

The Pennsylvania State University

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**FROM DRESS SHOES TO FLIP-FLOPS**

**A STUDY ON THE SHIFTING OF IMPERIALISM AND CULTURAL IDENTITY  
IN MALAYSIA**

A Thesis in

Communications

by

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## **Abstract**

This paper explores the differences in imperialism and its impact on cultural identity formation. Taking Malaysians as model, Malaysia is a country founded by the colonization of the British Empire. In present days, a new form of colonization through media imperialism, specifically American media, is circulating as the aftermath of globalization. Two questions explored throughout this research are does the Malaysian case demonstrate that media imperialism is more significantly impactful than traditional imperialism on cultural identity formation and did the impact of media imperialism create a new cultural identity among Malaysians? A survey (n=365) is collected and analyzed to answer these questions. Additionally, theoretical frameworks were used to gain further understanding of the topic.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter 2. LITERATURE REVIEW	5
Chapter 3. METHODOLOGY	16
Chapter 4. ANALYSIS	
a) Does the Malaysian case demonstrate that media imperialism is more significantly impactful than traditional imperialism on cultural identity formation?	23
b) Did the impact of media imperialism create a new cultural identity among Malaysians?	32
Chapter 5. CONCLUSION	41
Appendix A: Sample Survey	45
Appendix B: Tables and Charts	49
Bibliography	58

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

*“Laaa.. Don’t tell me nak keluar pakai selipar je. Pergi tukar and pakai kasut. Kalau jumpa kawan mama macam mana? Please don’t embarrass me!”*

Translation: “Don’t tell me you’re going out with flip flops. Go back and change to a more suitable shoe. What if we meet one of my friends? Please don’t embarrass me!”

Those were the words spoken by my mother to me, circa 2014, when we wanted to have lunch in a mall that is a five minutes drive from home in Malaysia. A couple of days prior to the incident, I was out with my friends and all of us were wearing flip-flops to the same mall. No one bats an eyelid.

Above is one example of a common occurrence where the disparity between two generations of Malaysians is apparent. The young generation in Malaysia tends to boast themselves as being “Americanized” which equates to being more modern in thinking. The “Americanized” attitude does not necessarily have to be real but more on what was portray in the media. On the other hand, the older Malaysian generation is more skeptical in adapting any changes of American culture. Often they tend to compromise their way by actively choosing what to follow. For example, most parents do not approve in wearing flip-flops outside of home yet would dress in jeans.

Why does the difference in mindset of these two generations occur? Malaysia was once a country that was colonized by the British. As a result, the repercussion of colonization can be observed in Malaysian culture. Colonization, defined by Merriam-Webster, happens when there is control by one country (the British) over another area and its people (Malaya). Fast forward to current time, a new form of colonization—media imperialism—is ensuing. And once again there may be a shift in the Malaysian cultural identity.

## **A Brief History of Malaysia**

Malaysia is a country that is located in South East Asia. It is a combination of the Federal Union between Malaya, Sarawak, Sabah, and Singapore, in which first became a country in 1963. Singapore left Malaysia in 1965 due to conflict of interest.

To comprehend the foundation of Malaysia, we have to observe from three distinct regions—Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak. Malaya, or now is known as Peninsular, was developed by the British. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the British East India Company traded with India and tried to look for a base in Malaya (Cheong, 2006). Malaya was a strategic base as it was located in the central of the straits (Cheong, 2006). Due to the struggle of power between the Malayan states, the British became more involved with Malayan's politics (Lambert, 2015). They expanded their influence with forcing each state to accept British protection (Lambert, 2015). The protected states later formed a federation.

During early 20<sup>th</sup> century, rubber industry was at its peak. There are many land areas to be developed in Malaya but with scarce labor (Yamada, 1971). As a solution, the British brought in Chinese from China and Indians from India to become miner, planters or merchants. This complies with how Americans bringing in Africans but instead of being slaves, the British provided job opportunities to them. Instead of establishing direct control over the local people, British tried to be more benign by importing outside labor. The living condition in China and India during that time was unstable. High population in both countries, political instability during the Manchu Dynasty in China and common occurrence of natural disaster in India made Malaya a better country to migrate (Zainuddin, 2001).

Across the South China Sea, in the East of Malaysia, lies Sabah and Sarawak. Popularly known as Borneo, both states hold indigenous people of different tribes. A British explorer, James Brooke governed Sarawak from 1841 to 1946 (Zainuddin, 2001). Sabah, on the other hand, used to be a part of the Brunei realm. The colonial presence was less evident, but in 1888, they became British protectorates to forestall other European power. Nonetheless, most of their bureaucracy were lead by local chiefs and was autonomous.

### **Globalization, Media Imperialism and Cultural Identity**

With the help of technology and satellite, people could access information and media without having to leave the comfort of their home. Moreover, the ability for media to be retrieved throughout the world is an outcome of globalization. Globalization can be perceived in many ways: “the unity of capital”, “disappearing of borders between nations and increasing the international division of labor”, “the similarity of values among different cultures” and “everybody and everything together” (Khvaborsk, 2009).

The emergence of globalized media system allows many firms that dominate United States’ media to dominate worldwide. This is due to United States being the largest media provider in the world. Herman and McChesney claimed that “The global media system is dominated by three or four dozen large transnational corporations with fewer than ten mostly US based media conglomerates towering over the global market” (McChesney, 1997, p. 189).

Additionally, Schiller (1976) concluded that the West—in this case, United States, due to them having enough financial and resources, able to produce the majority

of film and media. The smaller countries merely have to purchase those productions, as it is much cheaper than having to create their own. Similarly to the case of Malaysia, American media is becoming a dominant media in Malaysia.

Looking into cultural identity, it refers to identification or a sense of belonging towards a group (Chen, 2014). It is a representation of a person and would always be negotiated (Hall, 1992). Often the identity is constructed and maintained through the sharing of collective knowledge (Chen, 2014). With the overconcentration of American media in Malaysia, this collective knowledge can be changed accordingly. Not only that, one of Hall's theories of globalization is that it could either lead to the strengthening of local identities or the production of new identity (Hall, 1992).

With the two concepts—imperialism and cultural identity-- in mind, these two questions can be raised:

RQ1: Does the Malaysian case demonstrate that media imperialism is more significantly impactful than traditional imperialism on cultural identity formation?

RQ2: Did the impact of media imperialism create a new cultural identity among Malaysians?

By answering these questions, I am exploring the changes in the cultural identity among Malaysians due to the shifting of imperialism. This will provide a deeper insight to the inner workings of cultural theorists such as Hall, Fanon, Baudrillard and Jenkins. As a result, a greater appreciation for Malaysian cultural identity can be obtained.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

In this chapter, I would be looking into media imperialism and cultural identity exclusively before merging both concepts together. Past studies and related article are analyzed to find similar pattern and weaknesses being identified. This would be helpful in developing my thesis.

#### **Media Imperialism and Cultural Identity**

After the Second World War, the term imperialism became a theory that refers to the relations of power among developed and underdeveloped countries (Schiller, 2001). As time passes and laws formed, countries prefer to be independent and free from outside forces. Nonetheless, a new system of imperialism could be observed to be on the rise in the form of mass media or what is known to be media imperialism.

In order to understand media imperialism, one must look at the fundamental aspect of it. Boyd-Barret defined it as “The process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution or content of the media in any one country are singly or together subject to substantial external pressures from the media interests of any other country or countries without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected” (Boyd-Barret, 1977, p. 117).

The level of imperialism may vary according to the ownership, structure, distribution and content (Boyd-Barret, 1977). However, it is relatively difficult to measure them due to free access to the Internet. The Internet is an open network, and there is no specific system to monitor individual’s usage of it.

Most often, over concentration of media—or media homogeneity-- is the main effect of a lost or lessened of national identity. Instead of a renewal of identity, media imperialism may influence smaller nations through adaptation of culture. Some Malaysian journalists had shared their concerns on this adaptation of culture in Malaysia specifically among youth. Ku Hussain (2001) writes, “.. the negative element of global media was transmitted through the Hollywood film which is full of sex, violence, science fiction, etc. Most of the film produced in Hollywood is an example of homogenization of culture by the US” (Ku Hussain, 2001). Similarly, Mohd Pileh and Zakaria consider, “The influence of Americanization can also be seen through the entertainment and music channel which succeeded in creating a younger generation who follows Michael Jackson and Madonna as their idols” (Mohd Pileh & Zakaria, 2001).

An article dated in 1998 explores the impact of American media to Malaysian culture. It writes, “Yet most TV ads (in Malaysia) are modeled on American versions, and usually feature actors of indeterminate ethnicity. Often the ads play off viewers’ vast vocabulary of U.S. pop culture, as in one commercial for a cellular telephone company: “Hello darling?” says a construction worker in a bad American accent. He is calling his wife on a cell phone; She is in the hospital having their baby. “I want to call him Elvis instead of Rocky!”(Rosenfeld, 1998) This article further highlights the influence of American culture in Malaysia.

Cultural identity is another topic on its own. Culture is “the values, beliefs, thinking patterns and behavior that are learned and shared and that is characteristic of a group of people. It serves to give an identity to a group, ensures survival and enhances the feeling of belonging” (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2010, p.118).

Identity is the definition of one's self. It is a "person's frame of reference by which he perceives himself." Identities are "constructed by an integral connection of language, social structures, gender orientation and cultural patterns" (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2010, p.118). Culture and identity combined is "self-identification, a sense of belonging to a group that reaffirms itself" (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2010, p.118).

Friedman looks at cultural identity in different layers. The variations of cultural identity are usually expressed from the strongest to the weakest link. Individuals are mostly influenced by 'race, or biological descent' and least influenced by 'lifestyle, or way of life, which may or may not have a basis in tradition' (Friedman, 1994, p. 30). Hall writes on cultural identities in two different ways of thinking. The first position defines cultural identity as "one shared culture, a sort of collective one true self, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed selves, which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common (Hall, 1992, p. 223). The second position writes cultural identity as a "matter of becoming as well as being" (Hall, 1992, p. 225). It does not exclusively represent the past but the future as well. A recurring theme in this two research is that cultural identity is never fixed and could change over time due to outside influence. Similarly, Paul Gilroy (1991), Jackson and Penrose (1993) and Maurer (1997) also demonstrate how the meanings for a cultural identity changes over time and are usually influenced by power struggle.

According to Collier and Thomas (1988) Cultural Identity Theory, culture is one of the many identities expressed in communication encounters. It is the extent to which one is a representative of a given culture behaviorally, communicatively, psychologically and sociologically (Collier & Thomas, 1998). It becomes apparent through social

comparison usually by social interaction. Thus, one of the best ways to observe cultural identification is through social observation. Social observation is when researchers examine people in a natural or neutral setting (Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000).

For the purpose of this study, the culture I would be focusing into is the core traditional values Malaysians upheld. This includes family values, monarchy system, dress code and class system. These four values are concluded through social observation including first-hand observation from growing up in Malaysia. Additionally, Abdullah and Lim develop a model of Malaysian culture from an anthropological approach that includes relationship-task (dress code), hierarchy-equality (class system), harmony-control (monarchy) and high context-low context (family values) (Abdullah & Lim, 2001). Another research that focuses on Malaysian culture is the Geert Hofstede (2001) model. Malaysians score highly on power distance that shows they accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and do not need any justification (class system). In individualism, Malaysia indicates a collectivistic society that emphasizes on loyalty and close long-term commitment (family values). Also, Malaysia has a normative culture, which is described as a society that exhibits great respect for traditions and a strong concern with establishing the absolute Truth (dress code and monarchy) (Hofstede, 2001).

One of the fundamental ways to observe imperialism is through firsthand experience. Many past research that tackle this issue is written by the colonizer himself. Some popular example in the Malaysia case; Sir Frank Swettenham (*British Malaya*), Rupert Emerson (*Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule*) and J.M.Gullick (*Indigenous Political System of Western Malaya*). Consequently, the works by Fanon and

Stuart Hall highly influence this paper. Both theorists are relevant as they spoke from the ‘outsider’ point of view looking inside while being an insider at the same time. In Fanon’s *White Skin, Black Masks*, he explains the relationship between people of color—Black Antillean—and the colonizer—the French (Fanon, 2008). One of his critics is the way some people embraced the colonizer way of thinking instead of their own. Also, he looks into the concept of dual consciousness where the colonized subject has to simultaneously embrace two different cultural identities (Fanon, 2008). In this study, the ‘people of color’ would be Malaysian while the ‘colonizer’ is the American media or the British Empire. In Hall’s *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, he explores the issues of identity, cultural practices and cultural production (Hall, 1990). A significant concept that could be applied to this paper is that him bringing in Derrida’s theory to understand the difficulty for the Africans to imitate the Westerns. The usage of the word “differences” can be taken into several meanings. Hall explains that the meaning of a word is never finished or completed, but would be moving to encompass other, additional or supplementary meanings. He further interprets the idea of cultural identity in *Modernity-An Introduction to Modern Societies* (Hall, 1992).

Media imperialism could only occur when there is globalization. Likewise, globalization is the outcome of time and space compression. What is then the time and space compression? David Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity* argues that social factor such as economic globalization and a rapid spread of information made it possible for media to compress the experience of space and time (Harris, 2003). Similarly, Marshall McLuhan used ‘implosion’ to explain the process where in the globalized world, society is more closely unified through networks. As a result, a ‘global village’

emerged as a sensory connection (Harris, 2003). A global village is considered as a single community connected electrically (McLuhan, 1966). “The world has become compressed and electrically contractors, so that the globe is no more then a village” (Murray, 2006, p. 31). Today, global village can be applied to describe the Internet and World Wide Web. This ‘village’ differs from nations due to the immediate movement of information in all possible way and time. According to McLuhan, this enhanced “electric speed in bringing all social and political functions together in a sudden implosion has heightened human awareness of responsibility to an intense degree” (McLuhan, 1966, p. 20). Since everyone is able to receive the information simultaneously, this forces society to be more unified and involved.

Further, due to “destruction” of space through time, the world seemed smaller, and information could be obtained almost instantaneously with the compression. The impact of globalization to identity is that time and space is also the basis of systems of representation (Hall, 1992). As identity is also a representation of someone, “the shaping and reshaping of time-space relationships within different system of representation have profound effects on how identities are located and represented” (Hall, 1992, p. 301). With the constant flow of information from the media and the Internet (time-space compression), comparison can be made from users as a guide on what is deemed to be normal, which in turn creates an identity.

### **Malaysian Broadcast Media Industry**

To find if the media imperialism is affecting the Malaysian cultural identity, we need to familiarize on the Malaysian broadcast media industry. “The growth of the media industry in Malaysia was spurred by the New Economic Policy (NEP) following its

implementation in 1970, and especially by the privatization policy that was undertaken in the early 1980s by the government's administration" (Anuar, 2007). In 1982, then Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad launched an initiative, 'Dasar Pandang Ke Timur' (Look East Policy). The new initiative was held to lessen Western influence to Malaysian's economy in particular. Nonetheless, it created privatization to mass media. As a result, although economically Malaysia is trying to change towards the Eastern influence, in media production, Western influence is still evident.

There may be a lack of research and information historically, which directly connects American media to Malaysian community. However, in the list of highest grossing films in Malaysia, it is not until the 14<sup>th</sup> place where a Chinese-Hong Kong film is on the list (Box Office, 2016). In fact, out of 50 films on the list, there are merely three movies that are not American produced (Box Office, 2016).

In 'television traffic-a one-way street?' Nordenstreng and Varis (1973) managed to prove that most of the countries studied did import more than half of their television content—entertainment primarily—from the United States. Specifically, Malaysia imported half of its foreign programs from the United States and 25% from United Kingdom (p. 27). There was only one TV service and possibly two channels during that period. The rest of the programs were local based and divided into three main languages (Malay, Chinese and Tamil). Currently, the broadcast media in Malaysia comprise of public and private networks. The public networks include a more extensive local content as oppose to the private networks. One of the private networks, ASTRO is also the largest satellite channel provider in Malaysia. Almost 62% of the population is subscribed to ASTRO (Dawam, 2015). Out of 213 channels, approximately 40 channels are exclusively

for American media—television shows and/or movies (Astro). Sixteen American television shows are aired at the same time as the United States (Astro).

Watching a movie or television show is usually done in a passive state yet is significant enough to affect one's habits. In 1982, investigators at the University of Kansas reported finding that the excitement that keeps children glued to children's TV shows and videos also creates "a state of generalized arousal" leading to aggression (Rice, Huston and Wright, 1982). In 2013, a team in Japan found that verbal IQ scores, which assess vocabulary and language skills, fell in proportion to the hours of television watched (Takeuchi, et al, 2015).

"Participatory culture is also one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another, or at the least, they care what other people think about what they have created" (Jenkins, 2009). This theory is helpful in observing the after-impact of media imperialism. Some forms of participatory culture include affiliations, expressions, collaborative problem solving and circulations (Jenkins, 2009). It would be interesting to observe if the same pattern is happening in Malaysia and demonstrate which imperialism is more impactful.

In postmodern culture, society now has become so reliant on models and maps that they have lost contact with the real world that preceded the map. Jean Baudrillard introduces hyperreality as a characteristic mode of postmodernity where people are unable to distinguish between fiction and reality. Reality has merely begun to imitate the model, which now leads and determine the real world. The theory of hyperreality is important to my research because it could be helpful in finding patterns to connect both

media imperialism and cultural identity. Since we are currently living in the postmodern culture, there is a tendency for us to be experiencing hyperreality. A question that could be answered using this theory is that if Malaysians are too engrossed with media that they may not necessarily think that what was portrayed in media may not be true.

Huang (2009) in 'Korean Wave — The Popular Culture, Comes as Both Cultural and Economic Imperialism in the East Asia' did a study on how Korean dramas are impacting the East Asia culture. He used Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model and briefly compared Hollywood culture and Korean culture. The idea of television goes beyond providing entertainment but also selling goods and services. The model saw the production (encoding) and consumption (decoding) as two distinct semiological processes. After receiving the information, people's esthetic sense or standard of life may be influenced with what they watched (Huang, 2009). Huang discovered that after watching a television show, people tend to visit the place of shooting to be a part of the scene. Similarly, viewers may also adapt the way the characters' dress and talk accordingly. This study highlights the effect of hyperreality. Viewers visited the place of shooting and imitate the character's behavior as though the character themselves are real.

### **Hybridity**

The concept of embracing the dominant culture, in this context within media, without necessarily losing one's culture is known as hybridity. "Hybridity is seen as capitulation to the seduction of otherness, and not as a mutation and renewal of identity" (Kraidy, 2002, p. 445). Kraidy argues that hybridity, as a theoretical concept has become "a master trope across many spheres of cultural research, theory and criticism"(Kraidy,

2002). Similar to traditional imperialism, media imperialism usually leaves a huge imprint to the subordinate culture in which there will be an assimilation of culture. It exists when two different cultures work together to form a different culture altogether. Since media imperialism may indirectly create a conflict towards the nation's cultural identity, a hybrid culture may appear to reduce the tension.

A study by Kang and Morgan in 1988 explores the concept of hybridity in South Korean culture. The study compared heavy and light viewers of American Forces Korean Network (AFKN), a station that exclusively broadcast US programs. The targeted audience was Korean students that attended an English-language institute. The result showed that although students embrace the American culture and cultivate some acceptance of non-traditional values, for example, women wearing jeans and/or preferring to listen to rock n roll music, but at the same time, they are still inclined to uphold traditionally held values which are an allegiance to the Korean system.

Nonetheless, some studies reject the notion of media impacting culture. For example, Payne and Peake (1977) analyzed a 1968 data on Iceland's youth from three different communities. The first community was already familiarized with American based television programs; the second community had no television influence while the other community had both American and Icelandic television shows. They found that local media had a more powerful effect than impersonal media. The findings imply that research model often underestimated the obstinacy within which people hold on to their own cultures, thereby limiting foreign influence. This study is important to highlight that though media may be influential, there are still some instances where the audiences are still aware of the propaganda.

Media imperialism and cultural identity are two big concepts on the aftermath of globalization. There seems to be a lack of research that combines both topics together. Benyon and Dunkerley (2000) writes, “however, advocates of media imperialism are surprisingly vague about how media messages are actually received in specific cultural contexts and tend to assume that imported media inevitably results in cultural subordination and cultural homogeneity, Many fail to locate media within local discourses and practices that inevitable shape its reception.” The extensive research on the individual topic made it easier to grasp an understanding of the concept. Nonetheless, it was challenging to find an underlying pattern to connect them together. Consequently, this research is intended to bridge the gap between the two topics.

### Chapter 3

## Methodology

Given the geographical distance of the subjects, an online survey method, administered by Google Survey, was chosen to gather data. The scope of the data for this study did not require in-depth face-to-face sessions, further providing justification for this more streamlined process. The survey was posted on my social media account—Facebook—and snowball sampling method was adapted. I used my personal account to post the survey because it is the most effective way to collect data. Respondents are familiar and active with the current technology—being on Facebook-- and most probably updated with popular culture by being on at least one social media platform. Snowball sampling is a method where the initial respondents would refer the survey to another group. Although this method is a little bias as the responses are from the same network of people, a significant advantage is that it “substantially increases the likelihood of locating the desired characteristic in the population. It also results in relatively low sampling variance and costs” (Malhotra, 2012, p. 345).

The survey was divided into six different sections (Appendix A). The first section was to gather demographic information. Since Malaysia is a federation that consists of thirteen different states and three federal territories, each state may represent slightly different cultural identity. For example, back during colonization, the British focuses more on the Central of Malaya compared to the Northern. As a result, the states that are at the central of Malaya are more developed and modernized now in contrast with the states up north. It was important to note the different states the respondents are from. In 2010, it was found that the three highest level of urbanization in Malaysia were from

Kuala Lumpur (100%), Putrajaya (100%) and Selangor (91.4%), which are all located in the Central. On the other hand, the three lowest level of urbanization were Kelantan (42.4%), Pahang (50.5%) and Perlis (51.4%), which are the Northern States (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2011).

The second section of the survey focused on the media involvement among Malaysians. The questions were targeted to proof the existential of American media and its influence in the Malaysian media landscape. The third and fourth section was to explore the impact of media imperialism in one's daily life. Alternatively, the fifth and sixth section was to find the distinction between the core values of Malaysia and if it changes over time.

Most of my research questions were limited to a Yes/No answer. To avoid biases, I decided to separate the questions according to sections. The third and fourth section as well as the fifth and sixth section was related correspondingly. Only two options are given to get a definite answer. The advantages of forced binary survey questions are it is a model to find quick, simple and reliable answers (Dolnicar, Grun & Leisch, 2011). Reliability is the degree to which the result could be accurate, dependable, stable and consistent (Holsti, 1969). Also, to increase the validity of the data, I conducted further research by social observation. Different social media platforms were used as the setting specifically YouTube and Wattpad. Wattpad is an online platform in which users are able to share their written work usually comprise of short stories and fan fictions.

My target audience was Malaysians aged 18 and above. I found the wide range of age necessary to gain a better understanding of Malaysian culture and identity. Since the

age range comprises of a wide range, the time one grew up in would be significantly different from the other. Younger generation tend to have an easier access to media compared to the earlier generation. With the technological differences, I was able to examine any ideological changes and make a stronger conclusion on the impact of media imperialism.

The survey was provided in dual language—English and Malay. Although English is a compulsory language to be learned in Malaysia, Malay is still the national language. Both languages were incorporated to ensure a wider understanding of the subject. One may not be fluent in English yet still able to be influenced by media. Perhaps the respondents that were affected by media while having less fluency in English usage are the most notable.

## **Findings**

The survey was shared from February 13, 2017, until February 15, 2017. Although the time span in which the survey circulated was relatively short, I managed to collect 367 responses. The primary requirement for this research is one has to be a Malaysian and aged over 18. Two responses did not meet the requirement hence eliminated from the data set prior to analysis. The final data set was, n=365.

The data was analyzed to provide general descriptive findings. A more detailed analysis is discussed in next chapter accordingly.

## Descriptive Statistics

- The total number of respondents are as follow:

Age Range	Number of Respondents
18-29	229
30-39	13
40-49	18
50-59	58
60 Over	6

- The percentage of respondents according to states is 28.7% from the northern states (Terengganu, Kedah, Kelantan, Pahang, Perak, Pulau Pinang), 13.4% from southern states (Johor, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan) , 49.2% from the central (Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Putrajaya) and 8.7% from East Malaysia (Sabah, Sarawak).
- The percentage of respondents according to educational level is 60.5% Bachelor's Degree, 10.1% Master's, 2.2% PHD, 8,2% SPM, 15.1% College and 3.3 % other qualification.
- The majority of the respondents, 80.9%, have visited other countries increasing the probability of being influenced by external exposure.
- 84.9% respondents prefer to watch American television shows and movies compared to British produced yet 64.8% prefer the usage of British language in daily conversation compared to American English.

- 82.2% felt connected to the characters that they watched on screen, 76% would adapt and/or quote the languages used watched on screen and 79.2% admitted that they talked and discussed about a character with their friends. Nonetheless, 80.9% prefer not to follow any similar style of dressing of a character.
- 71.3% of the respondents would not join any movie's fan group or follow a page on social media. 81.1% would not share any artwork, fan fiction or YouTube videos online on their favorite show. Similarly, 72.7% do not write a blog, tweet or share a post on their opinions on a certain television show and/or movie.
- 75.5% agreed to abolish the class system, 58.6% would not want to eliminate dress code, 79.9% disagree to end any family values system and 64.1% do not feel the necessity to abolish the monarchy.
- When asked if respondents are willing to wear jeans and/or flip flops, 18.3% would wear them to social events, 12.6% would wear it to work, only 3.4% are comfortable to wear them during a presentation and 96.3% would wear them to casual activities such as going to shopping malls.
- 97% of the respondents would not send their parents to an old folks home.
- 84.1% have equal amount of respect for people that carry a title and those who do not, 12.6% have more respect with titled people while 3.3% have less respect to those that have a title.
- 34.4% respondents are proud of their state's sultan and their accomplishment, 33.1% are not proud while the other 32.5% have other feelings on the royal family.

- The majority of the respondents, 84.1% answered the survey in English in comparison with 15.9% who answered in Bahasa Malaysia.

Looking into the statistics, it is safe to say that this is a fairly representative sample. For example, 79% of the current population of Malaysia is residing in Peninsular Malaysia (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2016). Likewise, 91.3% of the respondents from my survey are from Peninsular. Also, the median age of Malaysia as of right now is at 28 years old (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2016). The sample age collected from the age range of 18-29 is 70.67%. This survey sample is quite useful as it signifies the actual demographic as a whole.

## Chapter 4

### Analysis

Colonists tend to develop a strong cultural identity, primarily as a means of distinction (Friedman 1994, p. 29). Before, it was easier to identify colonization, as it was very apparent. The modern day colonization through media may not be as transparent. Also, the contemporary way of thinking is that it is irrelevant and unnecessary to learn cultural identity and media. The tendency to disregard the consequences of media is because society thinks that they are somewhat immune to it. This, in turn, poses a bigger threat, as there is no apparent action taken by one to curb media influence (Dill-Shackelford, 2009). A study done in the University of Maryland concluded that college students, in general, are apt to think of media as “just harmless entertainment” (Dill-Shackelford, 2009).

Media seemed to succeed more easily in influence one’s thought and actions because it formed an ordinary entertainment in which mass audiences are more willing to enjoy popular culture. Further, Adorno and Horkheimer writes, ‘the experience of pleasure in mass culture is a false kind of pleasure, even part of the trick of manipulating the masses more effectively in order to lock them in the eternal statuesque of exploitation and oppression’ (Ang, 1985, p. 17).

This chapter would be helpful in understanding imperialism particularly in media and raises the question of cultural identity. With adequate understanding, we could be more sensitive towards our culture and feel the need to preserve it.

**a) Does the Malaysian case demonstrate that media imperialism is more significant impactful than traditional imperialism on cultural identity formation?**

Historically, the culture of Malaysia is already assimilated into the Indigenous culture, Malay culture, Chinese culture and Indian culture. As a result, Malaysia boasts its cultural diversity and embraces its unique characteristic. For the purpose of this research, I categorized the differences in race as one Malaysian identity. The variance is only noted when there is another foreign culture interfering such as the British and/or American culture.

In order to observe the difference in imperialism, I look into the usage of language. Language is fundamental in the formation of identity because it is a tool to represent a culture—in which one can communicate with another and a form of expression. As Patrizia Calefato wrote in *The Clothed Body (Dress, Body, Culture)*, “Clothing is explicitly considered as a kind of bodily disguise while language is a disguise of thought” (Calefato, 2004, p. 5) . Since cultural identification is best observed through social observation, the survey provided an overview on how one convey oneself. Additionally, the social observation was conducted through online and offline observation of interaction among Malaysians. Interaction in this context is exemplified by the direct and indirect actions specifically through social media.

I also explored the power structure during media imperialism and traditional imperialism. There seems to be a shift in power structure during both time periods in which makes one stronger than the other. I then talked about participatory culture and how it helped making media imperialism more relevant in Malaysia.

## Usage of language

Malaysia is a multi-racial country, and different languages are being spoken in accordance to one's race. For example, the Chinese tend to speak in Mandarin or Cantonese, the Indians would speak Tamil and the Sabahan and Sarawakian will speak in their own dialect respectively. The Malays are usually the main race that conveys in Bahasa Malaysia. The national language of Malaysia is known as Bahasa Malaysia and English is the second language. Therefore, every Malaysians are required to learn both languages—Bahasa Malaysia and English—in par with the education system. Also, the English that Malaysians learn abide the Cambridge English, in accordance with post-colonial education.

The last question posted asked if one answered the survey in English or Bahasa Malaysia. The majority of respondents chose to answer in English albeit having it as a second language (84.1% in English, 15.9% in Bahasa Malaysia). This finding is not surprising as it exemplifies Fanon's work. In *Black Skins, White Masks*, Fanon explores the usage of language in the first chapter where there is the tendency to favor the colonizer's language more than the national language. "A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. What we are getting at becomes plain: Master of language affords remarkable power" (Fanon, 2008, p. 127). Language is an integral component of a culture's power structure. It could either be a tool for liberation or oppression.

Spivak argues on the similar idea where Westernized thinking is actually often produced to support the Western economic interest. In some ways, knowledge is never innocent as it expresses the interest of the positioner. Relating to the idea of language as

the key component of expressing identity in power relations, the “universal” language now is English only because most of the most powerful countries are speaking in it, hence making it desirable to everyone with less power.

Colonialism is very powerful in the way that it manages to distort one’s perspective to the degree that the person may forget one’s self in the attempt to become another. Spivak writes, quoting Althusser, “The reproduction of labor power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also at the same time, a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they, too, will provide for the domination of the ruling class ‘in and by words’ (Spivak, 2010). Henceforth, there would also always be a contradiction. If one does not learn the colonial language, they are unintelligent, but if they learn it, they are still subservient.

During British colonization, one of the policies used was divide and rule. Although they brought in the Chinese and Indians into Malaysia, they were careful to separate each race to prevent an uprising. The aftermath of this strategy could still be observed. From the survey, I found that most respondents that answered in Bahasa Malaysia are from the northern states of Malaysia.

The primary aim of a national language is to remove the state of racial imbalance and provide everyone an equal type of education (Asmah, 1983). At the same time, English is considered as a universal language, and one has to master it to be able to stand as equal. The concept of dual consciousness is apparent, as Malaysians are required to learn the national language, their own ‘cultural’ language as well as the universal language.

A significant finding of this research is that when respondents were given two sets of daily conversations in English--one signifies the American English hence symbolizes media imperialism and the other signifies the British English which symbolizes traditional imperialism-- 64.8% chose the British version. To explore this result, I decided to look into two other independent factors: level of education and external influence (visited other countries besides Malaysia). The result concluded that there is no correlation between the two factors (Appendix B, Graph 3).

Moreover, it seemed that formal pedagogy is still able to surpass informal or media education where there is the preference for using the English they have been learning instead of what they are hearing. Some of the language cues I used to create the distinction were specific words such as line/queue, restroom/bathroom and shower/bath. However, my survey may be bias because the examples of sentences given are written down. Since American media are widely circulated orally in Malaysia, one may not notice their adaptation of American language. Malaysians' education on British English is through writing; there may be a tendency to choose the option from what they have been learning since young.

### **Power Structure**

Although media and cultural imperialism both benefits the more dominant country, society tends to be more willingly accepting media imperialism, in which I would be exploring in this section. The distinction between the imperialism is that creating an unequal relationship through the practice of promoting and imposing a belief either through media or culture. Media imperialism are usually more accepted because

most often society does not notice or aware of it happening. The power structure in media imperialism is not as apparent. Society thinks that they have the power, for example, to control what they watch and think. Nonetheless, many studies have already proved otherwise. “The most effective kind of propaganda is that which is not recognized as propaganda” (Kilbourne, 2012, p. 27). The beauty of media is that it provides ‘freedom’ and ‘power’ to the people. Likewise, media in Malaysia was used as a ‘fighting press’ during colonization.

The power structure in traditional imperialism is very concrete. There are foreigners coming into the smaller countries and dictate one’s way of life. Often this smaller country welcomes the foreigners in the beginning as the foreigners are usually better established. The explanation of Fanon on this perception quoted in detail:

“A Malagasy is a Malagasy; or, rather, no, not he is a Malagasy but, rather, in an absolute sense he ‘lives’ his Malagasyhood. If he is a Malagasy, it is because the white man has come, and if at a certain stage he has been led to ask himself whether he is indeed a man, it is because his reality as a man has been challenged” (p. 98).

Once the citizens started getting an education, they became more aware and started asking questions. As a result, they would start questioning the foreigners and resisting their influence. They want the freedom and power to control their life.

Also, it is in human nature wanting to be autonomous. This is one of the reasons media imperialism is more powerful than traditional imperialism. Since traditional imperialism is actually a form of colonization, the more dominant country tends to dictate the smaller country. For example, the British started to spread its ideology by providing protection to several Malayan states. They first acted as advisor, in which all political agendas are to be consulted through them. A Sultan usually led the Malayan States. However, once the British started to get involved, most of the leaders decided to be less

interested in the political aspect. The British started to provide income and increase their status to enhance feudalism (Hirschman, 1986). The Malayans (a loose term for indigenous people in Malaya) due to their deep loyalty decided to rebel when they felt the power of their feudal rulers was diminishing and being replaced with the British (Hirschman, 1986).

### **Participatory Culture**

Perhaps another significant reason media imperialism is more impactful than traditional imperialism is due to participatory culture. Although there are active collaborators during the colonization period, often the participants are the colonizer themselves or locals that are forced to adhere the colonizing policies. The locals are usually collaborating with each other only to try and free themselves from the imperialism. Conversely in media imperialism, the involvement is encouraged and rewarded to everyone. In order to encourage a sense of involvement, media producers actively generate products or services that consumers could actually be involved in (Jenkins, 2006). Not only that, people are able to take ownership of the content they chose to interact hence resulting in an illusion of belonging.

The three main participatory culture criteria, which was categorized by Jenkins on the basis of the culture, are:

- 1) Affiliation: Respondents' willingness to join informal memberships on any particular American movies or television shows in online communities such as Facebook groups
- 2) Expression: The need to create an artistic form of appreciation such as fan

fiction writings, YouTube and/ or Vine parodies.

3) Circulations: Eagerness to share and voice their opinion on a particular episode or scene from movies they have watched on a Facebook post.

In the survey, however, a majority of the respondents did not identify themselves as being a part of the participatory culture. “More than one-half of all teens have created media content, and roughly one- third of teens who use the Internet have shared content they produced” reported a study from the Pew Internet & American Life project (Lenhardt & Madden, 2005). The idea of participatory culture is relatively new and mostly targeted towards a younger—teenage level—audiences. Hence, the adverse result is not surprising. I then narrowed my data further by running a filter on respondents’ aged 18-29 and 50 and above which relates to the questions on Section Four of the survey (Appendix A, Section 4).

	Affiliation	Expression	Circulation
18-29	86	44	84
50 above	3	10	3

Table 1: Total number of respondents according to age

We can observe the vast differences in the participatory culture where it is more popular with younger generations aged 18-29. On Facebook, the official Star Wars Malaysia fan club garners 11676 members. In the top 10 most influential Malaysian YouTuber, all of them had created a parody on at least one American movie or television shows. Similarly in Wattpad, out of 20 Malaysian writers, I found 10 of them wrote fan

fiction from a popular American television show. Wattpad is a free service that encourages writers—both amateur and advanced—to share, comment and read each other's work. It is a strong form of community because users are constantly interacting with one another.

My survey does not necessarily convey that participatory culture is happening in Malaysia due to the limitation of demographic and sample size. However, through online observation, it is apparent that it is becoming more popular in Malaysia. For respondents aged 50 above, the majority of them are limited to only using one social media. I could not find any Malaysian Youtubers in that age range unless a cameo in the video. Also, before the Internet, the only form of participatory culture is in print media. Nonetheless, there is still a limited amount of participation.

After analyzing the three factors—usage of language, power structure and participatory culture—I am still unable to conclude if media imperialism is more significantly impactful than traditional imperialism on the formation of Malaysian's cultural identity. Although there is a preference in watching American shows hence exposing to American English, Malaysians still prefer to speak in the traditional British language, in which the version that they are taught in the education system. The power structure in media imperialism is somewhat ambiguous which in turn make it a more powerful tool to dominate one nation with little resistance as oppose to traditional imperialism. Since participatory culture is a relatively new concept, it is hard to make a comparison on the impact between the imperialism. In short, both imperialisms do create an impact on the cultural identity formation of Malaysia, but the level of signification is still unclear.

While I could not answer which imperialism is more impactful, another question that is still hanging is as to whether the latter imperialism is able to create a new cultural identity. I would be answering that in the next section where I will first discuss on the core value of Malaysian identity and how it became the nation's cultural identity. I would then compare the traditional identity with the current identity and see if there are any changes. Lastly, I would also touch on hyperreality as it is an important concept in the postmodern society and how it supposedly affects the reality of that society.

**b) Did the impact of media imperialism create a new cultural identity among Malaysians?**

**Malaysian Cultural Identity**

Before delving further into the analysis, I would like to explore the notion of identity and what would be the foundation of a Malaysian cultural identity. According to the sociological conception, identity “bridges the gap between inside and the outside-- the personal and the public worlds” (Hall, 1992, p. 598). Society becomes apart of a cultural identity when a group of people shares a certain connection with oneself and others. The shifting of identity, in which the postmodern subject, is happening because there is the tendency to assume different identities at different times. “The fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy. Instead, as the systems of meaning and culture representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one of which we could identify with—at least temporarily” (Hall, 1992, p. 598).

What is then the foundation of Malaysian cultural identity? According to Hall, "A national culture is a discourse—a way of constructing meanings which influence and organizes both our actions and our conception of ourselves, ... by producing meanings which we can identify' these are contained in the stories which are told about it, memories which connect its present with its past, and images which are constructed of it" (Hall, 1992, p. 613).

Modeling Hall's five elements of the discourse of national culture, I conclude that Malaysian cultural identity relies on four traditional values; monarchy, dress code, family orientation and class system. As mentioned in the literature review, these four values are the traditional principles of Malaysia. Each value is interconnected and could not exist without one or the other. This criterion is adapted as it is a comprehensive understanding of the national identity. Note that Malaysia is comprised of many different races hence culture. These identifications manage to combine the different cultural races into a unified representation. Although Hall uses five elements, for the purpose of this research I am only including four elements in conjunction with the four Malaysian beliefs.

The first element according to Hall is that *the narrative of nations*, in which an extensive explanation of national histories, literature, the media and popular culture as a significant aspect of identity which could be observed in the Malaysian monarchy. An emphasis of the monarchy system has always been present in classic literature and national histories. Tracing back to the root of Malaysia's history, one would definitely come across Melaka (also spelled as Malacca in English) as it represents the golden age of Malaysian history. In the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, the Straits of Malacca was well known among travelers. Although there may be a lack of concrete written history on pre-Melaka period,

the Melaka Sultanate has a lot of recorded documents. The written documentation of Sultanate in different states made the reconstruction of Peninsula's history more concise (Abu Bakar). Moreover, the federal constitution of Malaysia established the federation as a constitutional monarchy. An article extensively discusses the importance of preserving the Malaysian monarchy as it has been around for more than 700 years (Khalid, 2014). It would be a waste to disregard this system just to be updated with modernization (Khalid, 2014).

The second element is the emphasis on *origins, continuity, tradition and timelessness*. Taking family values as a model, this foundation holds up from primordial. From the survey, almost 80% respondents felt the need to retain family values and 97% of them would never send their parents to an old folk's home. "The essentials of the national character remain unchanged through any vicissitudes of history. It is there from birth, unified and continuous, 'changeless' throughout all the changes, eternal" (Hall, 1992, p. 614). It is important to note that in this case family does not necessarily confine to the primary blood-related individual. The foundation and importance of togetherness—being a family-- is taught since young. Additionally, almost 5% of the respondents decided to classify themselves as a Malaysian instead of their individual race. Malaysian current Prime Minister, Datuk Seri' Najib Razak introduced the term 1Malaysia where it acts as a unifying tool to emphasizes the cultural tradition of a united nation.

Dress code is another element of Malaysian cultural identity, which is the *invention of tradition*. Hall describes this as "a set of practices, ...of a ritual or symbolic nature which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviors by repetition which automatically implies continuity with a suitable historical past" (Hall, 1992, p. 614).

Before the arrival of British, the way Malaysians' dress is in accordance to the cultural upbringing, usually the race's traditional clothing. Dress code is a set of tradition that was introduced during the British colonialism and had upheld. In Malaysia, people that do not dress up to par are often coded as the lower level of society. Apart from dressing up for formal events, Malaysians are required to maintain a certain way of dressing at certain place and time. For example, one may be turned down for wearing flip-flops if they would want to dine in a restaurant. Some local universities require students to be in formal wear when attending daily lectures. Also, all schools in Malaysia—both public and private in primary and secondary level—mandates a uniform adhering the school policy.

The narration of national culture of *foundational myth* can also be observed through Malaysian class system. Before, Malaysia is founded by the basis of *Raja* (King) and *rakyat* (people) from the monarchy system. Hence, there are only two divisions where there is a King and the people. The people are all equal. In order to govern a more efficient bureaucracy, the British introduces the class system. As a result, the people instead of being “one” and equal, is now divided. There is not much difference between the British class system and the Malaysian class system. The system divides people both in the economical sense (being rich) and cultural signification (born royalty)-- as oppose to those that are not rich or not born royalty. People that are higher in class are usually more superior to the lower class. Rarely would different classes of people socialize with each other unless necessary. When Malaysia is created, the class system had already become a common norm, a myth that is being embraced. People that are born into the family of power tend to stay in power. It is very difficult for one to rise up the social

ladder unless given a 'title' from the state. Citizens are disenfranchised from expressing their resentment and seemed to accept their fate by thinking it is "just the way of life."

### **Hybridity Culture**

Since identity is always negotiating and changing, Malaysians' cultural identity is no exception. It used to be a traditional identity but as Malaysia grow and attaining outside influence, their identity is shifting into a mixture of Malaysian, American and British. There may not be a new cultural identity altogether but pieces of the different culture or what is known as the hybridity culture. Hybridity is more on the assimilation of culture. Also, often the adaptation of American culture may not be necessarily accurate but from what is depicted from the media.

The hybridity culture in Malaysia that is most prevalent now would be the class system. Based on the findings, the only hierarchy that Malaysians would want to abolish is the class system. The main difference between American and British/Malaysian system is the class structure of labor and the noble. In America, everyone is equal and the American dream can be achieved if one works hard enough. Some popular movies that support this claim are *The Pursuit of Happyness*, *The Great Gatsby* and *Catch Me If You Can*. Class is not predefined but could be obtained. Malaysians used to be in a conventional mindset where the division in class is apparent (Azlan, 2014). Nowadays, the mindset has been cultivated where everyone is somewhat equal to one another. At the same time, there are still 'titles' given to the individuals that contribute to the country's development. Looking into the result, a majority of the respondents would want to abolish the class system yet they still have equal amount of respect to people that carry a title and those who do not (Appendix B, Graph 4 & Chart 1).

Americans tend to be more individualistic compared to Malaysians high family oriented values. From the survey, 79.9% respondents feel the need to retain this values and only 11 out of 345 respondents would send their parents to an old folks' home (Appendix B, Graph 4 & Chart 2). Although this value is the strongest identity among Malaysians, there may have been some leeway around. For example, Malaysians would not send their parents to an old folk home but would still live separately from their parents. A study among Malaysians gathers that 98.4% of adult child would make room for parent in home in an emergency, 85.6% are willing to sacrifice personal freedom to help parents and 99.5% would take care of parents in whatever ways necessary when they are sick (Hamid, 1992). Majority of the participants of that study actually lives away from their parents (Hamid, 1992). Additionally, in an article talking on Malaysians' diaspora, James Huang, a market development manager comments, young professionals that work outside the country are willing to fly their parents and families to them to spend more time. "... the importance and value of family remains very strong even though modern life now places distance between them" (Yoga, 2016). Younger generations are open to relocate themselves—sometimes leaving the country—to get better opportunities yet still remember to take time to be with their families.

From the identity of dress code, it used to be one of the most important aspects of one's daily lives. Women are encouraged to wear dresses while men should be wearing slacks or dress pants. Nonetheless, the style is gearing towards American culture where one would dress more casually and jeans are now a major staple in both men and women's dressing. Earlier this year, a controversy on dress code made headlines after a woman was stopped by security from entering a district office due to her wearing

sleeveless blouse and jeans. The woman ignored the security personnel over the matter and proceeded to the office to complete her transaction. Her husband comments, “We are just paying our rates, renewing our licenses, paying our bills; we don’t have time to ‘dress up’ or rush back to dress up just because we are entering a council. It is petty mindedness, absurd and unacceptable to force us to comply as we have only want to pay the bill and do not wish to waste our time in the premises”(Palansamy, 2017). In Malaysia, there are some places that still enforce strict dress code upon entering. There would be a board situated outside the premise on what is deemed acceptable. Nonetheless, in 2015, a federal minister actually spoke up on this matter where government agencies should not enforce dress code on their visitors after repeated incidents where visitors are denied entry due to inappropriate attire (Palansamy, 2017). Citizens also commented on the article stating their dissatisfaction in having a dress code and the need for flexibility. In a professional setting, many companies tend to be more flexible and starting to impose a ‘casual’ Friday. The dress code is now adhered according to situation in which, 58.6% respondents agree to retain this system. The survey reflects this new thinking in which respondents are more willing to dress casually (shopping and social events). Nonetheless, there might be a probability in dressing casually in workplace but not on certain situations such as giving a presentation (Appendix B, Graph 4 & Chart 3).

The monarch system that is an important Malaysian identity could also be observed going through a hybridity phase. Traditionally, the gap between the king and people was somewhat impassable. With the presence of social media, the newer generation of royal families is beginning to interact with ‘commoners’. People are also

starting to criticize the royal family openly. However, there is still a limit in which the distinction between the royalty and proletariat. In 2016, a 19-year-old man was sentenced to a year in prison for insulting a royal family on Facebook (Ho, 2016). The former law minister, Zaid Ibrahim actually criticized the decision by tweeting, “Everyone on social media, including the Prince, Insults get thrown in. Not everyone is sensible; but no need to jail stupid fellas” (Ibrahim, 2016). ). The monarchy system somewhat obtains a mixed opinion in the survey of which 33.1% are not proud of their kings, 32.5% are proud while 34.4% decided not to give any opinion (Appendix B, Graph 4, Chart 4). The divided outlook may be because it is still considered somewhat taboo to disrespect the kings.

Throughout the survey, we can observe a parallel between the results in which respondents would want to keep or abolish a tradition and sticking with their perspectives after giving specific examples in corresponding to the identity (Appendix A, Section 5 &6). This is the perfect representation of hybrid culture. “Hybrid cultures stratify in unique ways, based on contingency rather than tradition...Hybridity disturbs tradition, and replaces tradition with novel solutions. The solution is one that fits the locale” (Clothier, 2005). Since cultural identity is often negotiated, the overconcentration media may create tension on that identity. In order to dissolve the tension, a hybrid is adapted to accept these different influences simultaneously.

### **Hyperreality**

Cultural theorists have always criticized the concept of hyperreality in post-modern culture. Baudrillard first coined this term in which he finds a lack of originality in the new culture. Hyperreality happens because postmodern society is too reliant on “model and maps”—in this context representation in media—that they lost the real world

that led the map. In other words, society is living in a condition where they are too absorbed with the reality that is created by the media, which often time is just fantasy or a simulation. It is a condition where both representation and reality is displaced by simulacrum (Perry, 1998). Moreover, the simulacrum is a concept in which it is not a copy but becomes valid in its right. Henceforth, with the excessive involvement with media, there is an unconscious effect that makes society conveys to the new reality as the real picture. Media imperialism and hyperreality correlates together in a way that it provides a new reality to the audience and in turn, could create a new identity.

From the survey, I inquired questions to examine the presence of hyperreality among Malaysians (Appendix A, Section 3). 301 respondents felt connected to the characters that they watched on screen. They tend to feel sad when the character dies as though they personally knew them. 278 respondents would adapt or quote the language used watched on screen. 296 respondents do not follow a similar style of dressing from a character. This can be justified through hybridity culture. 289 respondents talk and discuss on a character with their friends. (Appendix B, Graph 5).

Some example of real life hyperreality includes one of the most popular quotes in popular culture is the term, "I am your father" by from the Star Wars trilogy. Due to the release of new Star War movies, many advertisers have been using that quote to promote their brand. Also, one of the popular food chains in Malaysia, Nando's , is known to cultivate famous movie quotes in their social media. The top Twitter trending in Malaysia also always comprises of current American movies and television shows. The Twitter users would discuss with each other and voice out their opinions as though they are a part of the show. The blurring between the representation of actual reality and stimulated

reality is significant in the way that Malaysians do not necessarily distinguish the differences. What was portrayed in the media is considered as the reality hence the culture. The formation of identity is then adapted to the stimulated reality.

So did the impact of media imperialism create a new cultural identity among Malaysians? Although Malaysians went through some changes in the formation of the original cultural identity, they are gearing more towards a hybridity of cultural identity instead of a new identity altogether. This is mainly due to hyperreality in which the American culture is actually modified through the understanding of media instead of the real American culture.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

Going back to my first research question, one may not be able to say that media imperialism is more significantly impactful than traditional imperialism. Both imperialism has made strong impact and it is hard to conclude which impact is more significant. The usage of language still tends to favor the traditional colonizer's language. Most respondents preferred to watch American movies and television show but prefer to speak in British English. Before, there was a struggle in accepting political and cultural imperialism, as the dominant power was overt. Nonetheless, now due to media imperialism, there seems not to be any conflict in taking this new form of cultural imperialism because of its subtleness. Similarly in participatory culture, though a new concept, can be observed starting to secularize among society due to the illusion of having ownership. As a result, society is more tolerant in accepting media imperialism only because oblivious with the power of media.

Secondly, the impact of media imperialism does create a new hybridity of cultural identity. With the constant bombardment of media, one may not need to leave the country to be able to be influenced by another culture. The Malaysian cultural identity—the monarchy system, dress code, class system, family values—are perpetually a myth. A change in the supposed myth tends to occur after receiving newer influences.

Foreshadowing Barthes, myth here refers to “ideology understood as a body of ideas and practices, which, by actively promoting the values and interests of dominant groups in society, defend the prevailing structures of power (Storey, 2015, p. 124). Thus, the signifying meaning changes through out time. Due to hyperreality, an assimilation of

culture is incorporated to fulfill the desired identity. The signification of one's cultural identity is actually only valid during that given period. After globalization and the identity being renegotiated, the "new" identity tends to be hybrid according to the current culture.

### **Limitations**

Due to Malaysia being a colonized country, it is rather difficult to find a well-founded history that only focuses on Malaysian culture before the colonization. This limits my ability to find Malaysian culture before the arrival British. As a result, I am not able to make a comparison between the differences in culture in which how Malaysia is before and after the arrival of British. Also, it is hard to create a hypothesis on how Malaysia will be without the colonization of British. There are limited resources that discuss from the original people's perspectives.

Although my sample population is workable, there is the indeed a slight skew on the age range. The sample is viable in gaining an understanding of Malaysian culture from the perspective of Malaysians themselves. For example, I could create a conclusion that most Malaysians prefer to watch American television shows as opposed to British shows, the participatory culture is more popular among younger generation and family values is the core value of Malaysian culture. The skew in age does not impact the validity of this research because as mentioned earlier in the methodology section, it represents the median population of Malaysian. Further, the method that I used to collect the sample, snowball sampling, also has the inclination to be more one-sided. However, with additional research and social observation, a stronger conclusion could be made to

overcome the biases. During data collection, I also tried to monitor the results by focusing on finding data that the samples are lacking. If there seems to be a shortage of representative from a particular state for example, I will find respondents from that state to fill the survey.

### **Future study**

This study is just the start in tackling the issue of the new form imperialism and formation of cultural identity. A probable next step is asking if there are any indications that the core value of Malaysian culture diminishes due to the emergence of this new hybrid culture? This would further the discussion of media and identity.

In order to increase the precision of this research, targeted age group(s) should be incorporated in future work. This would be more interesting as we could find out if different age group would have a different cultural identity that they identify as. Also, this research is only targeted to Malaysians aged 18 and above. Having a study on youth culture among Malaysians will also be beneficial. The developmental period is usually around the teenage years where there is a higher tendency to explore and learn about one's identity. Not only will we able to emphasis on the power of media but we will also be able to see the thought process on one's cultural identity during that age and compare it with later generations.

Conducting interviews is also helpful in gaining a better understanding of this subject. This research is highly based on a theoretical framework. The next step is to make it stronger and more personalized by having real voices implicating the differences in identity.

Age segmentation and interviews were not feasible for the purpose of this study due to distance and time constraint. My subjects are in Malaysia while I am writing the research in the United States. Although I have direct connections to the sample, I was not able to consociate with everyone.

Despite the limitations of a pilot research as acknowledged above, this study provided valuable insights into the shifting of imperialism, from traditional to media, and its impact on the cultural identity formation in Malaysia. It may be one of the key initial steps in understanding the tendency for Malaysians to choose foreign produced media. This in turn can be the start in encouraging higher quality content from local media in order to attract Malaysian viewers and embracing the Malaysian cultural identity.

## Appendix A

### Sample Survey

#### Section 1-Demographic Info

- Age/*Umur*
- State/*Negeri*
- Race/*Bangsa*
- Educational Level/*Taraf Pendidikan:*
- Have you visited any other country? Y/N  
*Adakah anda pernah melawat ke luar Negara? Y?/T*

#### Section 2-Media Usage

Choose A or B

*Pilih A atau B*

- Do you prefer American television shows/movies or British TV shows/movies?  
*Adakah anda lebih menggemari cerita dari Amerika atau cerita dari Britian?*

Examples/*Contoh:*

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>
Star Wars trilogy	Doctor Who
American Next Top Model	Sherlock
Walking Dead	British Bake-Off
Jurassic Park trilogy	Downtown Abbey
Suicide Squad/Avengers trilogy	

- Which would you prefer to say in your daily conversation?  
*Penggunaan bahasa yang manakah anda akan guna?*

A	B
How's it going?	How are you?
Where is the nearest restroom?	Where is the nearest toilet?
I am going to take a shower	I am going to take a bath
Is the line for the movie long?	Is the queue long to get the movie ticket?
Hey	Hello

### Section 3:

#### Yes/No Answers

- Do you feel connected to the character(s) you watched on screen? IE: Feeling sad when a character dies

*Adakah anda mempunyai tarikan dengan watak yang anda lihat di dalam cerita?*

*Contoh: Merasa sedih jika satu watak itu meninggal dunia*

- Would you adapt or quote any languages used watched on screen?

*Adakah anda akan mengikuti bahasa atau ayat yang diucapkan di dalam sebuah cerita?*

- Would you follow a similar style of dressing from a character?

*Adakah anda akan meniru cara pemakaian watak seseorang?*

- Do you talk and discuss about a character with your friends?

*Adakah anda akan berbincang tentang watak yang anda lihat di skrin?*

### Section 4

If you enjoy a particular American show/movie, would you ...

*Jika anda meminati sebuah cerita dari Amerika, adakah anda akan ....*

- a) Join their fan group or follow their page on any social media outlet?  
*Mengikuti fan group atau page cerita tersebut di dalam laman web sosial?*
- b) Share your art work, fan fiction, YouTube videos online?  
*Berkongsi hasil seni, nukilan, cerita pendek atau video tenten cerita tersebut online?*
- c) Write a blog, tweet, Facebook (etc) your opinions on a certain episode and/or movie?  
*Menulis blog, tweet, Facebook(dll) pendapat anda terhadap sesuatu episod atau film?*

#### **Section 5:**

- Would you want to abolish some traditional social system in Malaysia? (Y/N)  
*Adakah anda akan/ingin menghapuskan sesetengah sistem di Malaysia? (Y/T)*
- a) Class system/*Pangkat dan darjat*
- b) Dress code/*Etika Pemakaian*
- c) Family Values/*Kepentingan bekerluarga*
- d) Monarchy/*Sistem Beraja*

#### **Section 6**

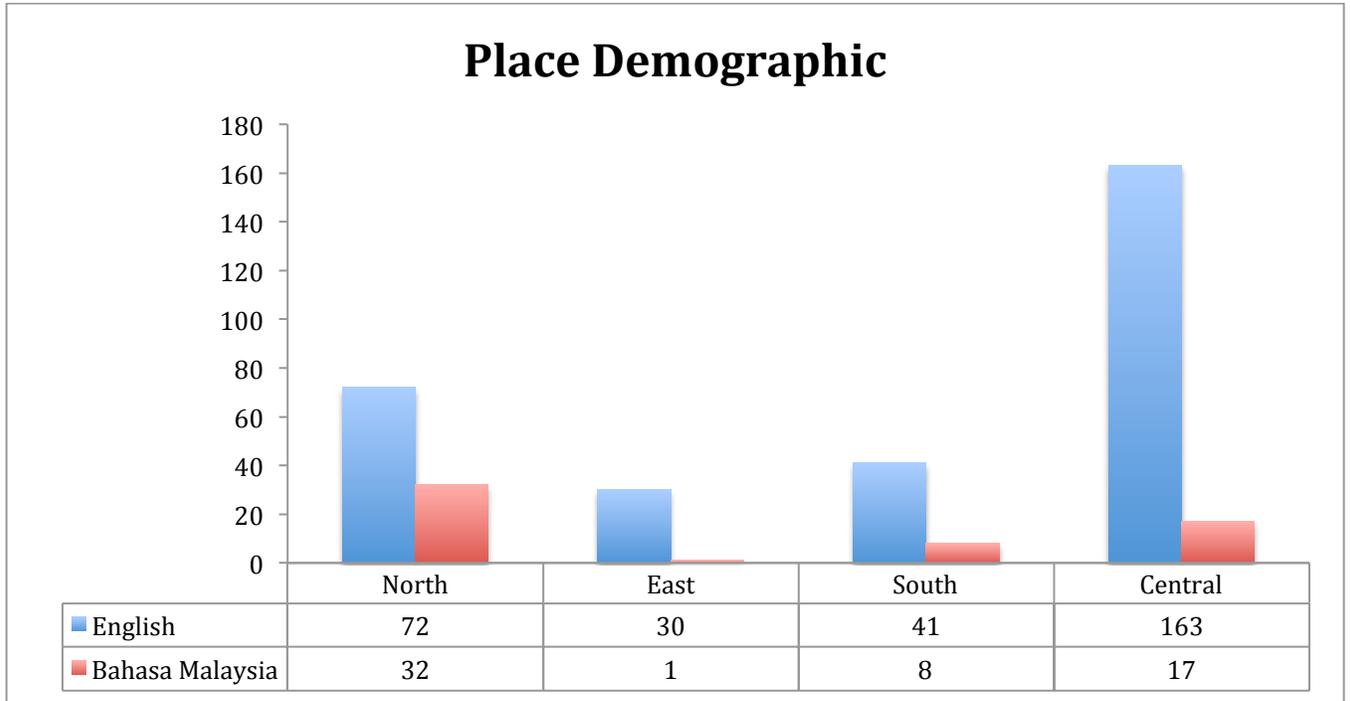
- Would you wear jeans and/or flip-flops to... (Y/N)  
*Adakah anda akan memakai jeans dan/atau selipar ke... (Y/T)*

- a) Social Events/*Majlis Keramaian*
  - b) Work/*Tempat Kerja*
  - c) Giving a presentation /*Memberi pembentangan*
  - d) Shopping/*Membeli belah*
- Would you send your parents to old folks' home? (Y/N)  
*Adakah anda akan menghantar ibu bapa anda ke rumah orang tua? (Y/T)*
  - Would you respect people who carry a title (Tan Sri/Dato, etc) more compared to those that do not have? (More/Less/Same)  
*Adakah anda akan menghormati orang yang mempunyai pangkat (Tan Sri/Dato, dll) lebih daripada orang yang tidak berpangkat? (Lebih/Kurang/Sama)*
  - Are you proud of your Sultans and their accomplishments? (Yes/No/Other)  
*Adakah anda bangga dengan Sultan dan keturunannya (Ya/Tidak/Lain-lain)*

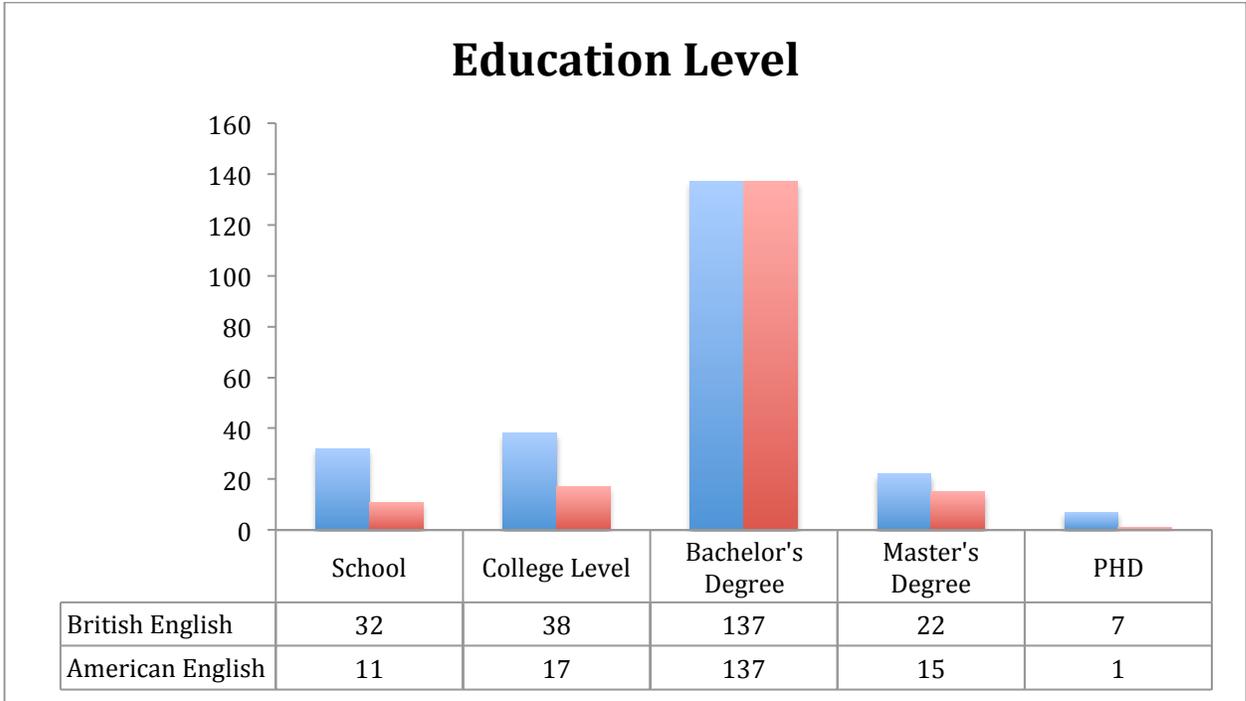
**Section 7:**

- Did you complete this survey in English or Bahasa Malaysia?  
*Adakah anda menjawab soalan ini dalam Bahasa Inggeris atau Bahasa Malaysia?*  
  
(English/Bahasa Malaysia)

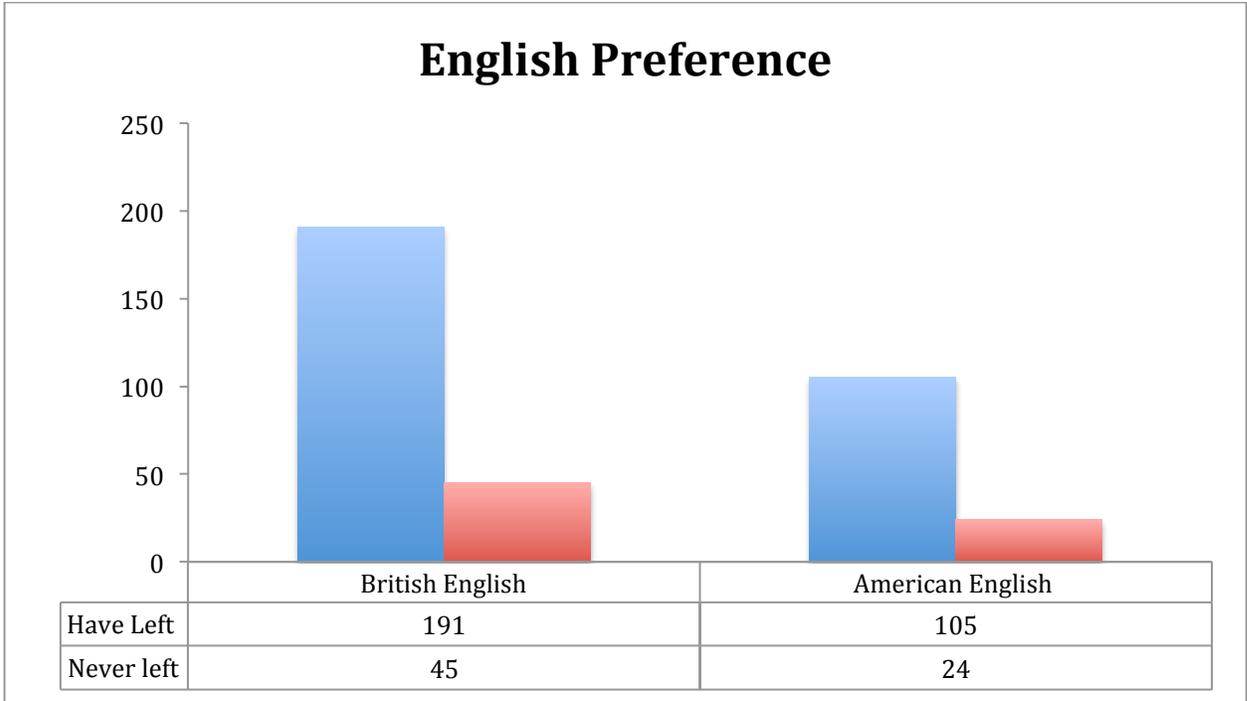
**Appendix B  
Charts & Graphs**



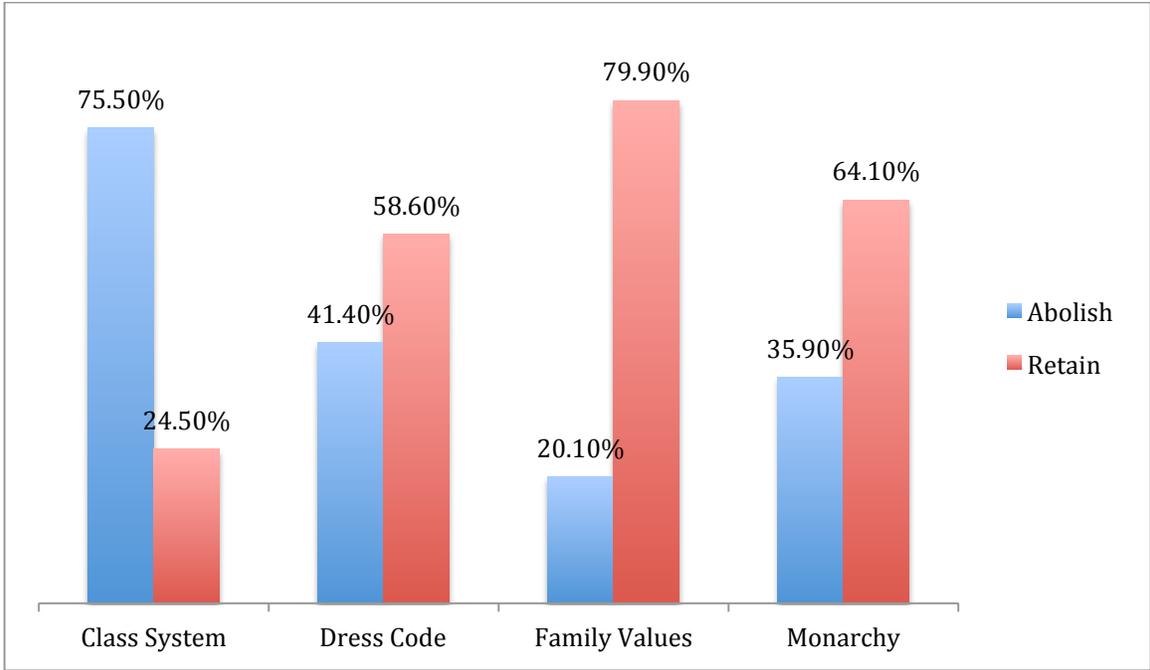
Graph 1: Demographic of respondents according to States



Graph 2: Respondents' education level corresponding to the answer of preferring to speak in American English or British English



Graph 3: Respondents' English preference in correspondence with having left the country or not



Graph 4: Percentage of respondents wanting to abolish or retain the Malaysian cultural identity

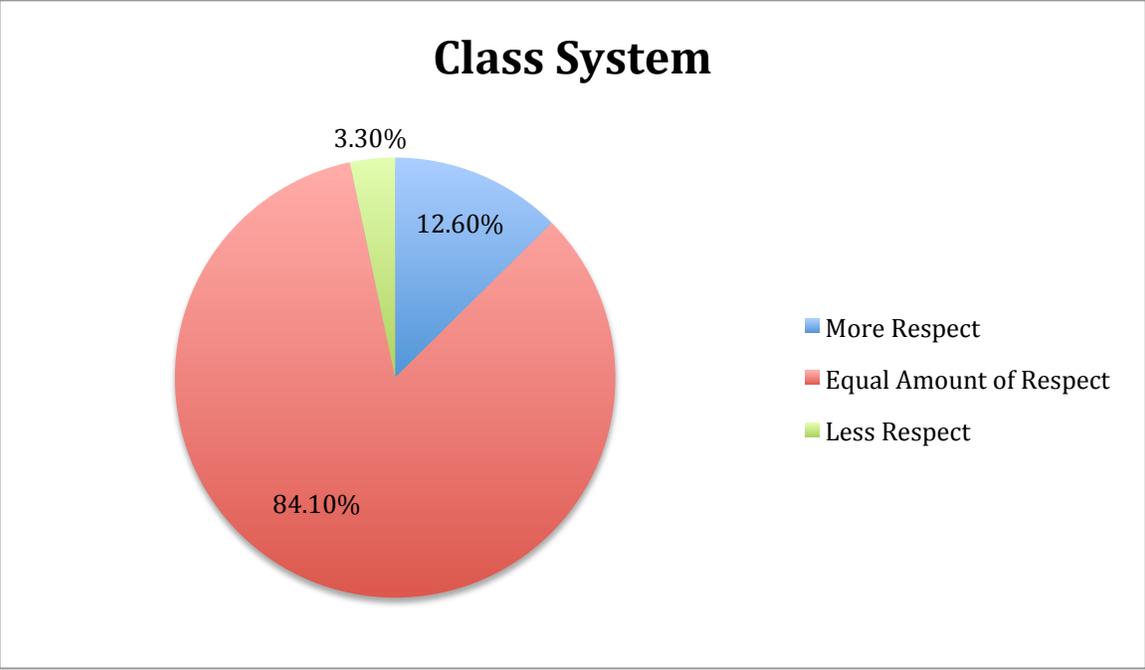


Chart 1: Percentage of respect given to people that carries a 'title'

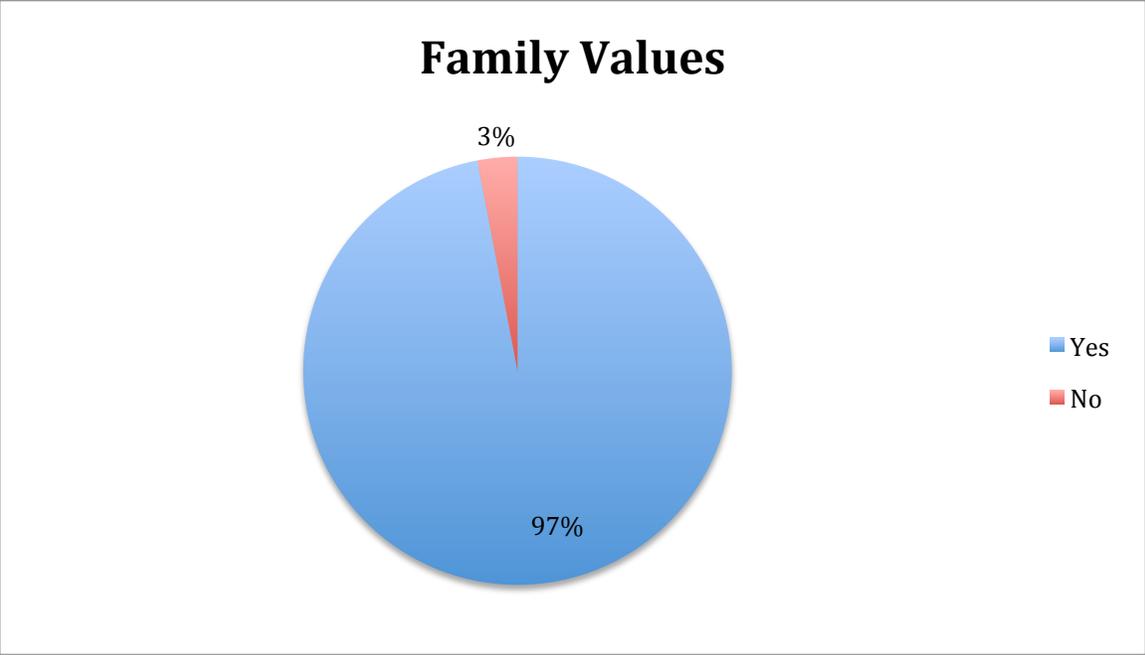


Chart 2: Percentage of respondents that will or will not send their parents to an old folk's home

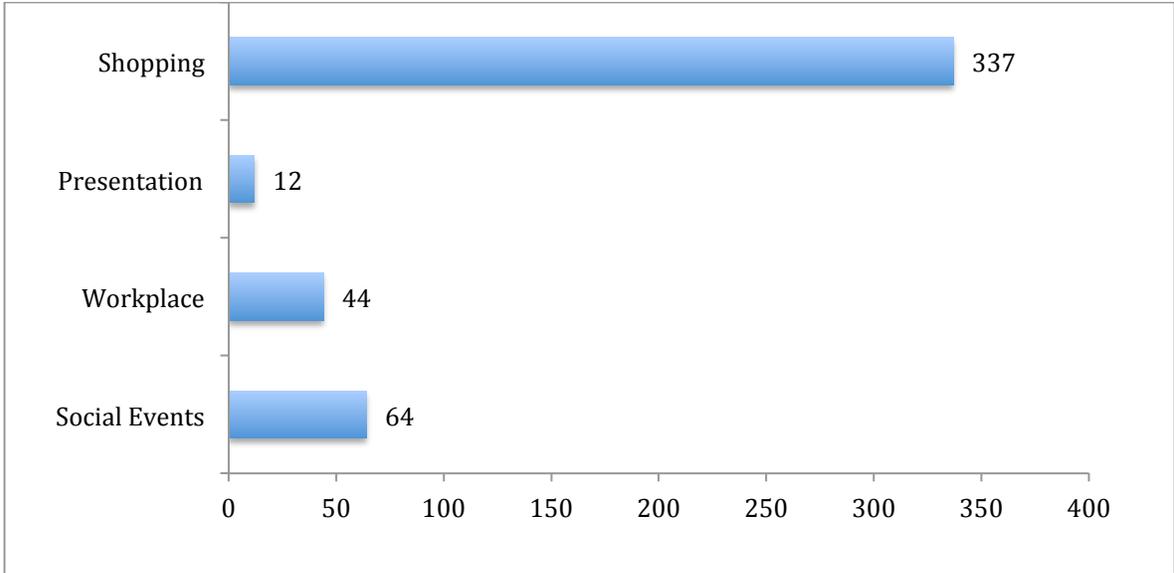


Chart 3: Number of respondents that would wear casually in different setting

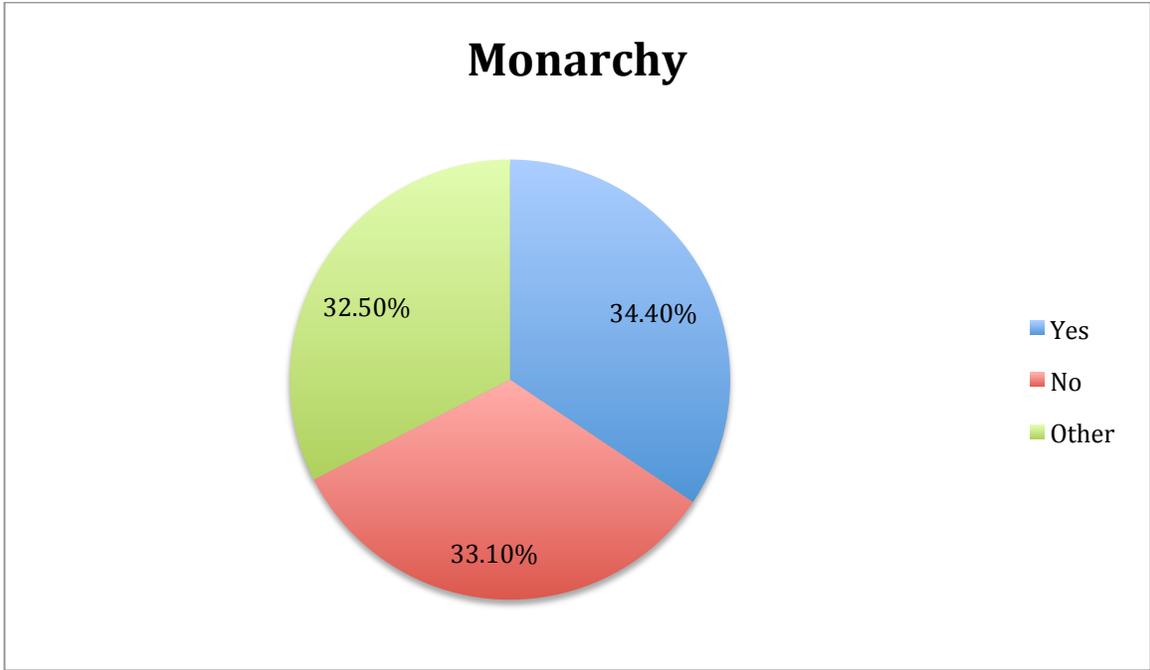
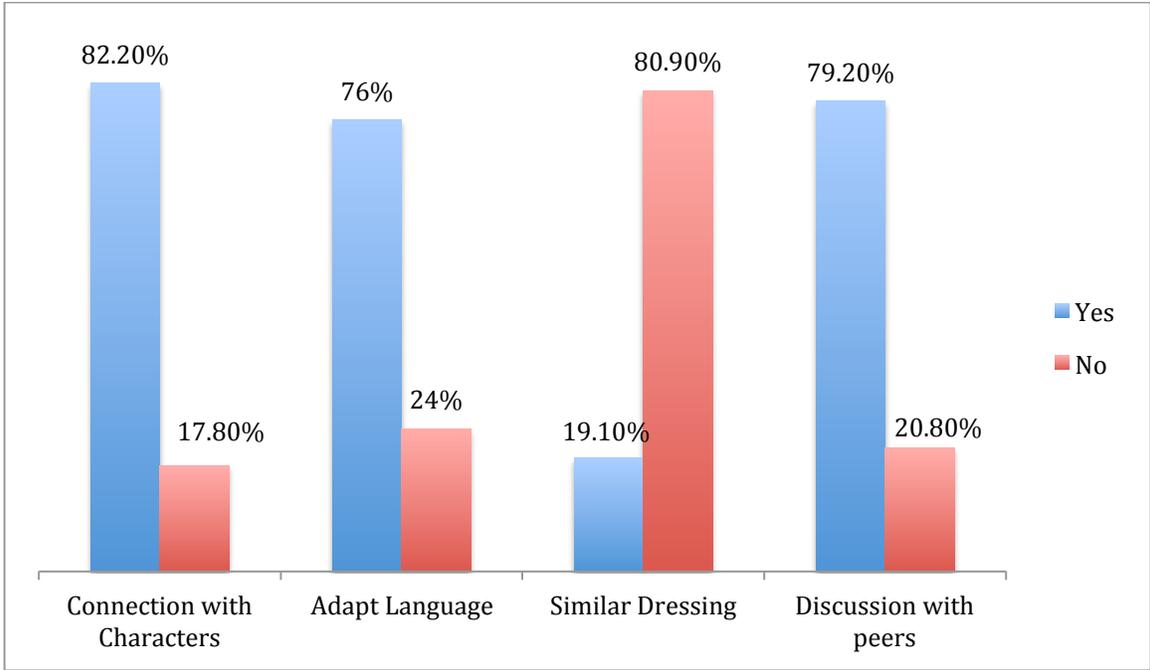


Chart 4: Percentage of respondents that honor the king and royal family



Graph 5: Percentage of respondents that manifest the idea of hyperreality

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