

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background of the Study

The use of media, such as television program as a campaign representation has become a common thing. Those television series are chosen because what they present is suitable or representing the idea of the campaign. One of television program that has been chosen as the campaign representation is *Skins UK* television series season 1 and 2, as anti-drug campaigns. As Easley, the co-creator of *Skins UK*, said in one of his interview:

*Skins* is a traditionally made television series which has won countless international awards and gained a worldwide audience for stories about the joy, misery and challenges of being a teenager. The show has been used in anti-drug campaigns, has drawn praise for its portrayal of mental health issues and explorations of bereavement, sexuality, bullying and gender stereotyping (Huffingtonpost 2011).

*Skins UK* television series is originally from England. The use of drug in England has come to a stage of normalization, where using drugs is no longer a law abiding. As the increase of the availability and accessibility of illicit drugs continues to be easier to obtain nowadays, the government stated that the drugs which are included as recreational drugs are only some selective drugs with minimum availability and accessibility (Parker, Williams, & Aldridge 2002). In Parker, Williams, and Aldridge study of normalization of drugs, cannabis gets the highest rates of accessible illicit drugs in any age:

... cannabis is the key drug, with the majority of respondents (85.5%) having friends who have taken this drug. Remarkably half the abstainers (50.5%) and almost all the ex-triers (96.2%) indicated at least one (and often more) friends have tried cannabis. Unsurprisingly, current users (99.2%) and occasional opportunistic users (86.3%) also have very high rates (2002, p. 957).

Skins TV series are produced in two versions, *Skins UK*, which is the original version and *Skins US* as the adaptation. This study concentrates on *Skins UK* instead of *Skins US* after seeing the audience response that shows a lot of despise toward *Skins US* version because according to most of the audiences said that US version intended to follow the audience's pleasure without showing any reality of drugs (Giarrusso 2011). In this study, the writer uses *Skins UK* season 1 and 2 because they are acknowledged as the best season out of 7 seasons. Each of two seasons of these television series are called generation. For *Skins UK* season 1 and 2 are called generation 1. Each of the generations have different casts and plot. Until now, *Skins UK* has reached its 8th season which is stopped in its ongoing chapter due to the lack of audience. According to *Skins UK* fans review in TV.com, these two seasons reached 8.8 of 10 points which was counted from 2.085 votes that came in the website (Skins Fan Reviews 2012). Most of the reviews that were written by the fans are their agreement on *Skins UK* season 1 and 2 as brilliant and genius TV series. In his article Guardian.com, Deans wrote the first episode of *Skins UK* season one which was watched by 1.4 million viewers as the digital channels biggest ever audience for a UK originated show other than Big Brother (Deans 2007).

*Skins UK* series basically tell about British teen drama around the live of a group of teenagers in Bristol, South West England. This series were first made by father-and-son television writer Bryan Eisley and Jamie Brittain and premiered on 25 January 2007 in E4. These controversial TV series include sensitive issues such as dysfunctional families, mental illness such as eating disorder, adolescent sexuality, teenage abuse, and death of close relatives in the storylines. The first season won the Best Production Design (drama), Best Photography (Drama), and Best Graphic Design nominations (Series 1 2007) in the Royal Television Society Awards 2007. Season 2 also won a BAFTA for Best Title Sequence at British Academy Television Craft Award in May 2008 and the Best Drama prize at the 2008 Rose d'Or ceremony (Series 2 2008). There is no working definition of *Skins* in *Skins UK* television series in academic studies and book, but according to some online dictionaries such as [urbandictionary.com](http://urbandictionary.com), [internetslang.com](http://internetslang.com), etc, skins is a British slang word means rolling paper especially rolling a joint or marijuana.

*Skins UK* Season 1 and 2 which are known as the first generation, tells about the journey of a group of eight drug user teenagers in their school life. They are Tony Stonem (Nicholas Hoult), Sid Jenkins (Mike Balley), Michelle Richardson (April Pearson), Cassie Ainsworth (Hannah Murray), Chris Miles (Joe Dempsie), Jal Fazer (Larissa Wilson), Maxxie Oliver (Mitch Hewwer), and Anwar Kharral (Dev Patel). They are known as *Skins*' users, drug addicts who use skins to wrap up cannabis into a cigarette and inhale it. In this study, the writer focuses the subject of the study on Tony's character because Tony is one of the

main characters which holds a big role and has a lot of influence on other main character.

As consumption in teenage world has a big role in constructing their identity. Young people are particularly easy to be a target of consumerism because they are easily interested in any aspect of social life. They are easily attracted to things they see as a 'cool' thing, such as using drugs. As a matter of fact, drug abuse has become a big problem in the society. Drug abuse is considered as one of worrying substance issues beside alcohol and smoking (Mueller 2007, pp. 341).

According to WHO (World Health Organization), drug abuse is 'persistent or sporadic excessive drug use inconsistent with or unrelated to acceptable medical practice' (WHO 2012). It can be concluded that the term 'drug abuse' refers to a negative meaning of drug using that can lead to health problem. The use of drug in drug abuse is not accordingly to medical practice. Thus, it can inflict overdose which is very dangerous for a person and can lead to death. The reason people abuse the drug is to experience the 'high' feeling. According to NIDA (National Institute of Drug Abuse):

A drug is a chemical substance that can change how your body and mind work. Drugs of abuse are substance that people use to get high and change how they feel. They may be illegal drugs like pot, cocaine, or heroin. Or they may be legal for adult only like alcohol and tobacco. (NIDA)

Based on the statement above, it can be concluded that people have various reason for using drugs. Taking drugs can make them feel good for awhile (NIDA), yet

they might get overdose from the continuous use of the drugs. The fact is drug abuse has negative effect not only for individual, but also for society. In 2011, United States spent \$600 billion for the annual substance abuse cost including productivity and health and crime-related cost, and \$181 billion out of it are used for illicit drugs. Some of the drugs of abuse are marijuana, cocaine, heroin, painkiller, meth, etc (NIDA 2011).

As media is very accessible nowadays, it is easy to find a media that offers drug as its attraction, for example in television. According to Walt Mueller in his book *Youth Culture 101*, teenagers' life is a world in which culture resembles the "soup" where they swim around and soak every day. The soup's ingredients include values, attitudes, and behaviors as well as the media, peer group, language, and so on that express them (Mueller 2007, pp. 37). One of the important ingredients which have a big influence in teenager's life is media. One of television program that uses drugs as its main theme is a UK's television serial titled 'Skins'. Drug abuse is represented in this serial as the main conflict of each actors and actresses. They represent the reality and pack it into the scenes of this serial. Stuart Hall explains representation as:

The production of the meaning of the concepts in our mind through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to *refer* to either the 'real' world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people, and events (Hall 1997, pp. 17).

Based on the meaning of representation above, Hall declares that there are two processes involved in the system of representation. The first one is the system which ties every aspect around us with our set of mental representation concept.

The second one is what Hall has called as a 'system of representation' because 'it consists, not of individual concepts, but of different ways of organizing, clustering, arranging, and classifying concepts, and of establishing complex relations between them' (Hall 1997, pp. 17).

The use of drugs in *Skins UK* TV series resembles the drug abuse phenomenon which has spread world-widely and attracts many attentions as one of the substance issues that threaten our society. According to Anderson, the term drug abuse here is completely different from drug use. People tend to see 'drug use' as the same condition as 'drug abuse'. In the identity construction of drug addict, Anderson gives a significant difference between drug abuse which is the use of drug in an abusive way and has reached crisis points with drugs, and drug use which is the use of drug in a non-abusive or unproblematic way (Anderson 1998, pp. 253).

In analyzing this study, the writer will use John Fiske's theory on reading the reality on the television to analyze the representation of drug abuse in Tony's character in *Skins UK* season 1 and 2. In *Reading Television*, Fiske and Hartley state that the representation of reality in television is performed in all message sequences of the television discourse and will be considered as a success when the members of the audience are able to negotiate the message to their understanding according to the reference of their own circumstances (Fiske and Hartley 2004, pp. 67). One's particular ideology has a big influence to the representation of reality which is pictured in television.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Based on the background of the study above, the statement of the problem is:

1. How does drug abuse is represented in Tony's character?

## **1.3. Objective of the Study**

Based on the research of the problem above, this study is intended to find out the way Tony, one of the characters in Skins UK TV series, represents the drug abuse in his character and whether he is promoting or preventing the drug abuse.

## **1.4. Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to understand how television captures drug abuse. This study is created in hopes to be the first step on preventing drug abuse which has threatened many societies, especially through electronic media such as television. The writer hopes this research could give more information on how to acknowledge the difference and the similarity of drug abuse in real life and in television. It is really important to understand the difference and the similarity in order to avoid the misunderstanding of the reality of drug abuse. By doing this research, it is hoped that the reader will be able to know more about the drug abuse and what it will lead them. It is important to understand about drug abuse in order to prevent it. In other words, this study attempts to understand the cause of drug abuse in our society and helps the war against drugs. In addition, this study is meant to give contribution to the study of youth culture in the case of the

substance abuse and understanding how drug abuse is represented in television, particularly in English Department of The Faculty of Humanities.

### 1.5. Definition of Key Terms

1. Drugs Abuse: the use of drug for something other than a medically prescribed purpose, that is, they have a habit of taking a drug to “get high” or “feel better”, they take more than prescribed amounts and take the drugs for recreation. (NIDA)
2. Representation: The production of the meaning of the concepts in our mind through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to *refer* to either the ‘real’ world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people, and events (Hall 1997, pp 17)
3. Television: a bearer/ provoker of meanings and pleasures, and of culture as the generation and circulation of this variety of meanings and pleasures within society (Fiske 1987, pp 1)
4. Skins: There is no working definition of *Skins* in *Skins UK* television series itself, but according to some online dictionaries such as [urbandictionary.com](http://urbandictionary.com), [internetslang.com](http://internetslang.com), etc, *skins* is a British slang word means rolling paper especially rolling a joint or marijuana.
5. Youth: is characterized by selfcentredness and an occupation with personal appearance, which many consider as a great problem (Johanson 2007, p. 47) and is characterized by dreams, hopes, visions and plans, but



also by the everyday, school, routines and disillusionment (70). Fiske said that youth is physical sensation, liberated from any social or historical context with its constraints of social powerlessness, of subjection and control (Fiske 1987, p. 263).