

EXTENDED ESSAY OF PRIDE IN KENNY CHESNEY'S “AMERICAN KIDS”

Gita Mahartini

13020111130107

**A Final Project, In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement
for S-1 Degree in American Studies In English Department
Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University**

ABSTRACT

This extended essay discusses the representation of the behavior of American kids as seen through their life styles reflected on Kenny Chesney “American Kids”. The behavior is well portrait through the lyric, but the lyric itself has not been reviewed sufficiently. The purposes of this extended essay are to describe the behavior literally and figuratively, and also to construct the meaning related to the description of the lyric. The writer analyzes the study using library research and she adopts the psychology of behavior by B.F Skinner as her approach method. The result of the analysis shows the description of American kids behavior literally and figuratively as pride in American kids reflected on “American Kids”. Therefore, it can be concluded that the song lyric of *American Kids* reflects the representation of American kids behavior.

Keyword : literal meaning, figurative meaning, psychology of behavior, American kids, pride.

Background of Study

This extended essay is about pride in American kids, which is also represented in the song lyric entitled “American Kids”. The pride in “American Kids” has not been sufficiently reviewed but little is known about the representation of American kids’ behavior. This study is intended to describe the representation of the pride in the lyric. The pride is described as the lifestyle which “American kids” have as it is expressed in the lyric literally and figuratively.

According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, pride is “feeling of satisfaction that you get from doing something well; person or thing that gives you a feeling

or satisfaction or pleasure" (2008 : 340).Pride which has shown in the lyric is mostly tell about the American kids who are proud of themselves, in their either habit or behavior. They have some habitual activity, and the activity reflects their lifestyle and the habit encourages them to be grateful and it becomes some pleasure toward their identity as American kids.

The songwriters convey the idea in the song to represent the habit and behavior which the kids or young people in America have. Based on *Oxford English Dictionary* "kids is child or young people" (2008: 236), while "teenager is person who is between 13 to 19" (2008: 443). Actually the role models in this song are teenagers who are called by the songwriters as kids or American kids. As a multicultural country, there are many cultures and it melted into one with the identity as American people. Multiculture take a freedom, so the freedom in many ways becomes influence toward behavior which is conducted by American people including American kids. According to the lyric of "American Kids", their behavior have seen through by the description, it tells that they were becoming prouder to their habit and they could say even there is a little messed up, but they are alright.

The analysis shows the representation of American kids behavior literally and figuratively, and also to construct the meaning relate to the description of the lyric. There is also representation of American kids behavior as pride reflected on Kenny Chesney's "American Kids".

Purposes of The Study

This study is intended to describe the pride in general. In the description, this study is intended to specifically describe the literal meaning and as the figurative meaning of behavior, and also to construct the meaning relate to the description of the lyric. The intrinsic aspect in the lyrics through the poetic elements such as diction, and figurative language in order to get the deeper meaning of what the lyrics tell about.

Methods of the Study

This study is carried out using a library research, also adopts structural and psychological approach focusing on behavior .The structural approach is used to analyze the structural aspect in the literary works containing diction and symbol. The writer uses psychology of behavior approach to analyze some extrinsic aspects..

Paraphrase of American Kids

"American Kids" tells the habitual activities which the American kids conduct. In their habitual activity, they show some things that have become daily habits and the habits have become the only activities the kids carry out. The United States of America is the place where they were born, and the country where they were raised by both parents. Their father and mother have given birth to a generation who has the identity as American kids. The United States is where they grow up, and also where they study and learn in schools. Every day they go to study in schools and they must be picked up by the school bus that takes them to the schools and that is why they should get up early.

They are very lucky and grateful with the life they have. They are lucky because they were born in America. They become proud of some of their habits since they are teenagers in America. They usually like to hangout and get along together with friends. They gather in the place where they are used to gathering. In every Saturday evening they usually sit back with friends and then they smoke. They consider the situation chaotic, but they are fine. In the track is clearly visible that all of their habits from a behavior which the American kids commit. It looks that they are proud of what they do as the American kids.

Theoretical Framework

1. Intrinsic Elements

1.1. Diction

Diction consists of two main aspects. They are denotation and connotation. Denotation means that the meaning of the word is the real meaning and can be taken from the dictionary, it does not have any other

meaning or interpretation. According to Meyer in his book *The Bedford Introduction to Literature 2nd edition*, denotation are “the literal, the dictionary meanings of the word”(1990:524). Denotation is the actual meaning of the word in the literature structure, in the song lyric of "American kids" there are many words which can be understood that it has true meaning. In the other hand, connotations means that the meaning of the word is depend on the word which has been used and the association people make with it. Meyer also says in his book, “connotations are association and implication that go beyond a word’s literal meaning” (1990:524). While, connotation is the implication meaning of the word, so it does not the actual meaning. "

1.2 Symbol

Symbol is one of the figurative language which tell about something is represented by a thing. Meyer stated “ A symbol is something that represents something else, an object, person, place, even or action can suggest more than its literal meaning (Meyer, 1990:581). Some words can have a meaning which shows the meaning that the word has existed as object existed as place and become an identity of some groups or personal. In the song lyric of “American Kids” there is some use of figurative language in the symbol that reflects the American identity which reflected by the American kids to show their behavior.

2. Extrinsic Elements

2.1. What is behavior?

Behavior, what is shown by someone as the way they behave. Behavior was built by someone and it usually become someone’s identity. According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, behavior is “way of behaving”. (2008 : 33). Behavior is created by habitual attitude which has shown by someone’s ability, someone’s hobbies in daily life which

certainly has limitation in some of the rules in either the society or the country.

Behavior is related to someone's identity, if someone has a good behavior, he will certainly well known with a good profile. Meanwhile if someone behaves badly, his or her identity in public is also bad. Behavior is also one of the factors that influenced simultaneously affect the identity of the smallest neighborhood environment to an environment widens. For example, if there is a generation that consist of individuals with good behavior in the environment or community, more or less the will influence another individual. Then the community will be judged and became a stereotype against the identity of those who have a good behavior with the environment dominance by individuals who have a good behavior, so the newcomer certainly is capable to have a good behavior too.

2.2. Psychology of Behavior by B.F Skinner

According to Malone in *Theories of Learning*, there are three things that the basis is the assumption. The first point is "Behavior is lawful", where a particular activity is associated with other activities on a regular basis so as to form a habit. The second point is "Behavior can be predicted", it means one's behavior can be predicted through past events will be reflected on the events that will occur continually. The third point is "the behavior can be controlled", the occurrence of a behavior through a process where as someone who can manipulate it to behave, so that it does not conflict with the views of other people, in other words if someone controlling what actions will be made, more or less correspond with what should be done in accordance within its environment, this assumption can be underlined that behavior is the conducted by the changes in themselves spontaneously.

Skinner states in Malone's *Theories of Learning* that "when someone behaves rudely or testily toward you , you may seek the cause for such behavior by asking someone who knows the person better than you

do , you may be told that he or she is nasty , aggressive person that is why she or he acted in that way” (1990 : 224).By someone’s behave, the surrounding people would exactly know about his or her behavior, It would be reflected the behavior of some people in some area too.

Then, according to Malone’s *Theories of Learning* Skinner states “The real explanation for that behavior lies in the history of the individual. Perhaps the manner in which he or she was raised a history failure, recent disappointment, achronic toothache, or a thousand other factors are possible” (1990 : 225). We can see someone’s behavior related with the manner he or she has, it will represent his or her environment, friend, and relative too.

Research Method

The main reference for this extended essay is B.F Skinner’s psychology of behavior in the book entitled "Theory of Learning". The book provides the theory to analyze the lyric in psychology of behavior so that writer is able to know the pride shown through American kids behavior. Then, another references are Meyer’s theory of literature in the book entitled “ The Bedford Introduction to Literature” , and also “ The Criticism of Poetry second edition” by S.H. Burton. These references help the writer in analyzing the lyric intrinsically, and figure out the parts which show the pride in American kids behavior songwriters show.

Approach Method

This essay uses textual analysis which concern toward diction and symbol from the song entitled "American kids" by Kenny Chesney. In that song, the lyric is taken as the material which can be analyzed to answer the purposes of this extended essay.

DISCUSSION

1. Intrinsic Element

In the song, the songwriters express their idea and feeling through selection of words which can be called diction. In the selection of the words, the song writer certainly chose with selectively, so that the words used are able to reflect a feeling that is wanted to be convey through a song lyric. In this extended essay, the writer analyzes the diction and symbol as figurative language which are contained in the lyric “American Kids”to get deeper meaning related to the representation of behavior which is containedthe song’s meaning. There are two meaning in the diction:connotation and denotation. The symbol as figurative language can also be found in every line of the lyric.

1.1 Diction

Stanza 2

CHORUS

We were: Jesus save me , blue jean baby

In the first line of the second stanza or the chorus of the song. The songwriters also use connotation, *we were Jesus save*, it is intended to show their religion toward their God. The majority religion in America is chatolic and Christen Protestan. Therefore, Jesus is called as the God who always save them. The phrase *Blue jean baby*, its identical with the kids in America.

Born in the USA

In the second line, the songwriters use denotation to make their intention clearly*Born in the USA* , the American kids were born in **USA**it means in America. The original place where they live.

Trailer park truck stop, faded little map dots

In the third line, the songwriters back to use connotation meaning the clause *Trailer park truck stop, faded little map dots– New York to LA* . It means that theres no another place which can similar with New York and LA. It is a part of America.Both of the most popular city in America.

New York to LA

In this fourth line *New York and LA* means Los Angeles are become symbolize of develop city in America. Both of cities are the main important city also become economic and entertaint city in America.

We were teenage dreamin' , front seat leanin'

In this fifth line, the songwriter use connotation meaning in the clause *We were teenage dreamin' , front seat leanin'* – *Baby, come give me a kiss*, it interpretsthat American kids is teenager's dreaming, they were exist and every teenager like to be them as American kids.

Baby, come give me a kiss

The imperative sentence in the sixth line *Baby, come give me a kiss* interprets their expression as become prouder toward themselves.

Put me on the cover of the Rolling Stone – Uptown

In the seventh line, the songwriter use connotation meaning. *Put me on the cover of the Rolling Stone*. It has meaning that the American kids want to be the best as like as they will be a cover model in the top magazine entitled “*Rolling Stone*”. Rolling stone is one of the most popular magazine in America. This Magazine releases in America and now releases over the world.

Uptown down home American kids .

In the eighth line, the songwriter still use connotation meaning. *Uptown down home American kids* means that everything is American kids home. America is their place, their original place from uptown till down town.

Growin' up in little pink houses

In the ninth line, connotation meaning still in use. *Growin' up* means American kids grow up. The phrase *In the little pink houses* means their home. The path they are living, they describe as a little pink houses.

Makin' out on living room couches

In the tenth line, the songwriter still use connotation meaning. *Makin' out on living room couches* This sentence means the messes which conducted by themselves as like as they mess up the living room.

Blowin' that smoke on Saturday night

Continuing the previous line, in the eleventh line, it is still using connotation. *Blowin' that smoke means* they have smoking. Some of American kids sometimes behave like that, such as smoking. *on Saturday night*, it is the exactly time to hang out with friends.

A little messed up, but we're all alright

In the last line of the chorus of the song, *A little messed up* has connotation meaning as the messing by American kids it perhaps happen when they were hang out like kidding each other. *but we're all alright*, it means they enjoy with anything happen, they fun and always alright.

1.2 Symbol

Stanza 2

CHORUS

In the first line of the second stanza, the writer finds the clause *Jesus save me*, consider to represent their religion. The phrase *Blue jean baby* is symbolize as the usual outfit American kids wear.

In the second line, the noun *USA* is symbolize as a country, as developed country that is America the place where American kids become prouder.

In this fifth line, the writer finds symbol *teenage dreamin'* as the dreaming of American kids represent dreaming of the whole teenagers in the world. They want to be exist, to be famous and hire their expectation. Its their pride as American kids.

In the seventh line, the word *Rolling Stone* is symbolize of magazine that it is original coming from America. This is very identical with American teenager or American kids.

There is also symbol in the eighth line, *American kids* is symbolize themselves, the writer finds the pride which American kids convey from that statement..

In the eleventh line, *Saturday night* is symbolize as the time when young people hang out and spent the night to go out somewhere with friends, relatives, or colleagues. It is very related toward teenagers habit and hobby.

The Pride in American Kids Behavior

From the literature review, it is known that the song entitled “American Kids” more and less tell about American kids behavior. Starting from the orientation whothey are, where they were born and live.

They are teenagers in America who call themselves as American kids. The United States of America is the place where they were born and they grow up. This orientation is shown in this line of the following stanza.

“Momma and Daddy put their roots right here” (stanza 1 line 3)

In this stanza, the American kids want to convey about themselves introduction and a bit about them in daily habit as American kids.

The pride arises from themselves, they show the pride just the way they are such as they were born in America and they are saved by Jesus. They are grateful with their life they have. This is shown in the second stanza,

We were Jesus save me, blue jean baby

Born in the USA. (stanza 2 line 1-2)

In this stanza through their life style and behavior, they feel so blessed by their God. The American kids so proud toward their life as being American people.

Theyfell not only blessed but also content about their willing. The American kids want to be in the front seat leaning. Being number one and still exist is the most influenced dreaming they have. This is shown on the following stanza.

“ We were teenage dreamin’, front seat leanin’ ” (stanza 2 line 5)

This line, American kids state that they have a lot of dreams. According to Jim Cullen in his book *The American Dream- A Short Story of an Idea that*

Shaped Nation “American dreams is included into the puritan interprise, the declaration of independence, the upward mobility, the dream of equality, the dream of home ownership, and the coast” (2003 : 11-12). It means that either at once or now days the American dreams still exist as the dream they want to reach it. Related toward everything they have, they want to reach more. It absolutely encourage them to make it real. It will be the reasonable which makes the Amewrican kids have a positive behavior.

One of the behaviors they have, The American kids are also become modern teenagers nowadays. They mingle each other and have some activities with friend to keep their existence in their environments. They share anything with another friend, they have spent time together as the habit of their lifestyles. Sometimes, it will be the most activities they fond.

“Makin’ out on living room couches” (stanza 2 line 10)

This part is shown as the state that their activity like that is becomes common activity. It is another side of them as human being. It doesnt give good feedback at least those activities accompany them when they are growing up.

In the other side,the environment influences toward individual or the individual influences toward the environment absolutely shown in the way the American kids behave. From friends will make some groups of friend and somebody’s behavior influences another one’s behavior. There are a good behavior and bad behavior, but it can not judge as an impact but it will judge as feedback.

The applying of psychology of behavior toward someone will encourage that there is a relation in behavior with the pride which American kids have. Skinner’s assumptions : “ Behavior is lawful”, the American kids live in the developed country, America. America of course is developed country and has the rule toward the citizens in America. Democracy in America makes multicultural in America melt up together. American kids are part of of the Americancitizens. They are American people who are still young

American kids like the younger generation in General, the guidelines that formed on the idea evolved from a variety of cultures, so often times they are considered the best, modern culture, and advance compared to the younger generation in other nations. However, American kids keep grown and behave accordance with the rules. For example, they pay attention education for their future and not completely has a wrong association.

The second of Skinner's assumptions says "Behavior can be predicted". As the previous analyze that the environment influences toward individual or the individual influences toward the environment. Either the behavior of individual or the behavior of groups can be predicted. The bad behavior of individual is coming from bad behavior of group, and it is influenced each other. American kids live in America, live in multicultural generation and they get freedom and prosperity. It can be predicted that they can grow up and being people depend on what they got and learned.

Another Skinner's assumption says "Behavior can be controlled ", All form of behavior shown by American kids, not apart from up bringing they had received. As the developed country culture also teaches their form of optimistic and confident. Thus, the pride which they is a form of confidence toward what they are doing and what they are like. They are proud with their behaviors as their life styles

CONCLUSION

Kenny Chesney's "American Kids" is the song which tells American kids behavior. The behavior is related to the habitual activities and the life styles which is described by the song lyric. In the song lyric, the songwriters convey that there is pride in American kids' behavior. The songwriters tell the readers and the listeners about the American kids' habits everyday. Other than that, the songwriters also show the readers and the listeners about anything around the American kids live which are identical with American identity.

The intrinsic and extrinsic elements of this lyric are analyzed by the writer. For the intrinsic element, the diction and symbol as figurative language is chosen by the writer as the songwriters use in the lyric. The songwriters also use suitable diction and symbol in order to make the listeners more aware of the meaning of the lyric. For the extrinsic elements, it can be said that there is the pride in American kids' behavior. The American kids are proud of their life, their habit, their background, their origin, their community and also their country. They were described clearly by the song lyric. Therefore, it can be concluded that from the analysis of the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the lyric, the writer could understand that there is the pride in American kids about their life styles as seen in Kenny Chesney's "American Kids".

REFERENCES

Burton. S.H.1974.*The Criticism of Poetry Second Edition*.London: Longman Group Limited.

Cullen, Jim.2003.*The American Dream : A Short Story of an Idea that Shaped Nation* .Oxford : Oxford University

Malone, John C.1990.*Theories of Learning: A Historical Approach*.New York: Wadsworth Pub.

Meyer, Michael.1990.*The Bedford Introduction to Literature*.Boston: Bedford Martin's Press.

Oxford English Dictionary. 2005. *Regular*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wellek, Rene and Austin Warren. 1963. *Theory of Literature (3rd ed)*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

"kenny-chesney-conan-american-kids".*billboard*.Copyright 2014.access date.web

"kenny-chesney-american-kids".*songchops*.Copyright 2014/09.access date.weB