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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMAN IN SELECTED THAI FILMS: A PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT. Worldwide, researchers have shown interest in the studies of violence and violence against women in the media that influence people's behaviour with different approach and theory. This paper introduces the concept for the study of violence against women in Thai films by using Framing theory, and Johan Galtung's violence model. Violence against women in films, the role of film directors in framing the meaning and presentation of violence in films are also discussed. In line with this concept of study, we can better understand the categories of violence against women in film's content.

Keywords: Films, movie, violence against woman, framing, perspective

INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is a widespread problem throughout the world (Kilpatrick, 2004; Krantz & Garcia-Moreno 2005). There is a growing body of evidence from researches that suggest that violence against women is highly prevalent (Boeckel, Blasco-Ros, Grassi-Oliveira, & Martínez, 2014; Li, Levick, Eichman, & Chang, 2014). The Canadian Women's Foundation (2014) reported that the causes of violence against women, which include political, religious, media, social norm, and workplace, directly and indirectly suggest that men are the superior gender. Although there are a multitude of factors that contribute to gender violence, however, the influence of mass media is best viewed as one of many potential factors that shape human behaviour, including aggression (Anderson et al., 2003).

The media reflect and shape cultural images, values, and social scripts (O'shaughnessy and Stadler 2014). Deeper than that, several evidences showed that forms of media are influencing attitudes of violence against women (Flood & Pease, 2009) because they often portrays violence against women as acceptable (Stewart, 2006). Worldwide, the researchers have shown interests in the study of violence and violence against women in the media with different approaches and theories (e.g. Bufkin & Eschholz, 2000). The study of Beck, Boys, Rose, and Beck (2012) suggests a link between negative attitudes toward women and violence against women, and media may condition such negative attitudes. In line with this, Emmers-Sommers, Pauley, Hanzal, and Triplett's (2006) found that the participants of the study who watched violence and sex films were more accepting of rape myths. Though as seen in the studies mentioned above, there are various media which can investigate on the violence against women; however, one of the most influential and interesting is film. We choose films to represent media because films industry has impacted the economy of a country and the film industry is a multinational industry. This phenomenon reflects the demand of audiences, and how much/far film can reach the audiences. Films are not only an entertainment but the power of films has been known by nations (Kolker, 2006; Louisyapong 2013). Meanwhile, the reason why attention must be paid to films is most of us get our stories, our narrative and myths from it (Kolker, 2006) and the myth may come to be regarded as "natural" or as reality (Partridge & Hughes, 1998). Additionally, the experimental research that works outside the realism of the television had shown the significant of the relationship between watching media violence and aggression. This relationship can be found from many sources such as

observation of violent films (Coyne & Whitehead, 2008). However, some scholars used framing theory or at least referred to framing in their studies (Bernard-Hoverstad, 2013; Riddle, 2014; Wheeler, 2012) to find out how film frames the violence. Moreover, based on this fact, the audiences can watch films at the cinema or easily buy the DVD from entertainment store and now also comfortably watch them on YouTube.

In this study, the central idea is violence against women in Thai films. The main reason why Thailand is selected is due to the fact that Thailand is one of the countries that has high reported crime rates against women (Moreno, 2005). Simultaneously, Thailand has become a strong film industry in the region over the years. Moreover, this present study investigates M.L Dhevakul's film - a famous Thai films director - as his works are unique in terms of story of films, film's form of presentation such as his signature that reflect his identity and his style of work (Boonruangpanao, 2014). In the next part, this paper first discusses the theoretical perspectives of Galtung's violence model on violence against women. Then violence against women in films and how films language communicates with the audiences is highlighted. Finally, theoretical perspectives on the role of director on framing content in films are discussed.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE OF GALTUNG'S VIOLENCE MODEL ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In perspective of media violence study, it is important to acknowledge and study the types of violent portrayals that concern the public (Riddle, 2014). There are many names for the violence types that have been used for defining and measuring the problem of violence against women. Each researcher selects the terms to describe their study; for example, an intimate partner (intimate partner violence), a rape/sexual assault, sexual violence, and so on. Moreover, according to Cross (2013), the study that relates to invisible violence against women is needed because the structural inequalities are especially harmful for women; however many studies conducted were more focused on direct violence.

From Cross's suggestion, this research explores the types of violence against women which were found in films that reflect the social context of Thailand. The data provides evidence on how media frame and present violence against women to the audience. To fill the gaps in study on invisible violence, this study further investigates types of both visible and invisible violence. To study violence against women, the body of knowledge should be discussed in female-male; body and mind, structure, and culture perspectives (Galtung, 1996), thus the Galtung's violence model that describes the direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence should be used to investigate violence against women.

Galtung's violence model

Johan Galtung, the Norwegian researchers have developed a model called "Galtung conflict triangle" or "the violence triangle" to analyze the causes of violence. Galtung presented various types of violence that can be classified in three categories: direct violence (behavior) cultural violence (society) and structural violence. He classifies these violence as visible and invisible as the figure below.

Figure 1. The Galtung Conflict Triangle (Galtung, 2004)

Galtung (2004) stated that the formation violence contains direct violence (the visible side of it) and cultural violence and structural violence (the invisible side of it), these are the three corners of the triangle of violence. Direct/personal violence is the violence that can be seen with the eyes, hear with the ears. Cultural violence means the aspects of culture is deeply rooted in the faith of the people and shape people perceptions of victims and perpetrators (Campbell, 2010). Structural violence is those kind of violence caused by the structure of society such as classes, law, economic, power relation that threat or harm people to control or possession of persons or property. Although, Galtung violence model is from the peace studies field; however Confortini (2006) stated that Galtung's theory should integrate notions of gender as a social construct representing relations of power. Moreover, Sengsorn (2014) called for the study in violence against women knowledge in Thai films on perspective of structural violence and others to complete the study in every dimensions of violence. Thus, applying Galtung's violence model will fill the gaps in previous studies on violence against women in films that were limited in direct violence, thus this study identifies direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence in films.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN FILMS

Violence against women was portrayed in various media. Television, music, and films are also effective teachers of genders, stereotypes and violence-supportive attitudes (Huesmann, 2007). Patkhacha and Prangsorn (2012) indicated that film is among the powerful media , which play vital role regarding audience perception affecting their attitude and behaviour. Wolf (2012) stated that visuals and info have jointly present images of gender based violence through repetitive stereotypes, myths and victimisation.

Films and How Films Create Meaning

Films are a kind of mass media which combines a diversity of arts. It is a pathway leading the audiences to the world of imagination, which is a presentation of story in real world. Films create a new world; present an image of a world which already exists; or tell the story by organizing the element within the frame to create the meaning. The lighting, the music, the collective strategies make a film compelling, interesting and immersing (Campbell, 2010).

To understand film's meaning, it is necessary to study the film element or how film textual is organized to create meaning. In line with this, Giannetti (2011) stated that films should be analyzed on the basis of "how", not "what" and the real content conveyed through the mise-en-scène. Mise-en-scène is a French term that means "placing on stage" or placing on the screen in cinema (Moura, 2014). Mise-en-scène is the name given to composition of frame or shot of films, which includes all the elements in front of the camera that compose a shot (Filmreference, 2014). It contains photography (camera angles and movement, composition and lens choices, type of shot-close up or wide shot) or movement of camera, the position of the character in the frame, costume and make up, lighting, placement of characters in the scene, design of elements within the shot (Filmreference, 2014; Moura, 2014; Partridge & Hughed, 1998; Sporre, 2011), and even music might be considered as a part of mise-en-scène (Filmreference, 2014). Everything that appears in the film's frame such as actors, lighting, decoration, props, and costume is called mise-en-scène.

Films and Violence against Women

In visual studies, framing refers to the selection of view, scene, or angle when making image, editing or selecting. For example, the journalists choose which photograph or piece of video to use, that it is the act of framing (Coleman, 2010). Mulligan and Habel (2011) have tested an experiment and participants have watched the films which frames the issue of abortion morality of following one's own conscience. The results are film influenced opinions in ways consistent with the framing of these issues. Moreover, Patkhacha and Prangsorn (2012) explained that human sexuality has played an important role in film plots in order to entertain and grasp the attention of audiences and stereotype sexually behaviours of oriented

groups in films, leading to audiences' misunderstandings about how the orient people really are.

From the above, the film's plots influence the audience's mind. Barnett (2011) and DeKeseredy (2011) stated that the belief in gender inequality is promoted by Hollywood movies, those violent media messages tend to increase tolerance of sexism, including violence against women (as cited in Celik, 2014). Thus, studying the image of rape, sex and the nature of rape depictions in film will shed light on the problem of sexual violence in our society (Bufkin & Eschholz, 2000). In addition, the films and conversations in the films tempt male to increase violence against women (Cordwell, 2013). For example, Thai films have presented women in a position inferior to men and become the inequality of power to oppression or exploitation (Sengsorn, 2014). Moreover, the study of Sengsorn (2014) also found that Thai films' content have constructed through visual and sound by the films maker. It can be seen that the study on violence towards women in films seem to be necessary to decrease violence against women. Also, after analysing violence against women in the film's content, it is also necessary to examine the role of the filmmakers frame. This is due to the fact that,   filmmakers influence spectatorship in the message they intend to convey with the film through the narrative itself and in their cinematographic choices (Bernard-Hoverstad, 2013). From this reason, Bernard-Hoverstad (2013) calls for deep analysis on the filmmakers and the techniques used to visualize the violence.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE ROLE OF FILM DIRECTOR ON FRAMING CONTENTS IN FILMS

Film directors have an important role in film production, they are the main controller of film production. They do not only control the contents in the screen play, but also the visual elements in their films. The visual elements can create the viewer perceptions as the directors want. How camera is placed and moved can be a great value to filmmakers to explain their cinematic idea (Sporre, 2011). In every shot, film contains composition framed by the film director who uses film elements to create the story. In the same vein, creating mise-en-scène is how the film director frames the meaning of film, for instance choosing camera angles to make an actor looks more powerful than others.

In Bernard-Hoverstad (2013)'s study, it was found that the director had an important roles for framing the film such as framing the story throughout the film. Framing is a study of how media tell the story that affects the change of audiences' attitude, not only at issue that media presented. For example, in news framing study, framing provides a way to study the function of editorial news that affect how the media reports (latent prejudice or bias). This will affect the content and direction of the news content that convinces the reader to accept it (Siriyuwasak, Jiajanong, Teawauthom, & Urapeepatphong, 2013). Framing can also occur within multiple parts of the communication process, specifically within the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture (Scheufele, 1999).

Therefore, framing can also be used to identify how filmmaker (communicator) tries to express something in film's story to the audiences. According to Brewer and Gross (2009), framing involves the presentation of such organization of ideas or storyline. However, the film is one of visual media that consists of the dialogue, image, lighting, or props to make the story more attractive by vividness of media. The vivid feature of pictures has more powerful influence on memory and perception than texts (Coleman, 2010). Therefore, in line with the proposition of framing theory, this study intends to describe how the selected films framed the issue relating to women in other to know and understand the extent that the films have promoted violence against women.

Thus, this present study investigates M.L Dhevakul's film. His films are also recognized in Thailand and the international film market. Most importantly, Dhevakul's films contain the

content relating to violence against women. It is also critical gap on an important issue of violence against women. This study chooses to analyse the content of M.L Bhandhevanop Dhevakul's films from 2009-2013, which is the new era that he returns to direct film again after he stopped directing films in 1996.

In line with this, this study will expand body of knowledge in media violence and focus on violence against women. Also, the combination of violence model to study film textual organization and perspective of stakeholder and the combination of violence model with framing theory to investigate the film director's perspective will make this study more outstanding and beneficial.

CONCLUSION

Current study uses framing theory and violence model to explain violence against woman in Thai films. The combination of violence model with the theories can better explain and relate the violence against women with films. Films close textual analysis, framing theory and violence model are used to analyse categories of violence against women and how the film director frames the meaning via film elements. Confertini (2006) stated that only by studying gender seriously as a category of analysis, can prescriptions for a violence-free society be more than temporary solutions to deeply ingrained attitudes to accept violence as natural. Thus, by studying violence against women in Thai films, we can better understand the categories of violence against women, how the director frames it in films and his attempt to inform the audience. This study adds to the body of knowledge in regard to violence against women and media violence in general.

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