Feminism through Figurative Language in Contemporary American Songs of Leading Contemporary Feminist Music Icons

ลัทธิสตรีนิยมที่ถ่ายทอดผ่านภาษาภาพพจน์ในเพลงอเมริกันร่วมสมัย ของศิลปินดนตรีแนวหน้าผู้ยึดหลักลัทธิสตรีนิยม

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ABSTRACT

The main objectives of this study are 1) to identify feminist values reflected in contemporary American songs of 'third wave' feminist lyricists (Madonna, Pink, Beyonce, Britney Spears, Lady Gaga, and Kesha); 2) to analyze how those feminist values are reflected in those songs through figurative language. The main theoretical frameworks of four major perspectives of third wave feminism (Mann and Huffman, 2005), of figurative language (Perrine, 1977; Arp and Johnson, 2009; Straker, 2013), and of content analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996) were applied. The findings revealed that six major feminist values were expressed in those songs including the themes of women's 1) Ambition; 2) Survival; 3) Pride; 4) Indiv idualism; 5) Liberalism; 6) Women's inferior social status and struggle for life quality. These feminist values were commonly expressed through three common figurative devices—1) metaphor; 2) simile; 3) parallelism. Of these three devices, metaphor was employed most frequently. This device of using shared background knowledge of social values (e.g., beliefs and attitudes) between the lyricists, who are considered as feminist icons, and their audiences through metaphoric symbols of women's behaviors, outer appearances and characteristics, abilities, and so on seems to show the most effective impact in promoting understanding of feminist sensation among their audiences. In conclusion, song, which is a common contemporary genre of literary work, can transcend feminist messages to the society effectively, and the intended messages appear powerful because of the use of figurative language.

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บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์หลักของวิจัยนี้คือ 1.) เพื่อระบุลัทธิสตรีนิยมที่ถูกถ่ายทอดในเพลงอเมริกันร่วมสมัยของศิลปินดนตรีแนวหน้า ผู้ยึดหลักลัทธิสตรีนิยมซึ่งได้แก่ มาดอนน่า พิงค์ บียอนเซ่ บริทนีย์ สเปียร์ เลดี้ กาก้า และ เคช่า 2.) เพื่อวิเคราะห์วิธีการถ่ายทอด ลัทธิเหล่านั้นผ่านภาษาภาพพจน์ในเพลง กรอบทฤษฎีหลักในงานวิจัยนี้ประกอบด้วย ทฤษฎีแนวคิดหลักทั้งสี่ของลัทธิสตรีนิยม คลื่นที่สาม (Mann และ Huffman, 2005) ทฤษฎีภาษาภาพพจน์ (Perrine, 1977; Arp. และ Johnson, 2009 และ Straker, 2013) และทฤษฎีการวิเคราะห์เชิงเนื้อหา (Miles และ Huberman, 1994 และ Coffey และ Atkinson, 1996) ผลการวิจัยเผยว่าความเชื่อ เกี่ยวกับลัทธิสตรีนิยมหกด้านที่ถูกถ่ายทอดในเพลง ได้แก่ 1.) ความปรารถนา 2.) การเอาตัวรอด 3.) ความภาคภูมิใจ 4.) แนวคิด ในเชิงปัจเจกนิยม 5.) แนวคิดในเชิงเสรีนิยม 6.) สถานะทางสังคมของหญิงที่ด้อยกว่าและการดิ้นรนเพื่อคุณภาพชีวิต ความเชื่อ เหล่านี้โดยทั่วไปแล้วถูกถ่ายทอดผ่านภาษาภาพพจน์สามประเภท ได้แก่ 1.) อุปลักษณ์ 2.) อุปมา 3.) ความสอดคล้องของระดับ ภาษา โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่ง อุปลักษณ์เป็นเทคนิคที่ถูกใช้มากที่สุดซึ่งใช้ประโยชน์จากหลักการที่ผู้ส่งสารและผู้รับสารมีองค์ ความรู้ร่วมกันในด้านค่านิยมทางสังคม กล่าวคือ การใช้สัญลักษณ์เชิงอุปลักษณ์เกี่ยวกับพฤติกรรม ลักษณะภายนอก คุณลักษณะ และความสามารถของผู้หญิงในการถ่ายทอดลัทธิสตรีนิยมให้แก่ผู้รับสารสามารถสื่อสารความเชื่อและทัศนคติของศิลปินมาสู่ ผู้ฟังเพลงได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ กล่าวโดยสรุป คือ เพลงซึ่งเป็นงานวรรณกรรมร่วมสมัยประเภทหนึ่งสามารถส่งผ่านเนื้อหา เกี่ยวกับลัทธิสตรีนิยมสู่สังคมได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ และเนื้อหาสำคัญในเพลงนั้นถูกถ่ายทอดได้อย่างชัดเจนผ่านกลยุทธ์ภาษา ภาพพจน์

Introduction

'Feminism', one form of beliefs and values that originated from the social problem of inequality between men and women, has been developing and influencing people's way of life, especially women's lives (Baumgardner and Richards, 2000). The expressions of this belief have been evidenced in various forms including literary work and particularly songs. Song has been one of the popular tools for feminist lyricists to convey their beliefs and values since the nineteenth century. When it comes to how to interpret their song lyrics, there have been several common devices which support their expressions of the intended meanings. Among these devices, figurative language has often been used to express the intended messages in their songs (e.g. Pinichka, 2005). Surprisingly, despite a large number of studies about feminism and/or figurative language in many areas including songs, there is no research that explains the phenomenon about how feminism is expressed in this era through songs, particularly through figurative language. Consequently, it was the main interest of this present study to explore how the feminist values are reflected in American society through contemporary songs. In addition, the role of figurative language in conveying these values through those songs was investigated.

Research Questions

1. What are the feminist values reflected in contemporary American songs through figurative language?

2. How are those feminist values reflected in contemporary American songs through figurative language?

Literature Review
1) Feminist History

The rise of feminism has been one of the great changes of our society. It is the social value that focuses on the fact that in any society, women are treated as inferior to men in various aspects. With this main belief, feminism influences women to take action in order to earn equal social position to men in any aspect of a person's life (e.g., Baumgardner and Richards, 2000). Scholars in this field (e.g. Bailey, 1997; Baumgardner and Richards, 2000; Rosen, 2001; Tyson, 2006) have mainly discussed three waves of 'Feminism' since the seventeenth century.

Movement from first wave feminism to third wave feminism

Dubois (1978) and Tyson (2006) believe that feminism started around the late 1700s, known as *'first wave feminism.'* First wave feminism in the United States began to emphasize the inequalities between the sexes. The great change of this wave was that activists like Susan B. Anthony and Victoria Woodhull contributed to the women's suffrage movement, which led to National Universal Suffrage in 1920 with the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, granting women the right to vote in all states (Conger, 2013).

Later, *'second wave feminism'* originated in the early 1960s and ended around the late 1970s: World War II and America's post-war economic boom brought many American women into workplaces (Whelehan, 1995). This helped them achieve and maintain a new higher standard of living. As well, in 1964, the American Civil Rights movement achieved a major goal with the passage of the Civil Rights Act, which established a ban on racial discrimination, which was considered similar to sex discrimination. Later, the National Organization for Women (NOW) was founded in 1966 to mark the formation of an official group to represent and campaign for women's concerns to improve the quality of women's lives.

Although second wave feminists achieved gaining much improved lives for women and tended to believe that they could speak for all women, they still had some limitations. To illustrate, according to Cooper (2000), second wave feminists emphasized on 'essentialist ideologies', which claim that all women, regardless of their cultural differences, are the same or equal and experience the same oppression. Unfortunately, despite their belief in fighting for women universally, they tended to focus

on western women. As a result, this over-generalization of their struggle against oppression did not sound meaningful to women in other societies. This led to the emergence of several approaches for different women's fights which was the beginning of 'third wave feminism'

Third wave feminism finally originated in the early 1990s and still exists now. Its focus has been on differences of women in the world (Gamble, 2001). Thus, third wave feminists view that several perspectives, especially the four major perspectives of third wave feminism, can serve the values of individual identities of different women in this world (Mann and Huffman, 2005).

The four major perspectives of third wave feminism

According to the historical movements as mentioned above, among various experts, Mann and Huffman (2005) stated that based on the American experience, the new discourse of third wave feminism has led to these four main perspectives that have influenced the movement since the late 19th century. The first two perspectives are the *intersectionality theory* (late 1960s – present) and *postmodernist and poststructuralist feminist approaches* (early 1980s – present). The former has been gradually derived from the final period of second wave feminism, whereas the latter emerged during the later years of the second wave. Two other perspectives that have grown out of integration of the first two perspectives are *feminist postcolonial theory* (1980s – present) and *the agenda of younger feminists* (1990s – present). All of them have been against the essentialist ideology of second wave feminism. However, they have developed some distinct concepts.

Firstly, the *intersectionality theory* stated that various social factors influence women's lives and the oppression of women. For example, differences of women are judged by different races, classes, genders, sexual orientations, and abilities. However, the identity of women shaped by these social factors was recognized by the society as groups. That is, when they judge a woman, they will judge her as a member of particular social groups, e.g. a member of 'white', 'lesbian', or 'lower-class'.

For *the postmodernist and poststructuralist feminist approaches*, instead of viewing a woman's identity as a group, they believed that each woman has a unique identity due to unpredictably different factors. Each woman can be free to have an unconventional life. This free view can be even messy, i.e. a woman's identity can be perceived as 'life-messiness' or 'non-identity'.

The feminist postcolonial theory believed that not only current social factors, but also different historical backgrounds influence women's lives and oppression of women. Although they viewed the identity of women as a group in any specific society like the intersectionality theory, they focused more on each individual's different historical backgrounds. In other words, women in a group may share

common social expression, but the unique life experiences of each individual were strongly taken into consideration as important factors to make them different. In addition, this perspective emphasized that this principle should be applicable to women globally.

With partial influence from the postmodernist and poststructuralist feminist approaches, finally, the latest perspective called 'The *agenda of the new generation of younger feminists'* emphasized their values in uniqueness of each individual woman, especially the specifically unique lives of current young women, which is mainly influenced by specific factors of this era including globalization, urbanization, and media.

To note, these existing feminist values of the four major perspectives of third wave feminism were applied as the framework guiding the analysis of this study. When considering the overall content of third wave feminism, the main features of each major perspective can be summarized as shown in the following table:

Table 1 The main features of the four major perspectives of third wave feminism

Intersectionality theory	1.) Viewing a woman as a member of various social groups: 1.1) race; 1.2) class; 1.3) ethnicity; 1.4) age; 1.5) sexuality; 1.6) gender; 1.7) ability 2.) Focusing on oppression against groups of women which are influenced by several social factors: 2.1) social structure (e.g., law, politics, religion, and economy) 2.2) interpersonal domain (e.g., lover or friends) 2.3) conventional beliefs (e.g., beliefs from religious teachings) 3.) Viewing social oppression on women's freedom portraying their personalities and identities
Postmodernist and poststructuralist feminist approaches	1.) Focusing on individualism (one's unique experience reflecting her basic characteristics) 2.) Viewing 'life-messiness' or 'non-identity' as real freedom
Feminist postcolonial	1.) Despite considering oppression of women within each group, it focuses on differences based on people's historical backgrounds. 2.) Viewing oppression at a global level
The agenda of the new generation of younger feminists	Focusing on a unique individual young woman's life influenced by several social factors especially globalization, urbanization, and media

2.) Feminism and Songs

'Feminism' has been conveyed through songs to the society together with the feminist movement since the nineteenth century. Mallery (1972) noted that 'song', which is a significant form of art, serves as a record of common social activities as well as of values and norms of their authors' cultures. The song composers reflect the attitudes of the times in which they live in songs; social values are often depicted in their songs and sometimes these songs might even represent a solution to social problems (Lugo, 2012). For example, Hercus (2005) revealed that several songs of Ani DiFranco, an American singer, guitarist, poet, and songwriter who is widely considered as a feminist icon, can reach out powerfully to people; this is because they reflect issues like abuse, reclaiming power and getting out of unhealthy situations.

Particularly, in America, feminist movements have been seen vividly and often as a form of music movement. Reger (2007) found that music can play a role in the mobilization and creation of collective identities. Reger (2007) suggested that musicians play an important role in the various aspects of the feminist movement. For instance, it was explained that in the early 1990s, punk music played an important role for the formation of 'Riot Grrrl', a recent young, feminist (sub) cultural movement that combines feminist consciousness and punk aesthetics, politics, and style (Garrison, 2000). Due to this influence, young women were indeed looking for a way to liberate themselves from the roles and stereotypes that society had set, and music helped create a subculture in which they could enjoy this kind of freedom. More importantly, music made the hope that one day, the values that Riot Grrrl placed on women and their compassion for all oppressed people would become the norms in mainstream society. Thus, it is not surprising that songs with feminist themes can be usually found in almost every period of American history since then.

Besides, in the present time, several recent popular music artists, especially American singers, possess great influences on the masses despite their uniquely queer identity and expression (Fogel and Quinian, 2011). Some of these popular music artists have been criticized by the general public and scholars as feminist music icons. Six of these were Madonna, Pink, Beyonce, Britney Spears, Lady Gaga, and Kesha. As well, their contemporary works, which reflected life during this period, were usually reported on by several institutions. One of them which has been well recognized is the Billboard Hot 100 chart, the American music industry standard singles popularity chart issued weekly by Billboard magazine which ranks songs by their popularity.

3.) Figurative Language

As mentioned in the previous section, song is one popular method of feminist expression. When

it comes to the question of how to interpret song lyrics, there are several common devices which support the songwriters' expressions of intended meanings in their song lyrics. Among these devices, figurative language or figure of speech is a device that is used to promote feminist values in songs.

Figurative language is a device of expressing something indirectly by using figurative devices in context which provides a chance for writers to create more than one aspect of meaning; thus, readers have to apply their knowledge to interpret the intended meanings of the contexts (Arp and Johnson, 2009).

In this study, the researcher applies the guidelines suggested by Perrine (1977), which focuses on figurative language used in literary work. According to Perrine (1977), the twelve types of figures of speech include simile, metaphor, personification, apostrophe, synecdoche, metonymy, symbol, allegory, paradox, hyperbole/overstatement, understatement, and irony. Additionally, since the use of other figures of speech (including parallelism, assonance, epizeuxis, polyptoton, proverb, and rhetorical question) was observed in a preliminary survey of 42 songs in this study, the descriptions of these devices suggested by Straker (2013) were also adopted as the additional guidance for the analysis.

Nevertheless, since the findings revealed that only three types of figurative language were employed most frequently, only definitions of these three types of figurative language are presented here.

- 'Metaphor' refers to the indirect comparison of two things based on shared background knowledge between the author and the audience (Perrine, 1977).

- 'Simile' is the direct comparison of two things, indicated by a word or phrase such as like, as, than, similar, resembles or seems (Perrine, 1977).

- 'Paralellism' is the use of repeated patterns in separate parts of a sentence which create emphasis, multiplying attention to each part referenced and thus the power of the sentence (Straker, 2013).

Research Methodology

To address the two research questions, the conceptual frameworks of types of figurative language (Perrine, 1977; Arp and Johnson, 2009; Straker, 2013) and the four major perspectives of third wave feminism (Mann and Huffman, 2005) whose major features of social values can be observed (as presented in Table 1) were employed as the frameworks of the study. In addition, content analysis suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), and Coffey and Atkinson (1996) was applied for

the investigation.

Data for this study was gained from 42 contemporary American songs of six leading contemporary music artists; Madonna, Pink, Beyonce, Britney Spears, Lady Gaga, and Kesha on Billboard's Hot 100 chart between the years 2007 and 2012. Only verses of the songs employing figures of speech that express feminist values were purposively selected as the overall data for the analysis. This resulted in 97 verses.

For the analytical procedures, firstly, the researcher preliminarily identified the themes of feminist values shown in those verses based on the list of 'feminist values' drawn from the review of the history of feminism (especially, the four major perspectives of third wave feminism) as the theoretical framework of the study as well as from the preliminary survey of song contents (Table 2). The frequency of occurrences of these themes was counted. Then, major categories of feminist themes derived from a preliminary survey of the data were developed (Table 3, which is based on table 2). The frequency of occurrences of these major themes was counted. To note, after having these major categories of feminist themes validated, the modified categories were created as seen in Table 4. To illustrate, the major themes of *'Women's identities'* was adapted in order to suit the dimension of social values, so instead of using the term *'Women's identities'*, the three characteristics reflecting either identities of women as groups or an *individual* woman including *'Ambition'; 'Survival'; 'Pride'* were derived. After that, the researcher identified and described types of figurative language based on the framework suggested by Perrine (1977) and Straker (2013) that were used to express the meanings of the identified themes of feminist values.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis, the researcher selected 30 percent of the identified data for validation by an expert in the field of literary work to gain preliminary agreement prior to further analysis. After receiving 92.50% agreement (Miles and Huberman, 1994), the remaining data was analysed. Next, connections between the employment of figurative language and the themes of feminist values were established. At this point, since metaphor was the most prominent figurative device, the connections of each feminist value and metaphoric symbols (symbolic objects and descriptions) were analyzed. As a result, the connection of the five main aspects of metaphoric symbols and the six major themes of feminist values was summarized. Finally, the researcher analyzed how each type of figurative language played a role in expressing the intended meanings of feminist values, and the findings were summarized and relevant theoretical concepts derived from the phenomenon of feminist values expressed in contemporary American songs through figurative language were discussed.

Table 2 A list of existing themes of feminist values based on the literature review to be used as a preliminary framework for deriving categories of related expressions found in this study

No.	Major features, characteristics, or values of feminism	Codes
1	Desire (of an individual woman) to be sexually free	DIS
2	Desire (of an individual woman) to have unconventional life styles (e.g., dress, hairstyle, make-up, etc.)	DIU
3	Struggle (of an individual woman / women as groups) with conventional beliefs against them	SIC/ SGC
4	Struggle (of an individual woman / women as groups) with being oppressed by men	SIM/ SGM
5	Pride (of an individual woman / women as groups) in being free from oppression caused by conventional beliefs	PIC/ PGC
6	Pride (of an individual woman / women as groups) in being free from oppression caused by men	PIM/ PGM
7	Pride (of an individual woman / women as groups) in their ability and success (e.g., in work, financial status, and family)	PIA/ PGA
8	Women's self-confidence to express their unconventional identities to the society (e.g., confidence in weird outer appearances and sexual behaviors)	SC
9	Women's power to flee from conventional beliefs (e.g., power to have weird life styles, to have free sex, and to dominate the world)	PO
10	Women's roles as political agencies (e.g., a representative of female fellows worldwide who desire to be a dominant part of world politics)	PA
11	Women's life messiness or non-identity (e.g., weird outer appearances and sexual behaviors)	NI
12	Women's inferior social status caused by interpersonal relationships	ISI
13	Women's inferior social status caused by conventional beliefs	ISC
14	Women's inferior social status caused by oppressive roles of media	ISM
15	Women's struggle (against social oppression) for life quality	WS

Table 3 A list of developed identified themes of feminist values and codes (as derived from the existing concepts from the literature review)

Codes		Major themes of feminist values	Codes
DIS, DIU, SIC/ SGC, SIM/SGM, PIC/PGC, PIM/PGM, PIA/PGA,	**WI/WG**	1. Women's Identities	I
SC, PO, PA		2. Liberalism	L
SC, PO, PA, NI		3. Individualism	IN
ISI, ISC, ISM, WS		4. Women's inferior social status and struggle for life quality	IS

Table 4 A list of developed identified themes of feminist values and codes (adapted after validation)

Codes of Sub-themes of feminist values		Major themes of feminist values	Codes
DIS, DIU SIC/ SGC, SIM/SGM,	**WI/ WG**	**1. Ambition:** Ambition of an individual woman and Ambition of women as groups	**A:** AWI & AWG
SIC/ SGC, SIM/SGM,	**WI/ WG**	**2. Survival** Survival of an individual woman and Survival of women as groups	**S:** SWI & SWG
PIC/PGC, PIM/PGM, PIA/PGA	**WI/ WG**	**3. Pride** Pride of an individual woman and Pride of women as groups	**P:** PWI & PWG
SC, PO, PA		**4. Liberalism**	**L**
SC, PO, PA, NI		**5. Individualism**	**IN**
ISI, ISC, ISM, WS		**6. Women's inferior social status and struggle for life quality**	**IS**

Note: WI = characteristics of an individual woman; WG = characteristics of women as groups

Results and Discussions

1.) Feminist values that are expressed through different types of figures of speech in contemporary American songs

From 97 verses with figurative expressions, some verses were found to have more than one expression reflecting feminist values. Based on the theoretical concepts of the four mentioned major perspectives of third wave feminism, firstly, the theme regarding 'Women's identities' (in Table 3) were found in all 146 expressions (100%). When considering how this theme related to social values, it finally reflected 1.) women's *Ambition* (25.72%), 2.) *Survival* (28.77%), and 3.) *Pride* (46.58%). All of these values were presented in women's roles either as an individual's identity or as a group's identity. Second, other themes of social values were identified from 97 verses again. These verses included 200 expressions (100%) with feminist values related to three other themes, namely 1.) *Individualism* (42.50%); 2.) *Liberalism* (38.50%); 3.) *Women's inferior social status and struggle for life quality* (19%). In sum, these six themes altogether were found in the songs in this study. Each of these six feminist themes can be seen in several dimensions (each of them has its own subthemes) which will be discussed in the following section.

Firstly, most pictures of *women's ambition* found in the findings mainly concern women's desire to gain more freedom in life. Most pictures of *their survival* mainly regard women's struggle from social oppression, and most pictures of *their pride* mainly involve women's pride of overcoming any obstacle in life. The pictures of *an individual woman* portrayed with these three themes (88.51%) are revealed much more frequently than the pictures of *a certain group of women* portrayed with those themes (13.69%).

Since *Liberalism* and *Individualism* were closely related, these two themes were reported together. Liberalism refers to the basic freedoms that women deserve, e.g. political freedom, while *Individualism* refers to the uniqueness of women that does not conform to the rigid social system (Mann and Huffman, 2005). Findings revealed that either theme or both of them are commonly seen in three specific roles of women (subthemes). They included *women's self-confidence* and *power* and *women's roles as political agencies.* Additionally, another pattern of *women's life-messiness,* i.e. the concrete appearance of the extreme senses of freedom and spirit of self, is considered to be a unique characteristic of *Individualism.* Most pictures found in the findings mainly concerned the ways women struggle from social oppressions in order to gain more freedom and spirit of self in their lives.

For the last theme, *women's inferior social status and struggle for life quality,* the songs reveal the pictures that show dimensions of *women's inferior status caused by* several social factors

including *interpersonal relationships, conventional beliefs,* and *oppressive roles of media.* The images that show aspects of the way *women struggle against these social oppressions for better life quality* are also portrayed in the songs.

To note, the examples illustrating all of these feminist values will be shown in the example verses of songs exemplifying the use of figurative language expressing feminist values in the next section.

2.) How feminist values are reflected in the songs through figurative language: The prominent role and impact of metaphor, simile, and parallelism

Based on the theoretical framework of figurative language suggested by Perrine (1977) and Straker (2013), the findings showed that there were 10 types of figurative language that express feminist values found in the songs including parallelism, simile, rhetorical question, synecdoche, paradox, epizeuxis, assonance, overstatement or hyperbole, and personification. Among the total of 10 types of figures of speech, the most common type is *metaphor* (74.68%). The other types appearing more frequently than 5% are *parallelism* (7.79%) and *simile* (5.51%).

Metaphor, the prominent figurative device, is employed to reflect all of the six feminist themes which were presented earlier in the first part; 1.) *Ambition* (10.07%); 2.) Survival (10.07%); 3.) Pride (17.86%); 4.) *Liberalism* (19.16%); 5.) *Individualism* (22.40%); 6.) *Women's inferior social status and struggle for life quality* (8.77%). Based on the basic role of using the shared background knowledge between the sender and the receiver (particularly the lyricists themselves and their audiences), the audiences are conveyed to perceive and understand all of these feminist values through the expression of metaphor. To illustrate, the six feminist lyricists chose to use the device of making indirect comparison between the metaphoric symbols and the messages they want to express. They create the connection between the metaphoric symbols (e.g., symbolic objects and descriptions of situations and behaviors) and the messages related to their beliefs in feminism. These metaphoric symbols involve the pictures of women's characteristics, behaviors, and social forces against women which can be observed in five main aspects, namely 1.) *sexual activities*; 2.) *unconventional outer appearances of women;* 3.) *women's abilities and success;* 4.) *oppression against women*; 5.) *women's fight against oppression.* These five aspects are found to relate to the six major themes of feminist values and their subthemes. That is, the use of *sexual activities, unconventional outer appearances of women, and women's abilities and success* as metaphoric symbols in the songs is aimed to reflect *women's ambition, survival, pride, liberalism,* and *individualism,* whereas the use of *women's fighting back against oppression* as metaphoric symbols in the songs is aimed to reflect *women's ambition, survival, pride and women's inferior social status* and *struggle for life quality.* Lastly, the use of

oppression against women as metaphoric symbols in the songs is aimed to only reflect *women's inferior social status and struggle for life quality.* The prominent examples of verses from the songs below exemplify the use of metaphoric symbols to express some feminist values.

Verse I: From the song 'Take it off' by Kesha shows unconventional activities which express uniquely queer identities of Kesha and a freaky group of her friends. In this verse below, Kesha describes the atmosphere of their meeting:

> 'There's a place downtown where the freaks all come around. It's <u>a hole in the wall</u>, it's a <u>dirty free for all</u>. When the dark of the night comes around, that's the time that <u>the animal comes alive looking for something wild</u>…There's a place I know if you're looking for a <u>show where they go hardcore and there's glitter on the floor. And they turn me on, when they take it off, </u>When they take it off, <u>everybody take it off.</u>'

From this verse, we can see that Kesha employs a metaphoric symbol 'a hole in the wall, a dirty free for all' to refer to a free place for a group of queer people to do anything they want despite the fact that their deeds are unacceptable for common people. Also, the symbol 'the animal comes alive looking for something wild.' is added to describe people with unusual identities who begin to follow their instinct without caring about any social norms. Kesha finally portrayed the atmosphere of her unconventional meeting with her queer friends by using the symbols 'a show where they go hardcore and there's glitter on the floor' and 'They turn me on, when they take it off… everybody take it off.' These symbolic expressions reflect the picture in which a group of outcast people are trying to express their unusual identities by showing their unconventional outer appearances and doing some freaky activities like taking their clothes off and starting to have some lustful sexual activities with each other. Kesha chooses to present the picture of women's weird outer appearances and sexual behaviors in order to portray the values of individualism and liberalism which is noticeable in parts of American society and seems to be a trend among Americans.

Verse II and III: From the song 'You and your hands' by Pink show men's oppression of women in their interpersonal relationships and women's struggle against this kind of oppression. In Verse II below, Pink describes that a group of men began to threaten a girl in a pub:

> 'In the corner with your boys, <u>you bet up five bucks. To get at the girl</u> that just walked in.'
> In Verse III below, Pink was also sexually threatened by a man; then she reacted to that man:

'Keep your drink, just give me the money. It's just you and your hand tonight.'

In Verse II, we can see that Pink employs a metaphoric symbol 'you bet up five bucks. To get at the girl' to illustrate that a woman is going to be a sexual victim of a bad male group despite the fact that she has just come to the pub to entertain herself. This description shows another example of oppressions against women, whereas in Verse III, Pink employs a metaphoric symbol 'you and your hand', which refers to masturbation. Instead of allowing a man to sexually oppress her, the woman recommends him to masturbate. This symbol shows another example of a woman's fight against or survival from oppression from an interpersonal relationship.

Verse IV: From the song 'Piece of me' by Britney Spears shows a woman's experience of being oppressed by the media. She has been greatly criticized about both her work and personal life. In Verse IV below, Spears describes her bad experience:

'I'm Miss bad media karma. Another day another drama. Guess I can't see no harm. In working and being a mama. And with a kid on my arm. I'm still an exception of panel.'

In this verse, Spears employs two metaphoric symbols: 'Miss bad media karma' and 'an exception of panel' to refer to a famous woman's life who is threatened by the media's practices. She is criticized badly by the media as a silly and guilty person in the public's view. These symbols show another example of inferiority of a woman with fame whose personal life is threatened by media practice, i.e. people around the world misconceive her as a good-for-nothing woman due to the media's portrayal.

Verse V: From the song 'Run the world (Girls)' by Beyonce shows the image of women's power and potential beyond men for dominating the world. In this verse below, Beyonce describes:

'Make your cheques come at they neck. Disrespect us no they won't…I'm repping for the girls who taking over the world. Have me raise a glass for the college grads.'

In this verse, Beyonce employs a metaphoric expression 'Make your cheques come at they neck. Disrespect us no they won't.' to symbolize women's power through the power of money. That is, when women show their ability of earning a lot of money, they will be accepted and respected by all people, even male members of the society. As well, she also employs another metaphoric symbol 'raise a glass for the college grads' to refer to celebrating the success of a group of women who can lead other women to earn status in the society. These two symbols show a new identity of women

which is full of pride of their financial success and power to dominate the world instead of men. This new identity is a signal of changing social values towards the female gender.

In conclusion, as can be observed in the sample verses of the songs with the metaphoric symbols above, it is evident that metaphor is a powerful figurative device because of the power of shared background knowledge between the lyricists and the audiences. This background knowledge helps enhance the effectiveness of making indirect comparisons of metaphoric devices.

In addition to the findings revealing the substantial use of metaphor, the use of *simile* and *parallelism* (which are employed more than 5 percent to express the feminist values in the songs) can also be observed. Similarly, the use of two devices in this present study reflects the same six major feminist values (themes). While metaphor works on the impact of the indirect comparison between the metaphoric symbols and the underlying messages, simile works on the impact of direct comparison between an intended meaning and an object of representation by using signal words (e.g., like, as, than, similar, resemble, and seem) for those representations. As shown in the present study, it is noticeable that those comparisons usually have a common characteristic—there is a comparison between the common concepts and the common metaphoric symbols which are known among people. However, while metaphor and simile convey the feminist values (intended meaning) in the verses of songs based on the use of shared background knowledge, parallelism is a figurative device which makes use of repetition of several patterns of linguistic structures in the verses to help strengthen the sensation of those values in order to help the audiences perceive them easily. As can be observed in the sample verses of the songs with parallelism, the repetition of structures (to emphasize the messages) was found mostly at the beginning of the verses. The prominent two examples of verses from the songs below exemplify the use of similes that express some feminist values.

Verse VI: From the song 'Hold it against me' by Britney Spears shows a woman is trying to do everything to convince a man to have a sexual relationship with her in order to fulfill her sexual need. In this verse below, Spears convinces the man:

In this verse, Spears employs a simile to make the direct comparison of 'you' and 'paradise'. The connection of 'you' and 'paradise' can be well perceived among audiences since 'paradise' is a common symbolic object which is known among people as a human desire, especially the desire of sexual affair (lust). When 'you' (a character of a male stranger) is connected with 'paradise', it conveys the sense of a woman's ambition of making a stranger fulfill her sexual desire without any concern about any social tradition. This illustrates an image of a unique woman who values herself as a man

who is socially accepted to play a role as an instigator of sexual intercourse. This unusual behavior exemplifies a modern woman's value of having self-confidence and life-messiness (individualism) and freedom (liberalism).

Verse VII: From the song 'We are who we are' by Kesha shows a woman releasing herself with her freaky friends by dressing and acting distinctly from others. Although they are considered by others as a messy and crazy group, they do not care about it. 'Just be yourself' is their motto. In this verse, Kesha says to their friends:

> '*Tonight we're going hard hard hard ha ha hard.* Just like *the world is our our our ah ah ours.*
> We're tearing it apar par par pa pa part. You know we're superstars. We are who we are.'

In this verse, Kesha employs a simile to make a direct comparison of 'Tonight we're going hard' and 'the world is ours'. The connection of 'Tonight we're going hard' and 'the world is ours' can be well perceived among audiences since 'the world is ours' is a common saying that expresses the feeling of having utmost freedom. When this concept of 'the world is ours' is connected with 'Tonight we're going hard', which is the metaphoric symbol of sense of enjoyment, it can be observed that the verse gains the impact of showing these women's ambition of being absolutely free to be uniquely different from others (i.e., having utmost freedom to have their own life-messiness). This implies their social values in individualism and liberalism.

To sum up, as can be observed in the sample verses above, it is evident that a comparison between the common concepts and the common metaphoric symbols which are known among people can make vivid expressions of the intended meaning of feminist values.

Two other prominent examples from the song verses below exemplify the use of parallelism that express some feminist values.

Verse VIII: From the song 'Tik Tok' by Kesha shows a woman's messy life. She loves going to parties, dancing with friends, drinking and getting drunk without caring or worrying about criticism about her improper behaviors. In this verse, Kesha describes:

> '*Ain't got* a care in world, *but* got plenty of beer. *Ain't got* no money in my pocket, *but* I'm already here.'

From the verse above, Kesha employs a repetition of the sentence structure 'Ain't got …in …but…' to highlight the sensation of her unique characteristics. To illustrate, this verse with parallelism shows another example of a modern woman's sense of life-messiness (individualism). For example, she just drinks a lot despite the fact that she has no money without any care about social criticism.

Verse IX: From the song 'Blow me (One last kiss)' by Pink shows a woman's farewell to her lovers since she cannot bear suffering from this love anymore. In this verse, Pink says:

> '*I think* I finally had enough. *I think* I maybe think too much. *I think* this might be it for us (blow me one last kiss).'

From the verse above, Pink employs a repetition of the sentence structure 'I think …' to emphasize the sensation of her determined decision to fight against the oppression caused by this interpersonal relationship. This repeated message helps strengthen the spirit of survival of a modern woman from social oppression. After enduring suffering from a bad love life, Pink is brave to decide to free herself by ending this relationship by herself.

In brief, as can be observed in the mentioned sample verses of songs, it is evident that the use of parallelism is another kind of figurative language that can effectively create the perception of the intended meaning; in particular, the six major themes of feminism which the six lyricists want to convey to their audiences.

In conclusion, for clarity, all findings in this study can be summarized in the conceptual diagram shown in figure 1 below:
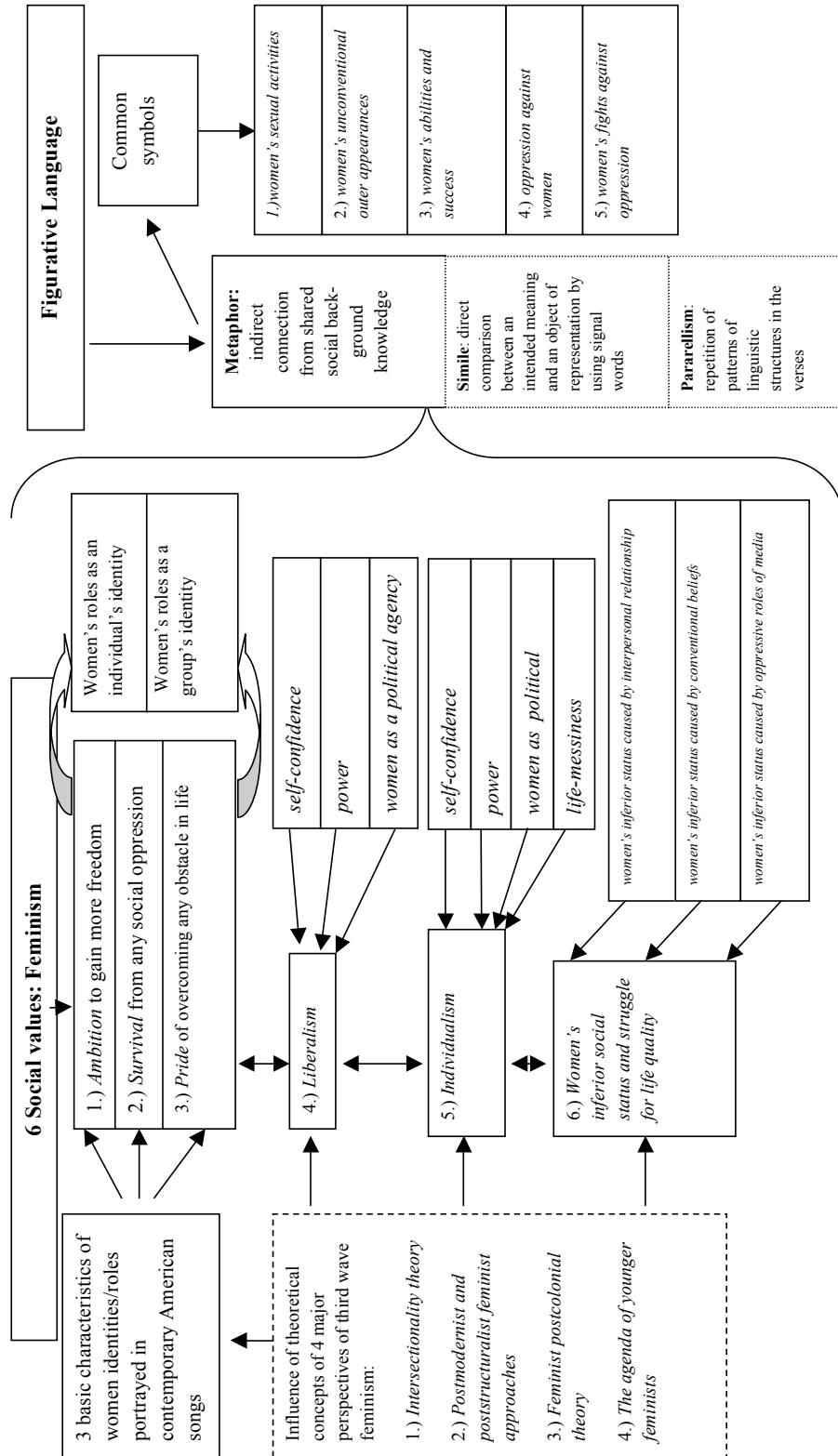
Figure 1. Connection of all findings in the study

Conclusion

From the conceptual diagram shown in figure 1, it could be seen that regarding feminist values in American songs, the findings firstly revealed the six major themes of feminist values including 1.) *Ambition*; 2.) *Survival*; 3.) *Pride*; 4.) *Individualism*; 5.) *Liberalism*; 6.) *Women's inferior social status and struggle for life quality.* To illustrate, the first three major themes were derived from the three basic characteristics of women's identities or roles obviously portrayed in contemporary American songs. When considering from theoretical concepts of the four major perspectives of third wave feminism, these characteristics could reflect either an identity of an individual woman or an identity of women as groups. Additionally, the three other feminist themes and their sub-themes were derived in connection with main features of theoretical concepts of the four major perspectives of third wave feminism. The overall pictures of these feminist values were found to be illustrated through the use of figurative language. Particularly, metaphor was found to be the most prominent device which could work effectively based on the shared background knowledge between the lyricists and the audiences. Especially, the five main aspects of metaphoric symbols were found to connect to the mentioned six feminist themes. Besides, the two other devices including simile and parallelism were also employed to express the same six themes of feminist values.

Interestingly, concerning feminist values in American songs, findings revealed that individualism can be seen as integral to other women's values (e.g., *women's ambition, survival, pride, confidence, power, their roles as political agencies, and their life-messiness*) despite the fact that some pictures of women as a social institution (women as a group) still appear in the songs in this present study. This resulted from the dramatic development of *Individualism* in American society since the 1980s. It seems to be possible that contemporary songs in the near future will become a resource for a new generation of women to keep promoting the spirit of their individualism in fighting against social oppression in any form to earn equality in society. Not only American women, but also women in other parts of the world may be more active in demanding their proper rights and status.

The fact that these six lyricists' attitudes were reflected in their songs as tools of the feminist movement supports the study of Reger (2007), which found that feminist voices are easily accessible in songs and music. To illustrate, in this present study, six major themes of feminist values can be observed as the intended messages of the contemporary songs of the six contemporary feminist music icons. Interestingly, similar values were also found in Hawkin (2003)'s investigation on T.V. series, e.g. modernity, sexual empowerment, self-awareness, possessing power, and choice.

It was evident that these lyricists expressed their social values regarding feminism in their songs through the devices of figurative language. Power of the use of figurative language to express meaning was also found in the study of Pinichka (2005). More specifically, while other previous studies of other literary genres (Dhepanont, 2005; Wisedsak, 2011) found a wide range of figurative devices expressing various social values, the present study found that metaphor was the most prominent device which was used to express feminist values. This suggests that in conveying feminist values to the audiences, shared background knowledge between the lyricists and the audiences seems to be the most essential feature.

Overall, the present study indicates that feminist values can be expressed through songs effectively. Figurative language, particularly metaphor, is the tool which can make the expressions of feminism powerful.

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