Americans and Asians to strengthen the superiority of Asian Americans over Asians.

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THE MAGIC ROLE OF KIM NAM JOON AS A LEADER OF BTS IN CONQUERING THE AMERICAN MARKET

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ABSTRACT

Bangtan Sonyeondan or popularly known as BTS is a South Korean phenomenal group. The massive popularity of BTS all over the world cannot be separated from the magic role of their leader, Kim Nam Joon. This research tried to explore Kim Nam Joon's role in regard to BTS's global popularity. This research used a qualitative descriptive method by using Khan, Nawaz & Khan's leadership theories and styles as well as used Brown's audience involvement approach to analyze the data. The result showed that there are four major reasons for Kim Nam Joon's influence over BTS's success: Kim Nam Joon marked the beginning of BTS, Kim Nam Joon's compassion and dedication, Kim Nam Joon's powerful speech, and Kim Nam Joon's leadership role towards teamwork. Moreover, there was also the fact that several non-BTS American fans tend to become ARMY after they knew about Kim Nam Joon's leadership role. This is interesting because not all BTS's fans become ARMY from enjoying BTS songs and performances.

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INTRODUCTION

It can't be denied anymore that the phenomenon popularity of BTS (*Bangtan Sonyeondan* or Bulletproof Boy Scout) in America has massively increased through the years. Since their debut 'I Need You' in 2015, BTS has continued their global success all over the world including in America. The fact said that the American market has known as the most difficult country for musicians to

penetrate outside of America or the most difficult market in the world for musicians outside America, but BTS proved that they can do it.

As Suryani (2019) said that the success of BTS in penetrating the American market is because of two main reasons: their androgyny physical appearance and messages in their songs about mental health problems and social issues. What is meant by androgyny physical

appearance is about their visualization. As we can see that BTS is a South Korean group that consists of seven members. All those seven members have an androgyny physical appearance with earrings, necklaces, rings, bracelets, and other feminine accessories, which redefines American traditional macho masculinity. This is what Hartman (2009) stated as the term ‘new masculinity’. New masculinity is a kind of ‘flower boys’ in which boys physically appeared as girls by having no beard, flawless skin, and even putting makeup on their faces (Pham, 2019). American fans can receive BTS music because their songs can represent their life problems. As we know that mental health problems and social issues have become the two top life problems in America, especially for adolescents.

Of course, the popularity of BTS in America is not only about those two reasons, because based on the preliminary study that has been done recently, but it is also found that one essential reason behind the massive popularity of BTS is the magic role of their leader, Kim Nam Joon. What is meant by ‘magic role’ is the incredible and dominant role of Kim Nam Joon in BTS. He has that powerful role not only for the group members, but also for the company and the fans. Based on the interview done by Metro Style online magazine on 12 September 2021, “RM is an asset for Big Hit Entertainment from the very beginning of BTS debut in 2013 due to his intelligence and his charisma as a world leader. Other than that, RM is the first member of BTS and he attracted ARMY from the first time. He’s different from any other K-Pop group’s leader and it can be proven from his dominant role that makes BTS become the biggest and the most successful K-Pop group”.

Kim Nam Joon is globally known as the great leader of BTS. As said in Esquire’s official website (2022), Kim Nam Joon has succeeded in bringing his group to achieve top popularity across the world, including in the American market. History noted that in September 2018, BTS made the headlines to become the first South Korean act to address the United Nations (UN) and Kim Nam Joon played an important role there as he delivered a deep message to the whole world related to their ‘Love Myself Campaign’ taken from their album *Love Yourself*.

This research is really important to show the world the realization of the soft power of South Korea through its K-Pop product: BTS. BTS has become proof that South Korea has massively and aggressively made promotions about their country (Rachmawati, 2021). It is proof that K-Pop is not only about showing the interactive physical appearance, but also showing original songs, and great culture, as well as promoting a campaign against two most sensitive issues in the world: mental health problems and social issues. And most of all, according to leadership theory by Khan, Nawaz & Khan (2016), the role of the leader is truly substantial to give a great influence on a group of people, and this is related to the fact that every group in K-Pop industries always has a leader as the representation of the group’s character (Rudy & Adhitya, 2022, p. 342).

Due to that reason, the researcher decides to do research entitled “The Magic Role of Kim Nam Joon as a Leader of BTS in Conquering American Market”. It yields the research problem is as follows: “How far does the role of Kim Nam Joon as a leader of BTS bring BTS to their global success?”

Khan, Nawaz & Khan's Leadership Theories and Styles

In the context of history, what is called the earliest leadership theories are 'The Great Man Theories', in the late 1800s. These theories mostly defined leadership by the leader's characteristics. The first understanding of leadership is about the fact that leaders were often men with dominant personalities (Yosko, 2017). However, the concept of this leadership has shifted a lot: leadership is not about who the leader is, but it is more about what the leader does.

Khan, Nawaz & Khan (2016) later argued about the meaning of leadership itself as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal". This sentence can also be interpreted as "You are not made a leader by your job title, but you are made a leader by your influence". In contemporary literature, leadership theory has been used in almost every aspect of people's lives. To know about leadership practices, there are practically five main leadership theories: transformational leadership, leader-member exchange leadership, adaptive leadership, strengths-based leadership, and servant leadership.

- **Transformational Leadership**

The concept of this transformational leadership was first brought in the 1970s by James McGregor Burns that identified leadership as transactional and transformational leadership. Transactional happened when a leader influences others by what they offer in exchange, while transformational happened when a leader connects with followers, which can raise the level of motivation and morality. From the eye of business and psychological perspective, this

kind of leadership needs to be learned a lot if they want to influence and impact others.

- **Leader-Member Exchange Leadership**

This leader-member exchange theory explains that in any group, there are always in-group members and out-group members, or like in high school, there are always popular and unpopular students. In the context of business or work, those in-group members are more likely to earn promotion, while out-group members are more likely to leave or stay where they are.

- **Adaptive Leadership**

Adaptive leadership means a style of leadership that need a leader to be adaptable to any kind of situation. A leader is not born successful but can be created based on learnable behavior. Actions rather than just qualities are the focal points of this adaptive leadership style. The actual benefit of this adaptive leadership is that the leaders can learn and decide what actions they want to implement to become good leaders. Thus, it allows them to be flexible, efficient, and adaptive based on their circumstances. Task-oriented leaders and people-oriented leaders are two main leader characteristics of this adaptive behavioral leadership.

- **Strengths-based Leadership**

This strengths-based leadership suggests that leaders are born. Leaders have innate traits and skills to make them become great leaders. These are considered to be things that cannot be taught or learned. But there is criticism related to this kind of leadership: even though someone has the quality to be a good leader since he or she was born, it still needs to be

learned practically how to become the best leaders.

- **Servant Leadership**

When it comes to servant leadership, it is like talking about participative leadership skill. This kind of leadership suggests the team needs to be directly involved in the decision-making. The role of the leader here is to facilitate communication among all teams, take all the suggestions, and then come up with the best possible action. Thus, this servant leadership leads to serving the needs of the team, it thus is the kind of leadership that is mostly liked by the team members because they can be involved directly in the decision-making process.

Audience Involvement

According to Brown (2015), involvement is a dynamic process that connects media consumption and co-producing through what is called mediated interaction. This kind of involvement needs several essential processes as follows:

- **Transportation**

This involves individual involvement with narratives. Moreover, the transportation process is not limited to the readers, but it can also focus on the viewers, listeners, or even the recipients. In short, audiences are involved in the narrative world.

- **Parasocial interaction**

This is a typical imaginary interaction between audiences or viewers and figures or in other words, this is also involved an interpersonal aspect. In this process, the audiences feel that their interaction with the media is real.

- **Identification**

Cohen (2001) once said that identification involves unification between oneself and other people. During the process, the audiences forget about themselves and transform into other people, then internalize their point of view. Identification is categorized as a temporary process but it can be long-term behavioral changes if the audiences repeat other people's identity capture.

- **Worship**

Brown stated that this worship consists of 3 different celebrity worships: low-level worship (an individual is attracted to celebrities), medium-level worship (an individual or audiences feel that they have personal relationship with celebrities, and high-level worship or mild pathological (those audiences believe that their relationship to celebrities is reciprocal due to excessive imagination). The last worship is considered to be dangerous because it can make celebrities feel disturbed and not comfortable with their fans.

Besides that process of involvement, there are also five audience involvement dimensions as follows:

- **Cognitive**

This dimension reflects how far the audiences give attention and reflects the meaning of the media content.

- **Affective**

This dimension tells us about how far the audiences react interpersonally to a message or character in the media.

- **Behavioral**

This dimension reflects on how far the audiences talk about media message with other audiences.

- **Referential**

This kind of dimension gives insight into how far the audiences relate media messages to their personal experience.

- **Critical**

The critical dimension is about how far the audiences are involved in the media message construction. According to Sood & Rogers (2000), the audience can reconstruct the television program by giving suggestions for a plot change.

Furthermore, there are so many researches that had been discussed and also related to this research. For example, there is research under the title “Analyzing the Reasons for the Global Popularity of BTS: A New Approach from a Business Perspective” by Parc & Kim (2020). This study has the purpose to analyze BTS as the center of the growing popularity of the Korean pop music industry. This research tried to see the popularity of BTS from the perspective of egocentric strategies as well as sophisticated consumer-oriented strategies.

Moreover, there is also a study proposed by Lestari & Irwansyah (2020) with the title “Participatory Fandom of Army BTS Indonesia in the Digital Comic on Webtoon Apps”. In general, this research has told us about culture exchange brought by the K-Pop industry through BTS. Specifically, this research tried to look closer at patterns of fan participation with different categories in utilizing the digital comic application as fandom media.

Then, the third research was conducted by Hermanto & Salindeho (2021) entitled “Analyzing the Impact of BTS on Resolving the Problem of Youth Mental Health”. In this study, readers have given new perspectives about some forms of BTS activities to help reduce mental health problems such as through BTS lyrics, UNICEF x BTS social campaign, as well as public responses.

The difference between all of the other researches with this research is about the object focus of the research itself. If the other researchers above see the popularity of BTS through some perspectives, this research tried to see the magic role of Kim Nam Joon as a leader of BTS who brings BTS their global popularity today. Furthermore, this research also only focuses on Kim Nam Joon and his great influence on his team members.

This research will use qualitative as the research design since it will discuss more the magic role of Kim Nam Joon as a leader of BTS who brings BTS their global popularity today. As Moleong (2005: 6) said about qualitative research that it is considered to be research that intends to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perception, motivation, actions, etc. holistically, and by means of descriptions in the form of words and language, on a special natural context and by utilizing various natural methods.

In qualitative research, the more in-depth and excavated the data obtained, it can also be interpreted that the better the quality of the research. The data in this research will be described in detail by using the descriptive method from the perspectives of the audience involvement approach and leadership theory (Adhitya, Rosmawati & Fainnayla, 2022, p. 69).

This research will mostly use the data taken from some online sources (including official websites, fanbase websites, and official and fanbase social media on Instagram). This data has been taken from the period of January – June 2022 due to the researcher's interest in exploring the role of the leader of BTS ever since there is still no research exploring this perspective. This research has not had any respondents, but only use some important and related comments from those social media.

The analysis of the data aims to find out about the magic role of Kim Nam Joon as a leader of BTS to his team members as well as the one who brings BTS their global popularity today. At first, the researcher has taken all the data needed relating to the global success of BTS from some online sources. Then, the researcher tried to relate the data findings with the leadership theory through the audience involvement approach determined at the beginning of the study.

DISCUSSION

Over the years, the world has shown us a lot of great and amazing leaders out there including the names like Martin Luther King Jr, Mother Theresa, Queen Elizabeth II, Jack Ma, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Barack Obama, Joe Bidden, Mark Zuckerberg, and many more. They came from several fields of technology, politics, economy, and business. As Yoonhee (2022) states in her article entitled “BTS Kim Nam Joon: The Great Leader of the Millennial Era, Why He's Chosen and The Moments He Used his Cards on the Members”, there is one more leader who is worthy enough to get the attention from the world that did not come from any business or political background. It is worldwide known that since BTS's debut in

2013 up until now, Kim Nam Joon has created a path for other BTS members to connect with international audiences, especially American audiences, through his powerful communication skills. And not only that kind of fact that makes him become a great leader for the millennial era, but also his ability as the team's leader, he's always succeeded to manage them close during difficult times. Kim Nam Joon also marked the beginning of BTS, thus basically he was the internal symbol of how the idea of BTS began in the very first place.

Kim Nam Joon was born in 1994. In BTS, Kim Nam Joon has been known as RM or Rap Monster due to his ability in doing the rap part. Later, the Army has known Kim Nam Joon as the leader of BTS. He was born on 12 September 1994 in Dongjak-gu, Seoul, South Korea. He was known as the first member of BTS and he got the position as the main rapper, songwriter, and record producer. He is also known as the spokesman of BTS as his English is very good. He learned English from a US TV Series called ‘Friends’, even Nam Joon mentioned ‘Friends’ as his English parents, as he ever stated in some interviews in the U.S., like in Ellen Degeneres’ show and during break rehearsal at Grammys 2021.

In the Korean entertainment industry, it is usual for K-Pop groups to have a leader as the representation of the groups’ characters. In addition to their music and their performance, the leader of K-Pop groups leads a substantial part to communicate with the media and fans about their groups’ activities and future planning (Benneth, 2014). The main role of this leader of the group is to maintain good relationships among team members as well as to be the representation of the group to the world.

For ARMY, Kim Nam Joon is popularly known as a young man whose words of wisdom never fail to inspire fans from all around the world. He inspired countless ARMY to love themselves, to be brave to speak up, and never give up. Based on the theory stated by Brown (2015), the relationship between ARMY and BTS is regarded to be in the stage of low to medium level of worship which makes the fans not only attracted to their idols but also feel that they have a personal relationship with their idols. During the process, those fans forget about themselves and transform into other people and internalize their point of view so that they identified themselves to have that personal relationship with their idols.

Throughout the past nine years since BTS first debuted, Nam Joon's leadership has shone in many ways as he unfailingly guides, helps, and motivates his team members to give their best in every performance. These are the reasons why BTS can get big success in the USA market (Cruz, 2021). His team members also called him RM, not just an abbreviated of 'Rap Monster', but also an abbreviated of 'Role Model' as he always listens to his team members, also he always speaks for the fans. One example of his snippet of speech can be seen through his remarkable words at the launch of Generation Unlimited at the UN General Assembly on the last 24 September 2018, as follows:

....but I am still an ordinary, 24-year-old guy. If there's anything that I've achieved, it was only possible because I had my other BTS members by my side, and because of the love and support of our ARMY fans. Maybe I made a mistake yesterday, but yesterday's me is still me. I am who I am today, with all my faults. Tomorrow, I might be a tiny bit wiser, and that's me, too..... After releasing the

'Love Yourself' album and launching the 'Love Myself' campaign, we started to hear remarkable stories from our fans from all over the world, how our message helped them overcome their hardships in life and start loving themselves. These stories constantly remind us of our responsibility. Find your name, find your voice by speaking yourself. I have many faults and I have many more fears, but I am going to embrace myself as hard as I can. And I'm starting to love myself, little by little. So, speak yourself!

What the agency wanted to show can be easily seen through what's been said by the leader of the group. As can be seen in BTS, Kim Nam Joon has always great influence on the whole members, including what they need to do, and what they have to say or do. As the leader of the group, Kim Nam Joon is also known as the spokesman of the group as his English is very good. During their debut in the U.S at the 2017 Billboard Music Awards, Kim Nam Joon played his magic role as the spokesman of the group, to tell the world about who BTS is and their success in winning Top Social Artist at that time and soon they become the first K-Pop act to be nominated a Grammy (taken from Billboard news, accessed on April 23rd 2022).

This fact is in line with the statement from Khan, Nawaz & Khan (2016) about his leadership theory of 'you are made a leader by your influence'. Related to Korean culture in general that still having high respect for age and seniority, those who's chosen to be a leader to certain groups are the oldest one (Bilsky & Schwartz, 2009). That is not the case for Kim Nam Joon. Kim Nam Joon has selected to become BTS leader not because he is the oldest member in the group, but he's chosen because of his brilliance, his compassion, his dedication, his ambition, his

charming behavior, his creativity, as well as his charisma (Yoonhee, 2022).

This kind of compassion and dedication can be clearly seen through the old time when BTS almost disbanded due to budget issues that their agency faced. Through that difficult times, Kim Nam Joon is managed to bring them to stick together and convince them to pull through as stated by one member, Kim Taehyung about his leader:

Nam Joon takes care of and is very good for every single of the member. When the members have any worries, Nam Joon will text the member personally in a private message. If not, he will look for them and speak personally to them, giving them some opinions and reminders.

Moreover, as what's been said by Khan, Nawaz & Khan (2016) through his leadership theory that 'leadership is not about who the leader is, but it is more about what the leader does', this is actually what Kim Nam Joon does to BTS throughout these years. What the future of BTS looks like, and what it will be most remembered for, remains more of an unknown — especially to the group itself. As the leader stated in March 2022:

When our history is over, it'll be clearer. When the dust settles and we come down from our pedestal, we'll be able to tell. At the moment, we're standing in the eye of the cyclone. I don't think we or anyone else can accurately say anything.

From that short statement, at least everyone can look at his powerful words and controlled emotions. During the first BTS debut, Kim Nam Joon was only in his early 20s, but the way he spoke and communicated to the audiences already seemed like he was a world leader (Jenkins, 2013). He has the power to silence the audiences and listen to what he said. There are several proofs taken

from American ARMY's comments in Instagram account related to Kim Nam Joon's powerful speech as follows:

This is the time where BTS say goodbye to their old selves to start a new journey again. Only old Armys knows about this that's why I'm bringing it up again. It's just sad and I can't deny that I cried so hard while watching this but one thing I realized is that, there's no permanent in this world. We all know that there will become a time that BTS will gonna say goodbye to us too. I just can't imagine how sad their last concert will be. I know that will be the most hurtful thing that will happens in our life but we also need to accept that they're also humans. They deserve to be happy, deserve to meet their partners, get married, and deserve to have their own family. After all they almost spend half of their life's to us, so let them do what they want. Let them have a life they deserve and be happy for them. They've come so far and I'm so proud of them. After all the hard work and sacrifices they do, they deserve everything what they have right now. I won't regret and I will never regret stanning them, the best group with the best leader. (@jooniescups, 14 May 2022).

You are so intelligent with words, very well spoken!! It's hard!! You are a great leader, rapper, dancer, speaker and human being! I love you and Army loves you!! Thank you for your wonderful speech! You and BTS have made history and will stay in the hearts of millions forever!!! Thank you!!! God bless you all!!! (@conniemorris453, 14 May 2022).

I'm stanning RM as the best leader of all time. He never failed to make us cried a lot with his touching words. What he did for BTS is beyond wonderful. He's the one who makes BTS like we see today. BTS is nothing without their great leader. (@btsarmy_baby_army, 15 May 2022).

His presence and his ability to silence the entire stadium as they listen to his words. (@armybangtan3334, 15 May 2022).

The fact that I've watched his speech multiple times and I am still awe struck. This is what you call impact. The amazing impact of RM to us. He's the one that makes me wanted to become a great leader someday. He's my greatest inspiration. (@alondr_amoreno, 15 May 2022).

His powerful speech can be heard through some awards that BTS won, even from the official stage like during the United Nation campaign and in the recent time when BTS has been invited by Joe Biden (The President of the USA) on 31 May 2022. His speech at the White House can be seen on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGoF1Iaj868>, uploaded by the Asian Mania channel on 1 June 2022. The snippet of the speech is as follows:

Hi, we're BTS and it is a great honor to be invited to the White House today to discuss the important issues of anti-Asian hate crimes, Asian inclusion and diversity. We thank President Biden and the White House and for giving this important opportunity to speak about important causes, reminding ourselves of what we can do as artists" (RM). "Today is the last day of AANHPI Heritage Month. We joined the White House to stand with the AANHPI community and to celebrate" (Jin). "We were devastated by the recent surge in hate crimes, including Asian-American hate crimes. To put a stop on this and support the cause, we would like to take this opportunity to voice ourselves once again" (Jimin). "We are here today thanks to our ARMY: Our fans worldwide who have different nationalities and cultures and use different languages. We are truly and always grateful" (J-Hope). "We still feel surprised that music created by South Korean artists reaches so many

people around the world, transcending languages and cultural barriers. We believe music is always an amazing and wonderful unifier of all things" (Jungkook). "It's not wrong to be different. The quality begins when we open up and embrace our differences" (Suga). "Everyone has their own history. We hope today is one step forward to respecting and understanding each and every one as a valuable person" (Taehyung). "Finally, we want to thank President Biden and the White House for giving us this valuable opportunity to speak out on important causes; and remind ourselves of what we can do as artists. Once again, thank you very much" (RM).

Kim Nam Joon got his first turn in giving a speech and he also closed the speech with excellent English, while other members speak in Korean. As we can see from the speech above, every time he speaks, he keeps his emotions in control and choose his words carefully, also he keeps just enough sprinkles of passion to make his words more meaningful. And the most essential thing is that Kim Nam Joon never speaks for himself, because as the leader of the group, he managed to speak for the company, the group, and also for their loyal fans.

Furthermore, as what is said by Yoonhee (2022) about Kim Nam Joon's notion: 'team work makes the dream work'. This notion is clearly understood by Kim Nam Joon as he always tries his best to make every member of BTS involved in every situation. Even in a big situation like when they have to make speech about anti-Asian racism and discrimination in the White House in May 2022, Kim Nam Joon always gives opportunity for all the members to speak their opinion even though he is known as the most eloquent speaker of the

group. When his team members are too nervous to speak up, Kim Nam Joon always there to back them up, translate and convey the message the members wanted to tell. He always tries to make sure that every BTS voice is being heard and respected.

There is also another big reason about the influence of Kim Nam Joon as the leader behind the global success of BTS today: that is about his ability to put himself both as a leader and as a friend to his team members. There is a time when Nam Joon is really a real friend to his team members when he makes fun and jokes to other BTS members during ‘Run BTS’ or during their everyday life. Even there were also times when some BTS members making a lot of fun of Nam Joon and he just seems to voluntarily give up. But there are also times when BTS members need their leader, and this is the moment when he used his leader card to put the group in order (Yoonhee, 2022).

Among the five Khan, Nawaz & Khan’s leadership theories, it can be concluded that Kim Nam Joon offers four out of those five leadership theories: transformational leadership, adaptive leadership, strength-based leadership, and servant leadership. Transformational leadership happened when a leader connects with followers, which can raise the level of motivation and morality. Kim Nam Joon takes a great role in terms of making a connection through his communication ability which increases the group’s motivation and morality to stay connected to each other to make better performance and to be bigger than before. In other words, he always becomes the person who can connect his group members to stay motivated and stick together during every situation through his compassion, his charming behavior as well as his charisma.

This kind of transformational leader will usually have four basic abilities: idealized influence or charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized concern (Northouse, 2016). Kim Nam Joon has four of those criteria to become a transformational leader for BTS as stated in People’s Magazine’s article:

... every time BTS RM speaks, he keeps his emotions in control. Also, he understands the notion that as a leader, he doesn’t only speak for himself. As BTS leader, he represents the company, the group, and the entire ARMY fans.

Then, it is about adaptive leadership that can be seen through Kim Nam Joon’s leadership role. As what’s been said by Khan, Nawaz & Khan above that there are two main leadership characteristics of adaptive behavioral leadership: task-oriented leadership and people-oriented leadership. If we look at Kim Nam Joon’s leadership role, it is seen that if there’s a problem with the team members, a task-oriented leader will look at the process to see if something needs to be adjusted with the workflow. And a people-oriented leader will look at the individuals and go right to them, asking what the issue is (Northouse, 2016).

When it comes to seeing conflicts among the team members like what’s ever happened to Kim Seokjin and Kim Taehyung, Kim Nam Joon will look at the problems and investigate the whole process. The way he did it can be considered as solving the conflict through a task-oriented perspective. And he also did a people-oriented perspective through the way he goes to each member individually and decides the best solution as he said: “It’s not about Jin or V or RM, it is about BTS, and we will make it as BTS”.

Strength-based leadership leads to the suggestion that leaders have innate traits and

skills to make them become great leaders. But still, even though Kim Nam Joon was born to be a great leader with his determination, charisma, and intelligence, he still feels that he needs to learn a lot to raise his ability to become a better leader for BTS. Kim Nam Joon understands that leaders are unable to come from the shadows, they are either chosen or not. High levels of ambition and determination are needed to be the most eloquent leader and it is no doubt that Kim Nam Joon has this kind of criteria as an eloquent leader.

Last but not least is the definition of servant leadership or which is later called participative leadership. Kim Nam Joon has been known to implement both servant or participative leadership and power leadership. This kind of leadership suggests team members need to be directly involved in the decision-making. The role of the leader here is to facilitate communication among all members, take all the suggestions, and then come up with the best possible action. The benefit of this leadership that Kim Nam Joon tries to do is that his team members feel more engaged and motivated because they are involved in the decision-making process. Still, based on Khan, Nawaz & Khan's leadership theory, Kim Nam Joon tends to hold both positional power and personal power over his relationship with BTS members. Sometimes he played the role of the main leader that makes the group order, and sometimes he also played the role of an individual who also needs suggestions and creates a closer relationship with the team members.

In relation to Khan, Nawaz & Khan's statement, Brown (2015) mentions the transportation aspect in audience involvement theory, it can also be said that the audiences

(in this case known as ARMY) are involved in the narrative world or other words, this transportation aspect needs the involvement of the audiences to ensure the massive success of the group. Also, the para-social aspect is also involved during the process of explaining the relationship between the figures and the audiences. In this process, the audiences feel that their interaction with the media is real even though it is just imaginary interaction. In short, it involves what is called an interpersonal aspect.

And about other five audience involvement dimensions including cognitive, affective, behavioral, referential, and critical dimensions; these dimensions help to reflect how far the fans give attention, react interpersonally, and relate the media messages to their personal experience to create media construction about Kim Nam Joon as a leader of BTS.

What is not included in Khan, Nawaz & Khan's leadership theories is leader-member exchange leadership since at this point, there are in-group members and out-group members. It means that there are members who get more attention than other group members. This is not what happened under Kim Nam Joon's leadership as he always treats all members fairly, there is no reward or punishment just like regularly used in business. One of his principles is about doing everything in the name of BTS, not in the name of Kim Nam Joon or Park Jimin or Min Yoongi or Kim Taehyung or Kim Seokjin or Jeon Jungkook or Jung Hoseok. This is because there is no drop of superiority in every word he speaks or arrogance in how he behaves toward others.

According to Khan, Nawaz & Khan's strength-based leadership theory, Kim Nam

Joon also becomes a great leader because he always returns everything back to the ARMY as their loyal fans during every speech, especially in concerts. One great example can be seen as follows:

Through this Love Yourself Tour, I'm finding how to love myself. I didn't know anything about loving myself. You guys [ARMY] taught me. Through your eyes, your love, your tweets, your words, and your everything, you guys taught me and inspired me how to love myself. It is our mission to define our way of loving ourselves. It's never intended but it feels like I'm using you guys to love myself. So, I want to say one thing: please use me. Please use BTS to find a way to love yourself. Because you guys taught me how to love myself everyday. (BTS RM during Love Yourself Tour, 2018).

Kim Nam Joon's statement went viral since that day and inspired tons of people especially many adolescents all around the world to love themselves. For instance, a BTS fan Ghelani wrote this in July 2022 that explained how she was inspired by Kim Nam Joon to be a better leader, to be a qualified leader.

This Love Yourself era became an intrinsic part of who BTS are and the message they represent. As a leader RM moved his fans by acknowledging how difficult it was for him to find ways to love himself. He showed me that in order to truly love others, it was important to love myself first. This is the integral part of what it means to be a leader. As authentic as RM is, he also thoroughly believes in himself which makes those around him feel confident in his ability to lead. This motivated me to re-evaluate my journey of self-love; which I believe will ultimately make me a more genuine and honest leader.

Kim Nam Joon is a great leader, and the ARMY always associates him with the whole of BTS. There is no BTS without Kim Nam Joon. His speeches always touch all people's hearts who listen, as we can see through his statement below:

Everyone's afraid of changes. Staying, moving on, staying, moving on. We are repeating the same things again and again. I guess that's life, I'm afraid. Old or new, new or old, that isn't really important. What's important is, that we still breathe and live in the same place. So, let's move on. If someday in your life, our existence or our music, our performance, or our photos and videos if they can help you a little bit. If your pain is at 100 and we can lower it to 99, 98, or 97.. even if that's all we can do, that's enough to value our existence. (Nam Joon's ending part on their song 'Moving On').

CONCLUSION

In short, it can be concluded that actually, Kim Nam Joon is a type of an unlikely role model. He is a young figure who redefined what it means to be an intelligent and impactful leader. Furthermore, to truly lead a movement of change, it is imperative for people to care and have compassion for others they represent and work with (Keesing, 2007). As mentioned above that Kim has inspired many people out there to use self-love and advocate for the people around us so that we may continue to influence them positively as a strong leader. His figure is not only seen as a great leader for BTS, but also known as one reason why many American non-BTS fans fall in love with his leadership role who's then becoming ARMY after that. This is all because of his positional power as well as personal power to lead BTS to finally reach

their global success in America and around the world.

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AN APPRAISAL ANALYSIS ON JOE BIDEN'S RHETORIC OF GUN CONTROL

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ABSTRACT

The recurring gun violence in the U.S. has been a prevailing issue for a long period. To tackle these, the government has implemented various policies and regulations. However, a transformation is nowhere to be seen. Having advocated for a change is Joe Biden, the president of the United States. In the light of recent unfortunate occurrences, Biden delivered a public speech that addressed this issue. This study aims to understand and thoroughly comprehend Biden's speech using appraisal analysis, in which the elements of appraisal are used to classify the terms within Biden's speech. This research uses qualitative methods, and it is concluded that it is clear from the performed research and supplementary data in the preceding sentence that Biden's speech contains a total of 37 evaluative items. 19 of these appraising items are positive, while 18 are negative. 19 of these appraising items are positive. This study found 12 findings for each of the appraisal parts of affect and appreciation, 7 findings of Judgment-social esteem and 6 findings of judgment-social sanction. Upon analyzing, it is found that Biden's speech contains numerous meanings, some of which are how he is saddened by the unfortunate event, and subsequently advocates transformation on gun regulation in the future years. In conclusion, Biden's position on gun issues as president of the U.S. is that the owner and the regulation, not the gun, are the issue.

Keywords: *appraisal; gun control; gun law; POTUS, presidential speech*

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INTRODUCTION

Since its establishment in 1776, the United States of America has had to endure numerous issues from various aspects. One of the recurring, and often deep-rooted issues is gun violence. The CDC (2020) reports that 45,222 Americans died from gun-related injuries in 2020, the most recent year for which complete data is available. 19,384 out of 24,576 homicides in the U.S. in 2020 (or 79%) involved a firearm. Among the three American largest cities, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, there has also been an increase in shooting incidents—except in Los Angeles. In the 2019-2020 timeframe, according to the NYPD (2020), there is an 11.7% increase in shooting incidents in New York, and a 23% increase in shooting incidents in Chicago (CPD, 2020). In 2021, the LAPD reported that there is a 141% increase in shooting incidents (CNS, 2021).

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic caused the U.S. population to have more access to firearms during the pandemic, and access to firearms is independently correlated with the likelihood of homicide and suicide with firearms (Studdert et al., 2020). Yamane (2017) established a concept called Gun Culture 2.0, which is focused on the culture of an armed citizenry, also known as armed self-defense. The idea of “armed citizenship” acknowledges the numerous and increasing numbers of Americans who exercise their constitutional right to carry weapons for self-defense in public, resulting in an increase of gun-related incidents. According to an analysis of gun sales in the U.S., the number of criminal background checks for gun transactions significantly increased during

the COVID-19 stay-at-home orders. The FBI carried out 13,674,878 background checks for firearm transactions between March and June 2020, up 42% over the same period in 2019 (FBI, 2020). However, an estimated 6.6 million weapons, or 40% of all transactions of firearms, occur each year without any background checks (McLean et al., 2019).

Finally, the U.S. regulates the legal possession of firearms. This refers to any legal action taken to prevent or limit access to or use of weapons, especially firearms. In a larger historical sense, the phrase also refers to restrictions on the ownership or use of other weapons, including some that date back to before the discovery of gunpowder. Only those in possession of a current, state-issued permit may buy handguns in the Empire State. After submitting fingerprints, paying a number of fees, undertaking a thorough background investigation that includes speaking with acquaintances in the police, and convincing a local court that they have a good cause for wanting to acquire a handgun can applicants obtain that permission (Spitzer, 2020). However, despite the thorough process, gun possession in the U.S. is protected by the law—the second amendment—to be exact. The U.S. Constitution's Second Amendment has been read to safeguard the majority of gun ownership, and according to the preponderant judicial view, it offers strong protection for gun rights (Pomeranz et al., 2021). The constitution reads “A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”. Gun control is regulated by the government of the United States under this

amendment. As Reeping et al. (2019) claimed in their study, a fully adjusted model analysis revealed a significant 11.5% (95% confidence interval 4.2% to 19.3%, $P=0.002$) greater rate of mass shootings for every 10 units higher state gun legislation permissiveness. Mass shooting rates increased by a significant 35.1% (12.7% to 62.7%, $P=0.001$) for every 10% rise in state gun ownership. Similar findings were obtained from studies that only included domestic and international mass shootings as well as from partially adjusted regression models. It adds to the fact that owning a gun is considered a birthright and an essential part of the nation's heritage by many advocates (Masters, 2015) in addition to sociocultural factors, such as fear of African-American violence (O'Brien, 2013). Gun violence is multifactorial (Sanchez et al., 2020). However, from a compilation of data shown prior, the amendment and gun possession law are arguably linked to the high number of mass murders committed with guns—significantly higher than any other country in the world.

To assess this issue, a thorough analysis of the government's stance in regard to this issue needs to be performed. In this article, the government's stance is studied on the highest-leveled representative of the executive, the U.S. President. As a leader of the country, the president often delivers speeches regarding various issues. These speeches possess meanings and serve as a direct reflection on the president's stance concerning a subject. Therefore, analyzing the president's speech is the most ideal method to conclude how gun control and gun violence in the U.S. are addressed and practiced.

The speech of the current president of the U.S., Joe Biden, is selected as the object of this study. The underlying reason for this designation is that Biden is the active president of the U.S., and has delivered several speeches addressing gun violence. Particularly, the speech that is used in this study is Biden's latest speech regarding gun control and gun violence, which was delivered on Thursday, 2 June 2022 at the White House.

In order to examine the speech, the full transcript of the speech will be analyzed using appraisal analysis by Martin & White (2005). Appraisal is one of three major discourse semantic resources constructing interpersonal meaning (alongside involvement and negotiation). The evaluation process itself is regionalized into three interconnected domains called "attitude", "engagement", and "graduation". People's emotions, including emotional responses, behavioral assessments, and objectivity assessments are all part of our attitude. Engagement deals with the play of voices surrounding opinions in debate as well as the sourcing of attitudes. Graduation addresses the phenomenon of grading, in which classifications are muddled and emotions are heightened. However, this study focuses only on the attitude aspect of the appraisal theory. The three areas of feeling that make up attitude are "affect", "judgment", and "appreciation". Affect is concerned with tools for understanding emotional responses. It is concerned with registering positive and negative feelings: happy or sad, confident or anxious, interested or bored. Judgment deals with attitudes towards behavior, which we admire or criticize, praise or condemn. Resources for evaluating behavior in accordance with different normative norms

are relevant to judgment. Appreciation considers resources for determining the worth of things, such as natural occurrences and semiosis (as either product or process). It involves evaluations of semiotic and natural phenomena, according to how they are valued or not in a given field.

This study aims to analyze, understand and establish a conclusion on the U.S. government regarding gun violence. The implementation of appraisal theory will help the author understand the interpersonal meaning of the speech better. Therefore, the objective of this study can be obtained. The methodology chosen for this study is qualitative as the data were gathered through non-numerical modes of observation and data collection. The process of comprehending the meaning people have created, how people make sense of their reality, and the experiences they have in it is referred to as descriptive qualitative (Merriam, 2009; Rudy & Adhitya, 2022, p. 338). Additionally, a case study or participant observation approach can be used in qualitative research to produce narrative, descriptive accounts of a situation or activity (Parkinson & Drislane, 2011). The qualitative method with the researchers as the human instrument is the most ideal option for this research (Adhitya, Rosmawati & Fainnayla, 2022, p. 73).

The concept of analyzing speech using appraisal analysis has been implemented in various studies. A study conducted by Nasution (2018) utilized this theory to analyze Donald Trump’s speech. The purpose of this study, was to evaluate Trump’s emotive speech. It used Praat to support the results regarding emotion in

terms of feeling based on the voice of Trump and Appraisal theory to assess the text.

The study uses Praat to detect and analyze speech emotion to examine the emotional circumstances present in Trump’s speech transcription. The research’s textual and audio sources were Trump’s remarks at the U.N. General Assembly’s 72nd session. The study concentrated on a particular line in which Trump expressed emotion while speaking to North Korea. The affect, judgment, and appreciation Attitude aspects were used by the researcher to analyze the emotional conditions present in Trump’s speech. Then, using Praat, an algorithmic approach is implemented to detect and analyze normal, furious, and panic emotions from the sound pitch and intensity. According to the findings on attitude, the percentages of effect, judgment, and appreciation were 30.3 percent, 45.5 percent, and 24.2 percent, respectively. According to the results of the Praat analysis, at Affection, 6 words (16.6%) showed furious emotion in both pitch and intensity, while 5 words (13.8%) displayed angry emotion in both pitch and intensity and panic emotion in intensity. In judgment, 10 words (27.7%) showed angry emotion and 5 words (13.8%) of the pitch showed panic emotion. In appreciation, 6 words (16.6%) showed angry emotion, and 3 words (8.3%) showed panic emotion. Lastly, 1 word (2.7%) of Trump’s pitch showed normal emotion. The research found The data revealed that the number of Affect (11/30.3%), Judgment (15/45.5%), and Appreciation (10/24.2%) could be noticed in the results of the attitude study. When delivering his statement regarding North Korea, Trump displayed attitude in both positive and negative ways. In Trump’s speech, judgment predominated in terms of

word count and sentiment. As a result, these findings suggested that Trump tended to expose the true nature of North Korea's leader. The tone that Trump used in his address to the leaders of North Korea was generally unfavorable. Trump called North Korean leaders derogatory names, such as Rocketman, which targeted nuclear-powered North Korea. The research by Nasution (2018) used the same theory that is used in this article. However, there is a gap between the study conducted and this research. Nasution's research studies the pitch and intonation of Trump's speech, whereas this study will focus on the appraisal as the only instrument.

In addition, a study by Zebua (2018) also utilized appraisal theory as the instrument of the research. The research analyzed the speech of Martin Luther King Jr., the thesis examines the use of appraisal from the Attitude subsystem of the Appraisal Theory in King Jr.'s demonstration speech. This study primarily highlights the affect elements that were present in the speech "I Have a Dream." Martin and White's (2005) theory, which classified affect elements into two categories—realis affect and irrealis affect—was the foundation for this thesis. Realis affect is divided into six sub-systems: happiness, unhappiness, security, insecurity, satisfaction, and dissatisfaction. Irrealis affect is separated into two sub-systems: inclination and disinclination. The writer can conclude the following based on the analysis: there are 71 manageable clauses in King Jr.'s speech. He employed the realis and irrealis systems of Martin and White's theory in terms of affect. The writer found 48 items for evaluation, including 20 for security, 10 for insecurity, 7 for inclination, 3 for unhappiness, 3 for dissatisfaction, 2 for

disinclination, 2 for satisfaction and 1 for happiness. and 3 for disinclination (1). The outcome above demonstrated that security in the category of "trust" is where Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech dominates. Martin Luther King demonstrated his skills as a persuasive public speaker by communicating his message using both positive and negative affect. In sum, Zebua (2018) demonstrates the same method used in this research. The use of realis and irrealis affect—however—sets the two researches apart. Nevertheless, the elements from the two researches mentioned in this literature review are helpful in evaluating this research.

This article will thus discuss the appraisal aspect—namely affect, judgment and appreciation—of Biden's speech on gun control and gun violence. The appraisal theory is implemented to obtain a thorough understanding and classification of the terms used by Biden. Therefore, the complete interpersonal meaning of Biden's speech will be able to be concluded by the end of this research.

DISCUSSION

The process of analyzing the transcript of the speech is performed by classifying the words used by Biden in his speech into a set of tables that contain affect, judgment and appreciation. In the initial part of the discussion, the tables displayed contain the total amount of sub-categories found in Biden's speech. The subcategory in affect includes un/happiness, in/security, dis/satisfaction, and dis/inclination. The subcategory within judgment are divided into social esteem (normality, capacity and tenacity), and social sanction (veracity and propriety). Lastly, appreciation has a

subcategory that includes reaction, composition and valuation. In addition, each

of these subcategories are classified into positive and negative.

Table 1. Affect

No.	Type of Affect	Appraising Items		Total
		Positive	Negative	
1.	Happiness	<i>Honoring.</i>	-	1
2.	Unhappiness	-	<i>Broken, suffering, hurting, wounded, heartbreaking, cry.</i>	6
3.	Security	<i>Willing.</i>	-	1
4.	Insecurity	-	-	-
5.	Satisfaction	-	-	-
6.	Dissatisfaction	-	<i>Carnage, rampage, outrageous.</i>	3
7.	Inclination	-	-	-
8.	Disinclination	-	<i>Horrificed.</i>	1
				12

In effect, the terms found are amounted to 12 in total, with “honoring” which resembles positive happiness, “broken”, “suffering”, “hurting”, “wounded”, “heartbreaking”, “cry” which are part of

negative unhappiness, “willing” from positive security, “carnage”, “rampage” and “outrageous” of negative dissatisfaction, and “horrified”, part of negative disinclination.

Table 2. Judgment – Social Esteem

No.	Type of Judgment	Appraising Items		Total
		Positive (admire)	Negative (criticize)	
1.	Normality (how special?)	<i>Beautiful, shine.</i>	-	2
2.	Capacity (how capable?)	<i>Responsible, best-trained, succeed.</i>	<i>Ordinary, fail.</i>	5
3.	Tenacity (how dependable?)	-	-	-
				7

In judgment - social esteem, the total of appraising items found is 7, with 5 capacity–3 positive capacity in “responsible”, “best-trained”, and “succeed”--and 2 negative

capacity in “ordinary” and “fail”. Lastly, the 2 positive normality is represented by “beautiful” and “shine”.

Table 3. Judgment – Social Sanction

No.	Type of Judgment	Appraising Items		Total
		Positive (praise)	Negative (condemn)	
1.	Veracity (how honest?)	<i>Innocent.</i>	<i>Unconscionable.</i>	2
2.	Propriety (how far beyond reproach)	<i>Lawful, rational.</i>	<i>Violent, danger.</i>	4
				6

In the table of judgment - social sanction, upon analysis, it is found that the total of appraising items are 6. 2 of them are positive veracity with “innocent” and

negative veracity with “unconscionable”. The rest of the 6 are 2 terms of positive propriety, which are “lawful”, “rational”, and 2 terms of negative propriety: “violent” and “danger”.

Table 3. Appreciation

No.	Type of Appreciation	Appraising Items		Total
		Positive	Negative	
1.	Reaction	<i>Hallowed, free, easy.</i>	<i>Devastating.</i>	4
2.	Composition	<i>Clear.</i>	-	1
3.	Valuation	<i>Absolute, vast, tougher.</i>	<i>Liability, bad, hard, invisible.</i>	7
				12

The last table, appreciation, contains 11 appraising items. These 10 items are divided into 3 positive reaction: “hallowed”, “free” and “easy”. 1 positive composition: “clear”, 3 positive valuation: “absolute”, “vast”, and “tougher”, and 4 negative valuation: “liability”, “bad”, “hard”, “invisible”.

to this subcategory is “broken”, “suffering”, “hurting”, “wounded”, “heartbreaking” and “cry”. In addition to the terms within negative unhappiness, his sorrowful stance toward this issue is also reflected on other subcategories, with the words “devastating”, and “horrified”.

Objectively, Biden’s foundational stance about gun violence is negative. According to the data shown, he highlights how this unfortunate occurrence is rather sorrowful, proven as he mentions a total of 6—the most among subcategories. Biden’s word in regard

Evidently, his stance on gun regulation is positive. With a total of 7 mentions, comprising “absolute”, “vast”, “tougher”, “liability”, “bad”, “hard” and “invisible”, Biden proclaimed that the war on gun violence and implementing proper gun

control is a task that is anything but easy. In addition, these terms also highlight how Biden is willing to establish tougher and tighter regulations despite the fact that it would be a hard task.

In this speech, Biden also covers sentimental values, showcasing his sympathy towards the victims with positive terms such as “beautiful”, “shine”, “innocent”, “hallowed”. This adds into the dynamic of his speech, as these sympathetic terms are integrated with the violent nature of this issue which are reflected by the words “carnage”, “rampage” and “outrageous”.

CONCLUSION

From the conducted study and supported evidence in the prior paragraph, it can be concluded that Biden’s speech has a total of 37 appraising items. Among these appraising items, 19 of them are positive, whereas 18 of these appraising items are negative. The appraisal elements with the most findings in this research are affect and appreciation, with 12 findings each, followed by judgment-social esteem with 7 findings, and the elements with the least findings is judgment-social sanction with 6 findings. The other terms mentioned in his speech are just as essential, and combined with other appraisal elements, these words successfully showcased Biden’s stance and his future acts in regard to this issue.

To conclude, Biden is not at all fond of this situation. In his speech, he repeatedly emphasized how he suffered from this situation, as an American and as a leader. He also paid his condolences towards the victims, whom he referred to as “beautiful and innocent”. Despite being saddened and furious, Biden did not only focus on what

had happened, but instead provided a solution on the upcoming times. He shared his opinion on gun regulation, and was willing to perform a transformation on gun regulation, while not taking the freedom of the US citizens to possess firearms—which is protected by the second amendment. In sum, Joe Biden's stance as the president of the United States towards gun issues is that the firearm itself is not a problem, the owner and the regulation is. His personal views on this issue are reflected entirely on the speech that he delivered, making his speech the ideal focus of this study.

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LOCAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVE IN TACKLING FOOD DESERT: ACHIEVING FAIR AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTH MEMPHIS

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ABSTRACT

The issue of food desert (difficulty in accessing healthy food at affordable prices) is a phenomenon that has long plagued a number of regions in the United States. Uniquely, this issue has a close relationship with racism because the majority of the population living in food desert areas are its black population, such as the area of South Memphis, which in 2019, was nicknamed “The Hunger Capital of America”. This article aims to understand the design and implementation of solutions to the food desert issue in South Memphis using the lens of local food network and just sustainability concept. This study also aims to analyze how racial and class awareness are integrated into solutions formulated by local communities, considering that the majority of the population living in the food desert area are black and in the lower middle-class group. Related to the sustainable aspect of the just sustainability concept, this study will also evaluate how initiatives such as farmer’s markets and community kitchens in the form of non-commercial practices, can be an effective and sustainable solution to the food desert issue in the long term.

Keywords: *community; food desert; just sustainability; local food network; racial awareness; social justice*

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INTRODUCTION

The United States is considered to be one of the most developed countries in the world, yet many of its citizens still live in areas known as food deserts. Food desert

refers to a lack of access to healthy foods, but also excessive consumption of unhealthy foods. These unhealthy foods have high fat and calorie content and very low nutritional value, and are commonly known as junk or fast food. Food deserts are often associated

with food insecurity and a major cause of continued overweight or obesity, and other health problems caused by poor nutrition such as high cholesterol, diabetes, and heart disease. Uniquely, the issue of food desert in the United States has a close relationship with racism because the majority of the population living in food desert areas are black people (Kurtz, 2013, p. 249).

Ironically, this phenomenon does not afflict black residents in remote areas with minimal infrastructure, but occurs in large cities or small towns that at first glance do not appear to have infrastructure and transportation shortages such as the city of Memphis in Tennessee. In 2019, The Guardian produced a short documentary entitled “The food deserts of Memphis: inside America’s hunger capital” which referred to the city of Memphis as the “Hunger Capital in America”. The nickname alludes to the difficulty of black residents living in the south Memphis area to access the nearest supermarket. The two nearest supermarkets are 3.7 km and 4 km respectively from the residential area in South Memphis, while a third of the population living in the area does not have private transportation. A South Memphis resident would have to ask neighbors who have a car to take them to the supermarket, or take the bus for 45 minutes to an hour each way.

The root cause of food desert areas in the United States is systemic racism rooted in the slavery system and segregation policies against the black population, which resulted in lower socioeconomic conditions, education levels, and overall comparably lower quality of life compared to white residents (Williams & Collins, 2001, p. 251).

Significant differences between the living conditions of the black and white population were demonstrated in a study conducted by Lamichane *et al.* Areas where the majority of white residents live with relatively higher property values than areas where black residents live. White residents also have relatively higher levels of education and income (Lamichhane, *et.al*, 2014, p. 7). Both of these facts indicate the concentration of poverty in black areas, making it difficult to access daily needs such as healthy food (Kurtz, 2013, p. 251).

Studies on food desert often focus on systemic racism as the main cause of the formation of food desert areas, but the solutions that are often implemented only focus on the issue of access in a geographical sense, which is opening supermarkets in food desert areas. The solution to the issue of food desert should pay more attention to the systemic racism that affects living conditions, behavior, and habits that perpetuate the issue of food desert in an area such as dependence on low-nutrition foods. Difficulty accessing healthy food at affordable prices can affect consumption patterns and preferences for unhealthy foods as well as lack of knowledge about nutrition and healthy lifestyles (Corral, 2009, p. 181; Cannuscio *et al.*, 2010, p. 388).

Research shows how systemic racism has affected the economic practice of retail companies known as redlining. Supermarkets have categorized the black population as an unwanted market segmentation because of their low purchasing power and the reputation of the area where they live is considered unsafe. The practice of redlining has degraded the quality of living areas and conditions of the black population by attracting investment from the area (Kurtz,

2013; Walker, 2011; Eisenhauer, 2001; and Kwate, 2012). Systemic racism has not only affected the living conditions of the black population but has also shaped their lifestyle and behavior. Several studies discuss how the everyday environment can affect the behavior and lifestyle of the black population which has impacted their health condition (Williams and Collins, 2001; Landrine and Corral, 2009; Bader et al, 2010).

The concept of food sovereignty proposes the creation of a localized food system or network to be a long-lasting solution to food desert issues that can be adapted according to needs and involve local communities such as residents, non-profit organizations, companies, and local governments in policy planning to ensure easy access to healthy food, regardless of their race and economic and social status (Schiavoni, 2009; Sadler, *et al*, 2016; Dowler & Caraher, 2013; McCutcheon, 2011).

In South Memphis, a grassroots organization based in the area called The Works Inc. was first founded by a local priest, in collaboration with The University of Memphis, Memphis Regional Design Center, and Hyde Family Foundations its local community has created an alternative local food network in the form of a farmer's market called South Memphis Farmer's Market (SMFM) in 2009 that sells fresh produce and an all year round grocery store called The Grocer next to the market.

The market was part of a development grand plan called the South Memphis Revitalization Action Plan which uses participatory planning and resident-led visioning method. South Memphis residents were involved from the early stages of

setting priorities, inputs on the development plan and identifying the strength and weaknesses of the community that should be addressed in the planning stage. The extensive planning revealed access to healthy food was a top priority. It also identified the strength of the community was the close-knit bond between residents due to their same experiences and hardships, and community institutes like the local church (Reardon, 2018, p. 437).

The first aim of this study is to understand and analyze the design and application of solutions to the food desert issue in South Memphis through its local community using the concept of local food network (LFN) concept proposed by Sadler *et al* (2016). The second is to analyze the local initiative solutions in achieving just sustainability, using the just sustainability concept proposed by Julian Agyeman (2008). The local food network concept proposed a local food system that is focused on food security and non-commercial practices, including the local community in planning and implementation process, has the main goal of increasing quality of life and aims to strengthen social ties within the community and its local government.

Agyeman's definition of sustainability is the need to ensure an increase in the quality of life for all people, both living now and, in the future, using a fair redistribution process, without compromising attention to the protection of the surrounding environment and paying close attention to systemic issues like race and class (Agyeman, 2008, p. 753). In order to achieve this, there needs to be a close cooperative relationship between the local government and the surrounding community who share the idea of

sustainability for the environment and the people in the environment. The role of local communities is important in identifying short-term and long-term goals and implementation strategies that will be used.

The qualitative method in the form of textual analysis (Rudy & Adhitya, 2022, p. 338) in analyzing three research corpus' SMFM's and The Works Inc.'s Facebook page, a video produced by media outlet *The Guardian* uploaded on YouTube titled "The Food Deserts of Memphis: Inside America's Hunger Capital" and a research article by Carter (2021) entitled "Mapping the Influence: A Nexus Analysis Approach to Addressing Food Access". These data sources (Adhitya, Rosmawati & Fainnayla, 2022, p. 69) will provide textual and visual insights into South Memphis' food desert plight, the process of creating SMFM as a local food network in South Memphis, how it has impacted the local community and possible challenges it may face in the current future.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of local food network (LFN) solutions by The Works Inc.

The three corpora demonstrated The Works Inc. seeks to eradicate the issue of food desert by creating an alternative food system in the form of SMFM. The establishment of SMFM interprets the concept of LFN by utilizing the strengths of the local community in the southern city of Memphis, namely close social ties so that SMFM is not only a place for residents to access affordable fresh fruits and vegetables, but also a place to gather and bond with fellow citizens. In the long term, the focus of the market is to increase the quality of health

and well-being for its community by focusing on non-commercial practices.

SMFM and The Works Inc's Facebook Page

SMFM and The Works Inc Facebook accounts show the enthusiasm of residents in the SMFM program that seeks to improve the health of the local community, by putting up information about coupon programs like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) and Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program (SMFNP) that could be used in the market, and cooking classes that demonstrate easy and affordable ways to prepare food that is liked and shared by residents. These initiatives showcase The Works Inc. understanding of the importance of creating a food pathway that ensures food security and a clear focus on health and well-being for its residents due to the involvement of the local community in the early planning stages.

Photos uploaded on the account pages also show the enthusiasm of residents in activities held in the market area like games and musical performances. Indicating SMFM playing to the strength of South Memphis' residence, and its close-knit relations. It is not only seen as a place to shop for food, but a social institution that is part of the community.

Carter's "Mapping the Influence: A Nexus Analysis Approach to Addressing Food Access"

Carter (2021) identified religion, race, class and everyday shared experiences included as the foundation of SMFM as an institution. This is largely due to the early involvement of the local community in the planning stages of the market. He conducted

interaction mapping and coding of space by observing daily interactions in SMFM. Carter found a strong emotional connection amongst the market staff, The Works Inc., and the customers who are all mostly black residents from a lower-income economic background that have experienced hardship in accessing affordable healthy food (Carter, 2021, p.5). This strong bond, ultimately directed the way in which the market operates, in a warm, friendly, informal manner that mimics daily interaction in the community which has kept customers coming back to the market Carter, 2021, p. 6).

The Guardian's "The Food Deserts of Memphis: Inside America's Hunger Capital"

The video largely showcased visuals that illustrate the stark difference in living conditions between South Memphis, which has a majority of black, low-income residents, and East Memphis which has a majority of white, middle to high-income residents. South Memphis has empty abandoned streets, run-down houses, liquor stores, cigarette shops and an abundance of convenient stores that sells cheap highly processed foods. While East Memphis is shown to be an upscale neighborhood with residents that owns cars and many supermarket options to shop for food.

The video captures the food desert issue in South Memphis through a racial and class awareness lens by pointing out the practice of redlining that goes back to the 1930s where black residents were refused housing loans by banks because they were deemed "high risk" compared to white residents. This practice led to the impoverishment of black neighborhoods as many businesses like

supermarkets followed suit which made accessing daily needs harder for black residents.

It also included interviews with two black female South Memphis residents that faced the same challenges of accessing healthy food in their neighborhood due to a lack of transportation and a lack of places to shop. The experience of these two women showcased how living in a food desert restricts how they make decisions regarding food, like shopping and cooking. People in these areas tend to shop for frozen and canned foods since they can only afford to go to the supermarket once or twice a month. This experience illustrates that most of the time, the food people buy is not a direct reflection of their personal preference, but rather the limitations that they faced in making these decisions. Which in the long run, will put their health at risk.

The video also included footage of a dietician in a hospital in Memphis treating black children and adults who are pre-diabetic and obese due to overconsumption of processed food before showing footage of South Memphis residents shopping at SMFM. The visual highlighted the direct need for access to healthy affordable food. Specifically, to address the challenges faced by the black low-income population in maintaining health and well-being. Indicating the importance of SMFM as a way for residents to access healthy affordable food, and in the long run, improve their quality of life.

The Works Inc's localized context of racial and class awareness has influenced the establishment of SMFM which has become part of the community in the southern city of

Memphis. The daily life experiences of the residents of the area such as transportation difficulties, long distances to supermarkets, and the high price of healthy food are part of SMFM's design as a solution to the challenges they face.

Local Food Network (LFN) Solutions by The Works Inc. through Just Sustainability

The concept of just sustainability is proposed by Agyeman highlights the importance of the local community's involvement in identifying short-term and long-term objectives as well as implementation strategies of a development plan. It also stresses the importance of paying attention to factors such as institutional racism and class discrimination, especially towards marginalized communities. Lastly, it also focuses on not only a change of regulation and policy implementation, but transformative change that has a redistributive function that can truly enable a just and sustainable environment for everyone, regardless of race or class (Agyeman, 2008, p. 753).

The Role of Local Communities in Identifying Objectives and Implementation Strategies

The SMFM and The Works Inc Facebook page has repeatedly posted content regarding the market's services which not only serves to help South Memphis residents' access healthy affordable food easier, but also in the long run as a platform to educate residents on how to live a healthier life overall. Indicating the institution's knowledge of the population they are serving, which is at high risk to suffer lifestyle-related

illnesses such as heart attack, diabetes, obesity and stroke.

Carter (2021) highlighted how the local culture of South Memphis very much influenced the founding of SMFM. It reflected the complexity of the food desert issue in the area, which is a mix of economic, race, class and public health concerns. By identifying the strength of the community which is its strong social ties, and its weakness, its lack of investment in the area from years of red-lining practice, it has helped to create a solution to better the health of the community by addressing that very same weakness through its own community agency and empowerment. Indicating SMFM has not only functioned to serve its community but is also dedicated to the continuity of the food system it has created that is based on social justice.

Comprehensive knowledge of the community's needs and daily life has guided SMFM in its ways of operating inclusively. Citizens preferred informal and friendly interaction between the staff, vendor and customers. Offering options of registering for events and classes by telephone, not just by text or social media, to make it easier for the growing elderly population in South Memphis to participate. Instead of forcing a foreign dish or selling them exotic produce that are unknown to the local community, the cooking classes taught participants how to make their local cuisine, like cornbread, chili, and apple crumble more healthily and affordably (Carter, 2021, p. 6).

Lastly, the Guardian's video included footage of a nutritionist in Memphis stating that community agency is far more important than individual agency, especially since the

barrier to access healthy food in South Memphis, are systemic problems that have lasted for decades. Expensive prices, lack of transport and lack of access to supermarkets indicate the need for a communal effort to eradicate food desert once and for all. SMFM is not merely an initiative to address food access only, but also rebalance the system by addressing these structural issues that have excluded marginalized people like the black low-income population in South Memphis.

Attention to Systemic Racism, Class and Gender Discrimination

The Guardian's video highlighted the practice of redlining has significantly inhibited the social and economic mobility of black citizens in the United States. Visuals that illustrate the different living conditions of South and East Memphis in 2019 show the legacy redlining practice contributed to the creation of a food desert area in South Memphis.

The difference in living conditions directly relates to how citizens in these two parts of Memphis interpret the meaning of health and well-being. With limited access and resources, South Memphis residents are only able to interpret health as feeling full after a meal and surviving another day. Whereas East Memphis residents, with an abundance of resources and access to fresh healthy food, are able to have a more flexible and comprehensive interpretation, by focusing on bettering their quality of health and well-being for not only themselves, but their families. The surrounding environment of a community or built environment provides behavioral signals to individuals regarding physical activity, diet and other habits such as smoking (Landrine & Corral,

2009, p. 181). So, it is not surprising that black people in the United States have a higher risk of suffering from obesity, diabetes and heart attacks (Williams & Collins, 2001; Soro, et al, 2004).

Carter's research indicated SMFM prioritized communication with South Memphis residents as the priority for the market's design and implementation process. Creating a space to explore a marginalized community's experience and challenges, it encourages citizens to identify a bespoke solution to address their problems, while also building on the community's sense of pride and empowerment (Morales, 2011, p. 158). The combination of not only understanding the reality of their daily lives, but also hearing what they think is right for them, is the key to creating the correct public intervention to solve a particular problem, especially one that is so unique to the community like in South Memphis (Carter, 2021, p. 9).

There are some areas that SMFM could improve upon to create a more just and sustainable institution for the community of South Memphis. As a market, SMFM operates with a majority of unpaid volunteer staff, this can put pressure on The Works Inc.'s time and budget to continually be hiring and training new staff. It can also lead SMFM to be majorly reliant on external funding from the government or philanthropic foundations. The Works Inc. will need to continually monitor any regulation changes that can impact its operational funding.

Another particular issue to be paid attention to is gender. South Memphis has 41,5% single mothers (City-data, South

Memphis neighborhood in Memphis, Tennessee (TN), 2019). Research shows the decision of what food to prepare and consume is influenced by the condition of the household and access to food surrounding the home (Hicks & Pennington; 2014). The operational hours of the market from 10 am-6 pm from Monday to Saturday will likely be an issue for single mothers who not only have to work long hours but take care of the house and their children. Both the video and SMFM's Facebook page showcase women are more likely to not only work but also responsible for the budget and shop for groceries, cook and prepare food for the household. Indicating the local context of just sustainability in South Memphis is also very much a gendered experience, particularly for women.

The Works Inc. will need to pay close attention by possibly providing services that could lighten the burden of single mothers, like grocery deliveries and facilitating the use of women, Infants and Children Farmer's market Nutrition Program (WIC FMNP) that is currently not an acceptable form of payment at the market. Even subsidy programs that are already facilitated by SMFM like SNAP and SFMNP are not the most reliable source of financial assistance that low-income residents can rely on to access healthy fresh food at the market. SFMNP coupons at SMFM are only eligible to be used from July to August, while normally they can be used until November. Limitations like these will need to be addressed to make sure those who are at risk of food insecurity like low-income families and elderly residents are able to access food regularly.

Pursuing Transformative Sustainability that has a Redistributive Function

Experts often think that the challenge for people living in food desert areas is the lack of access to healthy food and education on a healthy lifestyle. Initiatives like this do not take into account historical discourses and cultural and structural issues that have an influence on a community in navigating the food system that surrounds them. Therefore, a one-sided initiative like this often fails to improve access to healthy food in the long term (Carter, 2021, p.1). Although the discourse on healthy food is not inherently exclusive to the white population, it cannot be denied that social, economic and cultural conditions have placed the white population in an easier position than the black population, to access healthy food (Carter, 2021, p.2). Carter's research (2021) and The Guardian's video reveal the importance of paying attention to the history and structural challenges that exist within a community in shaping a more comprehensive healthy lifestyle campaign.

Community agency that was started by the founder of The Works Inc, a local priest from South Memphis and later continued by the organization he founded, focuses not only on changing policies and regulations but seeking transformative sustainability, especially for those who need more attention such as the poor who are vulnerable to hunger, namely the elderly and children as seen in several Facebook posts on SMFM and The Works Inc. account pages. According to Dutta and Basu's research (2008), transformative sustainability can be realized by understanding the reality and aspiration of health and well-being by the local community. Especially a community

that is often regarded as a passive subject by governments or organizations operating outside the scope of their local culture (Dutta and Basu, 2008, p. 561). The formation of walking groups and shared cycling groups shared on SMFM's Facebook page, is also another example of a community agency by South Memphis residents. The use of SMFM by local communities as a place to meet has formed habits that are slowly forming transformative changes, namely physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle.

Community agency in South Memphis can also be seen from the collaboration and participation of government agencies in SMFM initiatives. In one of its Facebook posts, SMFM snack-supply services for daycare centers, charter schools and offices. The supermarket operated by The Works Inc., which is located next to SMFM, The Grocer, acts as a supplier of healthy snacks to Memphis City Hall and the Shelby County Airport Authority. The concept of just sustainability put forward by Agyeman states that close collaboration between local governments and surrounding communities who both have a sustainable vision for the environment and society is an important factor to achieve true justice and sustainability. This initiative is also a good step in making transformative changes, namely changes to healthier food consumption. In the video produced by The Guardian, food options, especially snacks, are often in the form of potato chips or soda which are full of sugar and low in nutritional intake. Forming healthy eating habits by providing fresh fruit in place of less healthy options is expected to improve the health quality of local communities. The experiences of South Memphis residents in the video illustrate how living in a food

desert restricts how they make decisions regarding food, like shopping and cooking and how it ultimately affected the health and well-being of black residents in the area.

CONCLUSION

In creating a local food network, The Works Inc. designed SMFM by addressing the issue of access to food by focusing on non-profit solutions that focused on the health and well-being of its residence, through the community's strong bond. It is not only seen as a place to shop for food, but a social institution that is part of the community. Initiatives shown in the social media account like information about chronic illness due to poor lifestyle choices, cooking classes and use of SNAP and SMFNP coupons showcase The Works Inc understanding the importance of creating a food pathway that ensures food security and a clear focus on health and well-being for its residents due to involvement of the local community in the early planning stages.

Carter (2021) identified religion, race, class and local culture included as the foundation of SMFM as an institution. A shared experience within the community can be seen in the hardship they all have experienced in accessing affordable healthy food has built, has ultimately built a strong bond. This ultimately directed the way in which the market operates, in a warm, friendly, informal manner that mimics daily interaction in the community. The Guardian video captures the food desert issue in South Memphis through a racial and class awareness lens by pointing out the practice of redlining that goes back to the 1930s. This practice led to the impoverishment of black neighborhoods as many businesses like

supermarkets followed suit by which made accessing daily needs harder for black residents. The local context of the food network created in South Memphis highlighted the importance of recognizing the systemic issues by involving local residents to identify solutions that could be maintained long-term using the community's already built-in strength and resources.

Through the lens of just sustainability, the local food network solutions in South Memphis showcased comprehensive knowledge of the community's needs and daily lives that have guided SMFM in its ways of operating inclusively. Citizens preferred informal and friendly interactions in the market, offering registration through the telephone for easier access, and cooking classes that offer familiar dishes but are made healthier as examples of the depth of knowledge SMFM has garnered in serving the community. The Guardian's video highlighted community agency is far more important than individual agency, especially since the barrier to access healthy food in South Memphis, are systemic problems that have lasted for decades. Expensive prices, lack of transport and lack of access to supermarkets indicate the need for a communal effort to eradicate food desert once and for all. SMFM is not merely an initiative to address food access only, but also rebalance the system by addressing these structural issues that has excluded marginalized people like the black low-income population in South Memphis.

In paying attention to race, class and gender discrimination the SMFM initiative showcased the importance of creating a space to explore a marginalized community's experience and challenges as it encourages

citizens to identify a bespoke solution to address their problems, while also building on the community's sense of pride and empowerment. The combination of not only understanding the reality of their daily lives, but also hearing what they think is right for them, is the key to create the correct public intervention to solve a particular problem, especially one that is so unique to the community like in South Memphis.

Carter's research (2021) and The Guardian's video reveal the importance of paying attention to the history, local culture and structural challenges that exist within a community in shaping a more comprehensive healthy lifestyle campaign. Transformative sustainability can be realized by understanding the reality and aspiration of health and well-being by the local community. In particular, understanding the different meaning of health itself in marginalized communities like South Memphis often is restricted to feeling full after a meal and surviving another day. While white upper-class residents have more flexibility in bettering their health and quality of life due to the abundance of resource and access to healthy food.

Under the concept of just sustainability, comprehensive understanding will then hopefully lead to building and strengthening community agency. In the case of South Memphis, agency can be seen from the creation of a walking and cycling group and the collaboration and participation of government agencies in SMFM initiatives. All of which has been meaningful steps towards building and maintaining a healthy way of life that can be sustained by the community. In the long run hopefully, it can increase the citizen's overall quality of life.

Some Area suggested being paid particular attention to is facilitating single mothers in South Memphis which makes up 41,5% of the population. With the limited operational hours, SMFM should consider setting up a grocery delivery service and also facilitating WIC FMNP coupons that will help lighten the financial burden of single mothers in South Memphis. SMFM currently operates with a majority of staff signed on as volunteer workers which means there is pressure on The Works Inc. to continually hire and train staff which could potentially strain the organization's time and resources. To run sufficiently The Works Inc. will also need to pay regular attention to funding sources from philanthropic organizations as well as federal and local government. Attention to regulations that could affect development program funding should also be a priority moving forward.

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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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