Heroic Role and Attractiveness
as the Cause of Creating Slash or Yaoi Fan Art
บทบาทวีรบุรุษ และความน่าดึงดูด
อันเป็นเหตุของการสร้างสรรค์งานศิลป์แนวยาโอยโดยกลุ่มแฟนๆ

Proud Arunrangsiwed[1]

Abstract

Many fans reproduce the work based on the original media in the format of fan art, fan fictions, and other creation. Fan art includes villains (evil characters) and often contains violent contents. The current study primarily aims to examine the reasons that fans draw villains in their fan art. Partial correlation was used to explore if attractiveness or heroic role of fictional characters in media had more influence on the number of fan art published in Deviantart.com. The findings reveal no statistically significant relationship among these variables. However, the effect size may indicate that heroic role has a stronger relationship to the number of fan art than does the attractiveness. This could reduce fan scholars' anxiety regarding the attractiveness of villains.

Keywords: Slash, Yaoi, Fan Art, Heroic Role, Attractiveness

บทคัดย่อ

แฟนจำนวนมากได้สร้างสรรค์ชิ้นงานเกี่ยวกับสื่อที่ตนชอบ เช่น งานศิลปะ นิยาย และสื่ออื่นๆ บ่อยครั้ง ที่งานศิลปะของแฟนเหล่านี้มีความรุนแรงประกอบอยู่ ซึ่งอาจมาจากการมีตัวร้ายในภาพวาด การวิเคราะห์ สัมประสิทธิ์สหสัมพันธ์แบบแยกส่วนได้ถูกใช้ในการเทียบตัวแปรที่แฟนๆ มักวาดภาพ ระหว่างความหน้าตาดี น่าดึงดูด กับบทบาทของตัวละครที่เป็นคนดีหรือที่เรียกว่ามีบทบาทเป็นวีรบุรุษ ผลการวิเคราะห์ไม่พบ นัยสำคัญทางสถิติ หากแต่พบว่า แฟนๆ มักสร้างสรรค์งานศิลป์เพราะตัวละครเป็นคนดี มากกว่าเหตุผลที่ว่า ตัวละครหน้าตาดี ซึ่งอาจลดความกังวลแก่นักวิจัยด้านแฟน เกี่ยวกับตัวร้ายที่หน้าตาดีน่าดึงดูด

คำสำคัญ: แสล็ซ ยาโอย งานศิลปะที่สร้างโดยแฟนๆ บทบาทวีรบุรุษ ความน่าดึงดูด

[1] Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, E-mail: parunran@nyit.edu

Introduction

This study was primarily conducted to understand the main reason that fans included villain characters in their Slash or *Yaoi* fan creations. Fan creations in this study refers to fan art and fan fiction in which fans redraw and rewrite the story based on original media. Slash or *Yaoi* fan creation is a type of fan creations which contains homosexual relationship between male characters where these characters are borrowed from the original media, such as movies and comics (Kalinowski, 2014; Kustritz, 2003; Salmon & Symons, 2004). Generally, fans would select two heroic characters to portray in Slash creations (Kustritz, 2003; Yu, 2008), but Dennis (2010) found that many fans paired the hero and villain in their Slash fan creations. Fan art that contains pairings of a hero and a villain shows more sexual violence (Arunrangsiwed, 2015a) and lower level of friendship than pairings of a hero and a hero (Arunrangsiwed, 2016). This could imply that the researchers and media producers should help reduce the possibility for these fans to include villains in their fan creations.

Creating sexual abuse content in fan art could be more harmful than watching pornographic movie. This is because the audiences of pornographic media did not create the media by themselves. In the area of fandom, fans did not only consume the mainstream media, but also reproduced them (Collier, 2015; Stein & Busse, 2009). Fan authors and fan artists who create Slash fan creation based on the paring of hero and villain have filled sexual abuse content into their creations. Especially in fan art, fans did create and freeze the sexual abusing moment between the characters in their drawings, which, in original media, they did not

even have any sexual relationship to each other (Arunrangsiwed, 2015a). Many researchers believed that to create fan art and fan fiction was the way fans reflected their own need about the original media (Black, 2009; Bolt, 2004; Kalinowski, 2014; Kustritz, 2003; Yu, 2008). During the process of making such the violent fan art, fans may emotionally imagine a violent situation in erotic way, which is, in fact, not an appropriate thing for young people to think about.

The objective of the current study is to test if the attractiveness of villains in movies and comics might cause fans to draw them in Slash fan art or write about them in Slash fan fiction. The results of this study would help suggest the strategies to minimize villain recreated in fan creations.

Literature Review

2.1 Influence of Media and Misbehavior

Researchers in the area of media study suggested that the commercial organizations consider about the need of society as the first priority, before thinking about taking an advantage from it (Sliburyte, 2009; Somsert, 2013). However, several organizations still care much about their own commercial success. Media organizations fall into a similar track. Many producers made movies containing violent scenes, since it was a belief that these violent scenes could raise the movie gross. Pozios, Kambam, and Bender (2013) disclosed a case that a comic writer, Mark Millar, showed his irresponsibility regarding his violent comic books and movies by saying, "... has never quite bought the notion that violence in fiction leads to violence in real life anymore than Harry Potter casting a spell creates more boy wizards in real life."

In fact, these violent scenes inspired the audiences to create a copycat crime by taking the idea of how to make a crime from the original media (Helfgott, 2015). One of the extreme cases was the rampage in a movie theatre at Colorado, the United States ("Red-haired Joker", 2012). The shooter was inspired by Joker, and he caused the death of 12 audiences who went to watch the movie, *Batman: The Dark Knight Rises* (2012). Media do not only inspire their fans to cause a rampage, they also inspire people to make a sexual assaulting crime. Filipino male student mimic the BDSM (Bondage Discipline Sadism and Masochism) scene in *Fifty Shades of Grey*, which caused the death of a female student ("High school student died", 2015). News reports might show only the extreme cases, while many cases were not publicly reported such as domestic violence. Moreover, a hundred of minor negative behaviors were not considered as a committed crime. For example, students cheated on the exam, caused a school bullying, and lied to their parents. Coyne and Whitehead (2008) called this type of behavior, "indirect aggressive," which is one of the results of exposure to media violence.

Various past studies found that media usage could lead to a negative behavior. One of the most repeated outcome variables is the level of aggressiveness in children. Television shows, films, and video games could cause the aggressive behavior in young children both in short term and long term (Anderson et al, 2003; Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski, & Eron, 2003). This would be extremely more important in young children with preschool age, because these children easily developed an antisocial

behavior, and it could result in a long-term violent behavior (Knutson, DeGarmo, & Reid, 2004; Šramová, 2014).

Media do not only have an influence on tangible behaviors, but also affect psychological traits and personal belief. Arunrangsiwed (2015b) found the level of narcissism is varied by the usage of online community for artists. Other researchers also found the linking between social networking use and psychological traits, such as self-esteem (Wang, Jackson, Zhang, & Su, 2012), depression (Moreno et al., 2012), and narcissism (Ong, et al., 2011). Moreover, one of the most serious concerns about media effect is the false belief regarding others' identities. People should not rely on stereotype portrayed in media, such as gender (Avery-Natale, 2013; Garland, Branch, & Grimes, 2016), national identity (Vasilyeva, 2015), and other appearance-related stereotypes (Garofalo, 2013)

2.2 Fan Creations

Fan creations can be created in many forms, such as online fiction, *Doujinshi* (comic book created by fans and amateurs) (Lamerichs, 2013), drawings, slideshow video, edited video of original movies (Pearson, 2010), and manip (Brennan, 2013). Creating fan art and fan fiction could benefit fans in their drawing (Black, 2009) and writing skills (Black, 2006). Fans could also find freedom and enjoyment in attending acosplay event and making *Doujinshi* (Chen, 2007). Making artwork, without relationship to fan culture, might also heighten the level of self-esteem, which is a positive personal trait (Gocmen, 2012). Students could use their drawing to express their idea better than verbal communication alone (Hale, 1995; Pun, 2011).

Fan creations in general could be considered as the products recreated by fans that are mostly young and innocent. Fan creations could be either harmful or beneficial depending on the way to create and the way to understand them. There are only few researchers who studied about the violence in fan art and fan fiction. Some researchers concern about the pornographic content in *Lolicon* (comic with sexual attraction of young girls) and *Yaoi* manga (Lam, 2010; McLelland, 2012).

Slash is a kind of fan creations with homosexual relationship between male characters, introduced by Jenkins (1992), the father of the current definition of trans media and fandom. Kirk and Spock, the characters in *Star Trek: The Original Series*, have been mentioned as the first Slash pairing. Slash came from the symbol, /, which was used between the names, Kirk and Spock, as Kirk/Spock (Lavigne, 2012). Slash has also been read as a channel for women to express their desire toward original media. These female fans filled the missing parts into the original media, such as equality among loving partners, friendship, and their emotional interaction (Salmon & Symons, 2004). However, Slash and Yaoi fan art which contained the drawing of villain was associated with sexual abuse content (Arunrangsiwed, 2015a). The educators and fan scholars should identify the way to prevent fans to include villains into their Slash creations. The current study will explore one of the reasons that might make fans select villains to portray in fan art, which is the attractiveness of villain.

2.3 Attractiveness

Attractiveness has been the predictor of various studies in celebrity endorsement.

Attractiveness is one of three factors in original Source Credibility Scale (Ohanian, 1990), and used as an important variable in recent research studies (Kumkale, Albarracin, & Seignourel, 2010; Muda, Musa, Mohamed, & Borhan, 2014). Advertising campaigns often use attractive celebrities to persuade their target customers to purchase their product. Kim, Lee, and Prideaux (2014) found that attractiveness of celebrity endorsers was a capable predictor of Japanese tourists' positive attitude about the hotel through the advertising. The media organizations, which created attractive villains, might assume similar outcome, that attractive hero and heroine alone might not be able increase box office revenue as much as making both hero and villain attractive. The character, *Loki* in *Thor* (2011) and *the Avenger* (2012) is one of the most successful cases, in which Thomas (2012) studied the reaction of *Loki*'s female fan on *Tumblr*. *Loki* was also one of a few characters that got draws by various skillful fan artists, and portrayed in a large number of *Doujinshi*. The attractiveness of famous Loki in film version is also reflected back to the original creator, *Marvel Comic*, where *Loki* was recreated as more attractive character *in Loki: Agent of Asgard* (2014), compared to the original *Loki* in *Marvel Comic*.

Attractiveness of female characters was also used for engaging male customers in comic books. In superhero comic book, female characters, both heroines and female villains, were also sexually attractive by wearing skintight outfits, which almost showed every part of their body (Pratiwi, 2013). They were portrayed as a sexual object for male readers (Lavin, 1998; Pratiwi, 2013). Even for Wonder Women about which researchers of the past studies have a positive attitude regarding DC Comics

respect women (Dunne, 2006), her outfit was still considered as sexually attractive look (Lavin, 1998).

This means attractiveness is associated with the positive outcome that the marketers need from the audiences. It is possible that fan artists might want to draw an attractive character better than the unattractive character. If villains were attractive, fans would draw them. The current study will test two hypotheses based on attractiveness of characters in original media, whose fans chose to draw in fan art and write in fan fiction. First, the researcher hypothesized that heroes fans chose to draw are more attractive than villains. This hypothesis could be supported by the study of Bazzini, Curtin, Joslin, Regan, and Martz (2010) that the level of attractiveness has a positive association with characters' morality, and the study of Garofalo (2013), that showed the awareness of beauty and goodness stereotype in children' media perception. However feminist and media literacy scholars suggest that this stereotype should be removed from media, because if a villain are more attractive than a hero, fans may identify with the former and this will result in fans' negative behaviors. This is because attractiveness is one of the causes that media consumers would identify with fictional characters (Hearold, 1986), and identification is one of the most important factors that media consumers would mimic behaviors of fictional characters (Anderson & Warburton, 2012). Next, for the second hypothesis, the mentioned studies in advertising and graphic novel show that attractiveness is one of the most influential variables in marketing outcome and consumer behaviors.

H1: Heroes are more attractive than villains in the original media, which fans selected to reproduce as Slash fan art.

H2: Characters' attractiveness has more influence on the number of produced fan art than does the role of characters.

Method

According to previous studies, many researchers believed that Slash or Yaoi fan fiction were about the pairing between male hero characters (Kustritz, 2003; Yu, 2008). In the current study, the researcher have explored if attractiveness might be another cause, which led fans to draw fan art and write fan fiction. Content analysis was used to examine this idea.

Cases Selection:

Forty movie/comic characters were selected as the cases in this study. All of these characters are famous in online communities such as fanfiction.net and deviantart.com. They have been written and drawn in Slash or Yaoi style. These characters were selected based on the highest output from three websites, which are Google Keyword Planner, fanfiction.net, and DeviantArt.com. These three websites were used to confirm if the selected cases were really the most influential characters for the online fans worldwide.

The first website, Google Keyword Planner, gives the average number of searches for each keyword per month. The selected cases have to be searched on Google at least 100,000 times on average per month. The second website is fanfiction.net, which provides the top lists of movie, comic, and the name of characters mentioned in Slash fan fiction. The

name of each selected character has to be mentioned in at least 100 fictions on this website. The last website is DeviantArt.com, which is the largest social network for artists (Salah et al., 2012). The researcher searched for the name of the characters which were collected from two previous websites. After that, the numbers of artwork of each character would show up. The selected characters have to appear in at least 5,000 drawings on Deviantart.com.

Site:

Deviantart.com was selected as the site for data collection of this study, since it is the largest online community for artists with various genres of artwork (Salah et al., 2012). In this website, many fans have posted their fan art and explored the artwork of other fan artists who are interested in the same media object.

Instruments:

The Estimating Physical Attractiveness (EPA) Scale of Swami, Stieger, Haubner, Voracek, and Furnham (2009) was used for evaluating the level of attractiveness. This scale contains 20 items, and in the current study, the coders evaluated each item as 4-point Likert scale (4=attractive; 3=somewhat attractive; 2=somewhat unattractive; 1=unattractive). The possible maximum score for this scale is 80, and 320 after combining the results from all 4 coders. High score refers to the high level of attractiveness and vice versa. For the roles of the characters, which were antagonists and protagonists, the researcher used the actual role from the original movie/comic. This variable was collected as dichotomous, which was later used in the independent sample t-test.

After this research project was approved from IRB, 4 blind coders who did not know the objective of this study rated the attractiveness of 40 selected movie/comic characters based on the original appearance in media. Each coder's combination of scores was analyzed to see the elatedly highintraclass correlation coefficient of .786.

Analysis:

Independent t-test was used to evaluate the difference between the levels of attractiveness of heroes and villains in slash fan art or fan fiction. Normally, there is a stereotype that beauty is good, and ugly is bad. Independent t-test showed if protagonists might be more attractive than antagonists. This would not only confirm or reject the findings of studies regarding media stereotype, but also challenge the belief of early fan scholars who believe that there were only hero portrayed in Slash fan art. Descriptive statistic and Pearson's correlation analysis were also used for the researcher to better understand the data.

According to the second hypothesis, the current study would examine if the number of produced fan art were affected by the attractiveness or the role of the characters. Partial correlation was used in this part of the analysis to identify the variable that has the highest influence on the numbers of drawings on Deviantart.com. Partial correlation could help to indicate the amount of variance in the overlapping area of each pair of variables, while controlled by other variables. Additional controlled variables are initial reputation of the movie or comic that each character is in and the length of period since the first release of the movie/comic. Initial reputation of the movie

or comic was indicated by the number of search on average per month on Google. These additional variables were included in the analysis, because they might have some effect on the numbers of fan art and attractiveness judgments by the coders.

Findings

Twenty seven characters selected as the cases are hero in original media. Their overall level of attractiveness is higher than villain. Mean of total attractiveness score of these 27 characters rated by 4 coders is 262.19 (Standard Deviation (S.D.) =26.376; Standard Error (S.E.) =5.076). Only 13 villains were selected as the cases, and their mean of total attractiveness score is 256.23 (S.D. =38.484; S.E. =10.674). However, no statistically significant was found (t=.574; p=.569). This means that the characters chosen by Slash fans may not fall into beauty and goodness stereotype.

Five variables, which are number of fan art, level of attractiveness, role of character, initial reputation, and the length of period since the first release of the movie/comic, were included in Pearson correlation analysis. There are 3 noticeable relationships among these variables. First, the level of attractiveness has negative relationship with the length of period since the first release of the movie/comic (r=-.472; p=.001). This means the recent media contain the more attractive character than the early media. Second, there is a strong positive relationship between the initial reputation (number of search in Google) and the length of period since the first release of the movie/comic (r=.620; p=.000). This implies that the longer the media are existed, the more famous they are. Another noticeable relationship

is the negative relationship between the initial reputation and the level of attractiveness. This shows that the characters with a low level of attractiveness may receive a larger amount of Google search than high attractive characters. However, no statistical significance was found between these two variables (r=-.261; p=.052).

Partial correlation was used to indicate the influence of 4 variables (level of attractiveness, role of character, initial reputation, and the length of period since the first release of the movie/comic) on the dependent variable, number of fan art. The role of the character has the strongest influence on the number of fan art ($r_{partial}$=.204; p=.226). This reveals that fan artists would choose to draw the hero better than villain, where this result is supported by previous Slash fan studies. Variance of the dependent variable is slightly described by other variables, such as level of attractiveness ($r_{partial}$=-.021; p=.903), initial reputation ($r_{partial}$=.088; p=.603), and the length of period since the first release ($r_{partial}$=.010; p=.951). This implies that null hypothesis of H2 could not be rejected.

Descriptive statistic was also used to provide richer knowledge to contribute to this area of study. The data collected in the spreadsheet were ranked by the level of attractiveness, and it reveals that heroes with the highest level of attractiveness are Captain America, following by Derek Hale (Teen Wolf) and Legolas (The Lord of the Rings trilogy and The Hobbit trilogy). For villains, the characters with the highest level of attractiveness are Bucky Barnes (Captain America 2: The Winter Soldier), Thranduil (The Hobbit trilogy), and Loki (in Thor films). Later, the data were rearranged again based on the numbers of fan art. There is only one villain found in the top

10 of the characters who were frequently drawn by fans. This finding supports the finding in the partial correlation analysis. In this top 10, there are only 2 characters mentioned earlier in this paragraph, which are Loki (273,708 pieces of fan art) and Captain America (104,376 pieces of fan art). And the characters with the highest number of fan art is Harry Potter (504,095 pieces), following by Ichigo Kurosaki (375,323 pieces) and Loki. This result could indicate that Loki is one of the most successful villain character designs, and this might be the reason that Thomas (2012) chose him as the topic of his research study. Since the researcher showed her anxiety regarding how young audiences might mimic villains' behaviors, famous Loki may not be a problematic case. Loki's negative and violent behaviors were done in fantasy world with magical or supernatural powers. This kind of violence has less effect on the audience than the violence that people could easily imitate in real-world setting (Anderson & Warburton, 2012).

Discussion

The results of mean comparison do not support the first hypothesis. Although the descriptive statistic shows a higher level of heroes' attractiveness compared to villains', but a statistical significance was not found. The results from Partial correlation might help describe this insignificant finding by placing the age of media as the mediator. This is because either heroes or villains in recent media are more attractive than the fictional characters in older media. For the second hypothesis, the result shows that the role of characters has more influence on the number of produced fan art than characters' attractiveness, but again the finding is not statistically significant. This might be because of the limitation that the current study consists of only 40 cases in the analysis. The further study may increase the number of cases to meet a significant result.

One of the most important factor that leads people to imitate media content is the level of identification (Anderson & Warburton, 2012), where three dimensions that affect the level of identification are perceived similar (Arunrangsiwed, 2015c), heroic, and attractiveness of the character (Hearold, 1986). Pairoa and Arunrangsiwed (2016) have added one more dimension, which is 'being point-of-view character' to describe more variance in their conceptual model. It has been generally known that the point-of-view characters are more likely to be heroes than villains, which may result in higher level of identification and larger numbers of fan art.

The researcher of the current study suggested that attractiveness is an important gap of knowledge in the field of media effect. Since people could be likely to identify with attractive characters (Hearold, 1986), their behaviors and traits would be influenced by these characters, too. This could imply that media producers should not create an attractive villain, but should make the hero more attractive to avoid the possibility that people would imitate villain' behaviors. In contrast, feminist researchers and educators do worry that young children may believe in attractiveness-and-goodness stereotype shown in films (Bazzini et al., 2010; Garofalo, 2013; Hovdestad, Hubka, & Tonmyr, 2009). With such the belief, unattractive and neutral-look people around particular children will be rejected (Arunrangsiwed & Pasomsat, 2016). Moreover, in films, being

unattractive, unhappiness, easy-to-be-angry, and physical-disability are associated to one another (Klein & Shiffmann, 2006). Reinforcing such stereotype might cause a negative impact on the society, such as rejecting people with physical disability from workplace. The future study needs to fathom the attractiveness variable deeper than, and should look for the equilibrium of attractiveness that media producers should insert into both heroes and villains.

Fortunately, the current study does not find the difference between the level of attractiveness of heroes and villains. This shows that media which Slash fans consume may not reinforce an inappropriate stereotype to their audiences. The researcher expects that these fans will learn that both attractive and unattractive ones could be either good or bad person. In other words, the fans may learn not to link people's visual appearance to their traits. Without significant relationship between the level of attractiveness and the frequency that the characters got drawn by Slash fans, the actual reason that these fans have drawn villains and produced violent Slash fan art is still unclear. Fan scholar may try to use a qualitative approach to find out the possible reason before testing them with quantitative one. The current study used content analysis, which is able to test only two dimensions, attractiveness and heroic of the characters. Once that a qualitative study can identify the actual reason, future study should use a questionnaire to gain more power to test it, and should also include other dimensions such as, perceived similar (Mongkolprasit & Arunrangsiwed, 2016) and being point-of-view character.

In the area of Slash fandom, the current study confirms that protagonists were selected to write and to draw in fan creation because of their role or morality, not their attractiveness. However, no study has tested a false belief of Slash fan study, that women who write Slash fan fiction are unsatisfied with the media that women have to be at home and male characters together fight the evil (Salmon & Symons, 2004). Slash is a popular genre of fan fiction which has been continuously written until today. Such the statement is not true in present media, where many female characters fight along with male characters for the entire story, as seen in superhero, sci-fi, action, or even final-girl horror films. Hence, Slash fan authors and Slash fan artist would have another unexplored reason that brings them to create Slash fan work.

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