

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background of the Study

Gender role has changed over the times. Traditionally, it encouraged men to be strong, fast, aggressive, dominant and achieving; while women were to be sensitive, intuitive, passive, emotional and interested in the things of home and family (Ruth). Due to those terms, the traditional gender role is used to justify and maintain the men monopoly of position of economic, political and social power. It is also used to keep women powerless by denying the educational and occupationally means of acquiring economic, political and social power. The traditional gender role has been adopted in many countries in the world, for example in South Korea.

Women roles in South Korea, now, have changed considerably (Kovac). Traditionally, women are supposed to stay at home. Women have a responsible to be wives and mothers. So women in traditional South Korea are taught to take care the household. Women could not go outside house to do some activities like working, studying and so on.

Due to the growth of technology and industrialization, women in South Korea now got a chance to get a higher education (In). That is why they also have already taken a great part in many aspects such as education, engineering, law, arts, literature, sports, entertainment and many more. In 1966, there were only 33

percent of girls who continued to study in high school after graduating elementary school. But in 1998 the number has increased rapidly into 99.5 percent.

The number of women who work is also increased. In 1975 there were only 2 percents women who worked in professional job. But, after 1998, it became 12.6 percent and some of them had a significant position (In). Many companies in South Korea now allow women to have an important position like the executives or even the CEO. Due to the increasing number of women who joined the professional job, the government established the “Equal Employment Act” in 1987 (Kovac). It is used to prevent the discrimination practice toward women in regard to hire and promotion opportunities. Women now can choose their activities outside home. Nevertheless, they still pay attention to their role in a family. They have to be responsible to take care of the children and housekeeping. The real example of women movement in the working area is the recent president of South Korea. Park Geun Hye is the first South Korean female president. Indirectly, it can be seen that South Korea, which is patriarchal country, now can put woman in the top position (as a leader).

Because South Korea is a patriarchal country (Koo and Nahm), its system is also applied in many things; one of them is Korean pop industry. Men seem to have higher position than women in entertainment industry. In addition, the CEO of three major entertainment managements in South Korea is men (Oh and Park). YG Entertainment is led by Yang Hyun Suk, SM Entertainment is led by Lee Soo Man and JYP Entertainment is led by Park Jin Young. It also can be seen in the product of entertainment industry, Korean drama. In Korean drama, it seems that

the numbers of women characters are less than men characters. Women are always younger than men. Women are portrayed as passive, weak, dependent, obedient and patience.

Korean pop can be said as the representation of traditional gender role because South Korea is a patriarchy country. That's why women in Korean pop are commonly portrayed as conventional women, especially those in girl group and in the Korean music industry. They are branded as beautiful, sexy, white, and charming; and have long hair, small legs, proportional body and cute face. That stereotype is strongly proven by the image of Korean pop girl group.

In the late 1990s the Korean pop music followed the success of Korean drama. One of music television channel, Channel V, started to present Korean pop music at that time. By broadcasting the music videos, the number of fans in Asia had grown rapidly. As the effect, in early 2000s some of Korean musician held successful concerts in China. In 2002, Korean pop had made a fantastic record. A teenage Korean pop female singer, BoA, reached the top position in the Oricon Weekly Chart in Japan. Oricon Weekly Chart is equal to American Billboard Chart (Shim).

But there is a girl group, 2NE1 (pronounced /tu: ɛn i: wʌn/), consists of four members; Lee Chaerin (CL), the leader, Park Bom (Bom), main vocal, Park Sandara (Dara), visual, and Gong Minji (Minzy), lead dancer. From their music videos, they seem that they want to break the concept of Korean girl group. 2NE1 was debut in 2009 with 'Fire' as their first song. 2NE1 has a bad girl image so they never act like a "princess" whom always done by the other Korean girl

groups such as Girl's Generation (SNSD), Wonder Girls, A-Pink, After School, and Red Velvet and so on.

The image of 2NE1 is constructed by the producer, which is YG Entertainment led by Yang Hyun Suk (YG Family). All of the artists in YG Entertainment have the different image comparing with the ordinary South Korean pop idols. All the artists show and keep the bad image, such as Se7en, Epik High and Big Bang. They do not use the 'beauty' boy concept which is used by some boy group like Super Junior, EXO and etc. Thus, it is common if 2NE1 presents the bad image which represents the YG Entertainment's brand.

YG Entertainment (next will be stated as YGE) want to be a brand that brings a valuable change to the life of everyone around the world based on YG Spirit. YG Spirit contains five main core values; creative thinking, creating a new value in the world; evolving, seeking endless evolution; unique identity, respecting others' ideas and ways; familism, showing love and consideration to all members as one family; and excellent quality, completing with a perfect work. Then there are three main goals of YGE; giving positive values to people's lives; becoming a brand that creates a practical difference and significantly influences others; and going beyond making music content and create a lifestyle and culture (YG Family).

As one of YG Entertainment's artist, 2NE1 has received many regional and international achievements such as in iTunes and Billboard. The most popular song of 2NE1 is 'I am the Best'. Its music video has been watched by more than 120 million people in YouTube. The music video starts with the leader of 2NE1,



CL, who acts like a champion of WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment) World Heavyweight Championship Title. She is standing with an arrogant pose and wears boxer hoodie. She is also putting the championship belt on her shoulder. By presenting that, the viewer can see if woman finally can join and win the WWE World Heavyweight Championship Title. Because since the first time WWE has been airing, the champion of WWE World Heavyweight Championship Title was always a man (WWE). The championship is only for man because in WWE, woman is categorized in Divas Title (WWE). In the middle of the music video, all the members bring the weapons and guns. They break the glass cupboard which storing the awards that they have already got.

In visual culture, the properties such as weapons, camera angle and narrative are forms of codes which can be interpreted and analyzed. This study will analyze the music video by using the television culture theory of John Fiske. In his book, he stated each product of television is encoded by three levels of social codes. The first level is reality, the second level is representation and the third level is ideology. The reality consists of appearance, dress, make-up, environment, behavior, speech, gesture and expression. The representation contains more about technique such as camera, lighting, editing, music and sound. Then the ideology is the result which relates into social practices like individualism, patriarchy, race, class, gender, materialism, capitalism and many more. Fiske also explained about the gendered program. He stated that each program is gendered whether feminine or masculine. Each program also can show the representative of both masculinity and femininity.

Through this music video, it seems that 2NE1 promotes the values of independence, strength and confidence of woman which is rarely presented in the media. They became trend setter due to their styles and outfits. Many people can accept it and some of them are also following (their fashion). With the different identity, 2NE1 still exists in Korean pop. The new woman's image of Korean girl group, which is presented by 2NE1, is fully accepted. And it also inspired people to modify or even change their mind (especially in fashion).

Actually, gender is totally different with sex. Gender refers to the psychological, social, cultural, and behavioral characteristics associated with being female or male (Ruth). Sex in this context refers to the biological aspects of being either female or male. Biologically, male is someone who was born with a penis and female is someone who was born with vagina.

The social constructions created a gender binary where masculinity and femininity is an opposition (Patricia). But actually, the social construction of gender is significant and perhaps the single agreed upon principle in feminism, an expansive field constituted by diverse thought. As Patricia said:

Gender takes on the appearance of naturalness. Our environments are very difficult to perceive when we are inside of them and so it is difficult to recognize how our realities are socially constructed, especially with regard to gender because it becomes naturalized. Gender appears like we were just born that way, that sex and gender are the same. Because it is hard to see, it is important that we expand on what it means to claim gender is socially constructed (Leavy and Trier-Briniek).

Gender issue in Korean popular culture actually has been discussed by several scholars. For example by Gita Noviasari (2013) entitled “Masculinity Image in the Super Juniors Music Video Entitled ‘Mr. Simple’ and ‘No other’”. The study analyzed the masculinity that is constructed by Super Junior in the music videos by using semiotic theory that is proposed by Roland Barthes. The result shows that the masculinity in the Super Junior’s music video is categorized as ‘ubersexual masculinity’, which is a heterosexual man who is masculine, confident, compassionate and stylish.

Similar to the first study, the research by Reynata Sukma (2011) entitled “Masculinity Representation of Korean Pop Boy Group in the ‘Mirotic’ Music Video” analyzes the masculinity of young boy group. The writer analyzes the music video by using semiotic theory of Roland Barthes and also using queer theory to support. The boy group represents the boyish softness and assertive masculinity.

The last study is a study by Wina Satiti (2013) entitled “The Representation of Femininity on Snow White’s Female Characters in ‘Once Upon a Time’ TV Series”. This study analyzed the representation of femininity by using content analysis. She also used several gender theories to determine the femininity. The result showed that the character represented the new femininity. The characters seem a bit masculine and independent but still obey the patriarchal system.

## 1.2.Statement of the Problem

According to the background, there are many problems found and can be discussed, but this study wants to solve the problem below:

1. What type of femininity is portrayed by 2NE1 in the ‘I am the Best’ music video?
2. How does the music video negotiate the traditional gender role or the normative femininity in South Korea?

## 1.3.Objective of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to answer the problems by using these following statements:

1. Finding the representation of women in the music video.
2. Analyzing and categorizing the femininity that is portrayed in the music video.
3. Analyzing the way music video challenge the traditional gender role or the normative femininity in South Korea.

## 1.4.Scope and Limitation

This study will focus on woman’s character in the 2NE1’s music videos entitled “I am the Best” and how the woman is represented there. The analysis is focused on the type of femininity that belongs to the woman’s identity in the music video.



### 1.5. Significance of the Study

By using this study, the writer wants to find the new image of women in Korean music industry. 2NE1 brought new image of South Korean group, especially girl group. The writer does hope that this study can explain the new style of woman. The music industry, and Korean pop, will still exist and the new kind of characteristics will be used and found in the future because music is an art so there is no limitation about it. From this study, the writer also wants to analyze how the resistance of 2NE1 toward traditional gender role (in the society) by using popular culture. This study will guide people to understand many images that are represented by the artist in the global entertainment industry. The writer also expects that this study can help further studies especially in cultural study on English department Airlangga University.

### 1.6. Definition of Key Terms

1. 2NE1 : Korean girl group belongs to YG Entertainment.
2. Femininity : The behaviors or roles that is associated with female or woman.
3. Music Video : A videotaped performance of a recorded popular song, usually accompanied by dancing and visual images interpreting the lyrics.
4. Gender : The social constructed quality that differentiates between male and female.