

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### I.1 Background of the Problem

Masculinity can be defined as a role or identity internalized through agents of socialization such as family, school, and the mass media, reflecting certain culture's norms or values (Davis, Evans, & Lorber, 2006, p. 55-56). However, masculinity can't be simplified into a role as any other role men can have – a father, a husband, a brother, a friend or occupational role such as a doctor. As Helena Lopata and Barrie Thorne write, "To make gender a role like any other role is to diminish its power in structuring our lives." (Kimmel, 2011) In the words of West and Zimmerman, it's a constitution of interactions, what one *does* in front of others instead of *has* (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

By the age of three, children already knew the information of their gender as male or female, which means the concept of masculinity and femininity, is taught from the earliest stage of life. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet stated as children grew up, they're conditioned to gender differentiation "for kids to behave not as good or bad people, but as good boys and girls" (2003, p. 19). The enforcement of gender is aimed more at boys than girls, where males are more involved in enforcing gender differences, both adults and children.

Fathers generally reward their sons with gender appropriate toys (robots, trucks, etc.), play rough as an act of bonding, and expected their sons not to back down from a fight. Fathers most likely also taught their sons to control their emotions, and so passing on the taboo against men crying or showing fears (or allow them in certain context, yet there are still constraints on showing vulnerability in general) (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003; van Der Gaag, 2014). As children get older, peer encounters also socialized masculinity to boys. Boys would more likely reject the notion of femininity at this point and punish other boys who showed 'feminine' traits because they're rewarded to show their masculinity. Boys are made to be afraid to appear 'girly' or fear to be laughed at for doing 'women's work'. This is part of the culture where children learn from gender differences that men are valued better than women early on; devaluing women and femininity. Feminine men are seen as the inferior men, and while women deemed masculine may sometimes be seen as inferior women, they are most likely accepted more because masculinity is seen as a "valued persona" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003).

Reeser (2010) in his book *Masculinity in Theories* said masculinity can also be seen as an ideology. Marx and Engels coined the term "ideology" in the 1840s to describe the dominant ideas and representations in a social order, meant to gain social domination and maintain existing hierarchies with power and control (Durham & Kellner, 2006). Ideology includes domains such as gender, race, and class: which justifies domination and serves oppression within each domain through forces and institutions, constructing a hierarchy on the basis of

natural order or assumed superiority (Kellner, 1995). From earlier description, gender socialization to children involved teaching boys that men are valued more than women, and therefore placed higher in the gender hierarchy.

Reeser (2010) continued by saying although a single origin to an ideology can't be located, ideologies are created and reproduced through various social forms, especially through images, myths, discourses, which all can be found in media. Through the constant and unavoidable repetition of media's portrayal of masculinity, they eventually made their construction of masculinity to seem natural and thus to keep it from being questioned (p. 21). Then representations of masculinity in media can be seen as a double edged sword: while these representations reveal a masculinity that exists in culture, they also help to construct the masculinity in culture (Reeser, 2010). Men's (and to a different extent women's) social behavior is deeply influenced by beliefs and fantasies of masculinity represented in media, which was why portrayals of masculinity was important to be studied on (MacKinnon, 2003).

Mass media are crucial in the construction of gender ideologies and, thus, are crucial in gender socialization: such as film, TV, and advertisements. Advertisements often used to differentiate and enforce gender traits of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity was always depicted with adventurous, active and victorious traits whereas the female was shown as weak, victimized, and supportive of the male roles or simply as token females in 1950s to 1970s films and TV (Gauntlett, 2008, p. 47). Masculinity portrayal took a turn by the time of the 1970s, where traditional masculinity was severely criticized by feminism,

men's traditional skills in the workplace were sidelined by technological advances and their breadwinner status was shaken (or known more the 'crisis of masculinity') that resulted masculinity representation tamed, as women's representation in media grow (MacKinnon, 2003). In advertising, the portrayal of men and women taken mainly from stereotyped imagery of masculinity and femininity. In advertisements, men were most likely to be seen in roles with authority, while the women took the role of housewives, affirming the old stereotyped roles in the year 1930s to 1950s (Gauntlett, 2008). On a research of male advertisement for 'Esquire' in the 1980s, and perhaps in most media, the representation of masculinity is rather simplified, largely drawn on traditional dominant characteristics attributed to males (Kervin, 1990, p. 68). Advertisements offer multiple images of masculinities: the theme of self-reliance and independence in cigarette's advertisements, and the homo social masculinity by beer commercials that promote men-to-men relations but at the same time shows restriction in emotional display and affection (MacKinnon, 2003). Overall, advertisements for men are also directed at heterosexual market (Scheibling, 2014). Females are placed as admirers of the male who supposedly display masculinity by using the products in advertisements - at times literally placed as subordinates in the legs and feet of men (Kervin, 1990; MacKinnon, 2003). Females rarely captured in advertisements as ones who engage in energetic activities or interact unlike men, they're often dressed up or dressed down, for example into bikinis, as a sign of sexual objects for men to desire (Lester, 2003). Given this, it's no surprise to learn in advertisements aimed at boys,

they're portrayed as more active, aggressive, and dominating than girls (MacKinnon, 2003).

The construction of masculinity eventually taught boys and young men qualities of a 'real man' are as what masculinities expert Jackson Katz summarized (van Der Gaag, 2014, p. 60), which are: physical, in control, stud, strong, rugged, athletic, independent, scares people., muscular, intimidating, respected, and tough.

But in the end it illustrates masculinity as an ideal, and not actuality. As Reeser said, it becomes ideological; masculinity ultimately becomes an unattainable goal (MacKinnon, 2003). Michael Kaufman theorized this as "men's contradictory experience of power". Men enjoy social power (above women or men), benefited from many forms of privileges, and often unconsciously have a sense of entitlement from socialization and representation of males from media. Yet the society constructed a world of power which causes pain, not only for women, but also for men due to the hegemonic forms of masculinity that held them to said unattainable goals (Kaufman, 1994).

Hegemonic masculinity is defined as the normative ideology of domination of a man through the subordination of women and other men as a way to maintain power. Hegemonic masculinity refers to strict masculine gender roles to ensure male dominance men have to obey and not allowed to be deviant from, especially by possessing traits deemed as women's (Smith, Parrott, & Tharp, 2018).

## **I.2 Problem Identification**

Many hegemonic masculinity researches are based on the feminist theories of patriarchy (Connel & Messerschmidt, 2005). Patriarchy can be defined as “a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.” one of which through male violence towards women (Walby, 1990, p. 20). The combination of construction of masculinity and structure of domination and control can be seen as the background of male violence to women, as one corner to what Michael Kaufman theorized as The Triad of Violence - violence to women, men, and violence to oneself (Kaufman, 1987). While violence is not a part of masculinity, the two are often linked (Jewkes, Flood, & Lang, 2014). The root cause of men’s violence is the way they are brought up to see violence – both against women and against other men – as intrinsic to being a man; either to gain or maintain control, or as a way to express emotions they otherwise have to repress such as fear and sadness (van Der Gaag, 2014). Other influences include the media, often at a young age, included exposure to violence ranging from television to violent pornography on the internet which demeans and degrades women.

Violence against women, especially by male, is systematically allowed and legitimized by the state’s and society’s doubt to intervene, often because it is still seen as a private matter between a woman and a man (Walby, 1990; van Der Gaag, 2014). These include rape, wife beating, sexual harassment, and so forth (Walby, 1990). Sexual harassment is understood as “any deliberate or repeated sexual behavior that is unwelcome to its recipient, as well as other sex-related

behaviors that are intrusive, hostile, offensive, or degrading” (Fitzgerald, 1993), usually happen in closed space such as workplace, school, home, etc. In public space, women may also experience street harassment and what is called as ‘catcalling’. Chhun (2011) detects catcalling as “use of crude language, verbal expression, and nonverbal expression that takes place in public areas such as streets, sidewalks, or bus stops”, which can concur as a form of stranger harassment (O’Leary, 2016, p. 32). Unlike catcalling that may not possess physical danger, street harassment is what happens when men invade women’s space and violate their right to privacy by obstructing their path (p. 33). The difference is catcalling includes verbal degradation, such as commenting on women’s physical appearance, while street harassment includes men offering women a ride, forcing them to talk to men, or worst case scenarios include following them to their homes. Physically endangering or not, both street harassment and stranger harassment are an act of objectification of women, as a way to subordinate them.

Traditional practices of masculinity are often excused and normalized most men’s behavior with the tagline “boys will be boys” - yet it does not teach boys responsibility, so in turn they’re not prepared to face responsibility as an adult, resulting in risky behaviors such as smoking, drinking and violence (van Der Gaag, 2014, p. 52). Bullying is defined as “unwanted physical or emotional mistreatment that is intended to inflict harm on a person, often involves an imbalance of power, and occurs two or more times a month”, where boys overwhelmingly appeared to be more aggressive than girls (Rosen & Nofziger,

2018). Largely it's due to what Katz calls as 'The Tough Guise', "an extreme notion of masculinity that emphasizes toughness and physical strength and gaining the respect and admiration of others through violence or the implicit threat of it" (van Der Gaag, 2014, p. 52). Gender is one of the factors in bullying, in instance of when a boy or girl failed to adhere to traditional norms of gender, the usage of the term "sissy" for boys who don't follow norms of masculinity, and therefore can be used as an insult (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003). The use of physical violence is also one of the visible patterns in bullying, and used as a way to reinforce hegemonic masculinity, used as a reflection to show that boys and men are ranked based on certain types of masculinity where the dominant ideal of masculinity trumps above subordinate masculinities (Rosen & Nofziger, 2018).

The problem with hegemonic masculinity is men may not always conform to the hegemonic standards of men, and results in the discrimination of men who don't conform to said standard. Men can grow up with anxiety when he underperformed his masculinity and therefore made vulnerable with the need to reaffirm his masculinity. The need to reaffirm masculinity can be done through unhealthy lifestyle, anger, with the possibility of leading to depression (Smith, Parrott, & Tharp, 2018). The repression of emotions, normalization of violence, subordination of women and men will bring harm not only to women and men surrounding, but to the men who practiced it as well. This stemmed from how masculinity is socialized to men, and thus, the way masculinity is conveyed through agents of socialization, one of which is mass media.



As one of the biggest and longest companies that promote masculinity through its brand, Gillette has released many advertisements of their products to appeal to men. Like many advertisements aimed at men, Gillette's advertisements tend to be aimed towards heterosexual market, using female's sex appeal as well as drawing the imagery of 'ideal men' as a way to promote their products. Recently however, one of their recent advertisements is a short movie that is also a part of a campaign called "We Believe: The Best Men Can Be". Based on the title, Gillette gave the portrayal of masculinity with traits they believe conclude the best version of a man can be: which is a healthy, inclusive version of what it means to be a man, according to Damon Jones, Vice President and Global Communications and Advocacy at Procter and Gamble at an interview with Forbes.

Gillette pointedly saying through the Forbes interview, the commercial was intended to highlight the issues surrounding masculinity in today's society, namely the construction of masculinity that is still linked with violence and harassment towards women. This commercial is aimed to hold a higher standard for better environment for men, women, and society, and the shifting definition of masculinity in today's society. As Gillette was a well-known and trusted male brand, and its advertisements have been largely consumed by its male customers, makes this advertisement to be efficient to be aimed for a social change conducted by men, to use its worldwide platform to offer a modern, positive vision of men. As of now, the advertisement's current views sit at 32,411,211 (per September 2019) and counting with 802k of likes and 1,5M of dislikes on Gillette's YouTube

channel. Despite the number of dislikes, the online response to the ad has been mostly positive, for example on Twitter, thousands of tweets that were hashtagged #TheBestAManCanBe or mentioned Gillette's official account had been positive (Fast Company, 2019).

### **I.3 Statement of the Problem**

Based on the elaboration above, the researcher would like to analyze about: How is masculinity portrayed in the Gillette "We Believe" advertisement?

### **I.4 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to: Examine how masculinity is portrayed in the Gillette "We Believe" advertisement.

### **I.5 Significance of the Study**

The significance of this research will be played out in both academic and social practice.

This research will enrich research on men studies, furthermore about portrayal of masculinity in media. This research will also share information on hegemonic masculinity theory and how the theory applies in today's society, with

the development of women's rights activities and the demand of shifting definition of masculinity.

This research will also serve social practice purpose in terms of recognizing stigma around idealism on men and masculinity that often lead to men with unsatisfying behavior. This research will hopefully bring a better socialization of masculinity towards neither men that does not marginalized women nor men, but instead bring a better perspective on men's place in creating and preserving equality.

## **I.6 Organization of the Study**

Organization of the study contains a brief explanation of the research structure from chapter one until chapter six. The systematic writing of this study is:

### **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses: (1) background of the problem, which explains the relevant history and information as the landscape of this research, (2) identification of the problem, which explains the motive and relay foundation of this research, (3) statement of the problem, (4) purpose of study, (5) significance of the study, and (6) organization of the study.

### **CHAPTER II: RESEARCH SUBJECT AND OBJECT**

This chapter discusses: (1) Gillette Company as a subject of research, (2) Gillette short movie commercial, “We Believe: The Best a Man Can Be” as an object of research.

### **CHAPTER III: LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter discusses the literature review used in this research: (1) social constructionism theory, (2) hegemonic masculinity theory, and (3) semiotics theory.

### **CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter discusses the methods used in this study, which comprises of: (1) research method, (2) data analysis method, (3) data gathering technique, (4) data triangulation, (5) unit of analysis, and (6) research constraint

### **CHAPTER V: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter discusses the findings and analysis of collected data, which elaborate (1) the findings of research based on the scenes taken from the video as object of research, and (2) the analysis of the data based on the literature review.

### **CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION**

The last chapter of the research discusses the overall research. This chapter include: (1) conclusion of the research question, and (2) suggestions based on the significance of the study mentioned in the first chapter.