SHAPING AMERICA'S PERCEPTION OF MUSLIMS: The Transnational Approach to Globalization's Role in Popular Culture

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Abstract

After the 9/11 tragedy in 2001, where terrorist attacks destroyed the WTC and the Pentagon, Muslims were widely represented as terrorists in American media. However, the representation of Muslims began to change from 2017 to 2022 in popular culture such as films and TV series. Instead of being depicted as terrorists or "bad guys," Muslims started to be portrayed more positively as "good guys" in some movies. It is worth questioning what factors or circumstances led to this change in the depiction of Muslims in American popular culture. Through a transnational approach, the authors find that the shift in perception of Muslim characters is a utilization of current popular culture trends, which emphasize diversity to meet American audience preferences, resulting in several globalization consequences. These consequences include the formation of a Muslim image adjusted to American standards, often conflicting with Islamic culture, and the homogenization of Muslim culture, which is often reduced or even omitted in Muslim characters in films. In short, the shift in perception of Muslim portrayals in American popular culture is based on three interrelated factors: capitalism, representation, and globalization.

Pasca tragedi 9/11 tahun 2001, dimana serangan terror terjadi dan menghancurkan WTC dan Pentagon, Muslim banyak direpresentasikan sebagai teroris dalam media Amerika Serikat. Namun, representasi Muslim mulai mengalami perubahan sejak tahun 2017 hingga 2022 dalam budaya populer seperti film dan serial TV. Alih-alih digambarkan sebagai teroris atau "orang jahat," Muslim mulai digambarkan dengan citra yang lebih positif seperti sebagai "orang baik" dalam beberapa film. Namun, patut dipertanyakan factor atau keadaan apa yang menyebabkan perubahan gambaran Muslim dalam budaya populer Amerika Serikat. Melalui pendekatan transnasional, penulis menemukan bahwa pergeseran persepsi tentang karakter Muslim merupakan bentuk pemanfaatan tren budaya populer saat ini, yang mengangkat topik keberagaman untuk memenuhi preferensi audiens Amerika sehingga menimbulkan beberapa konsekuensi globalisasi. Konsekuensi yang timbul adalah pembentukan citra Muslim yang disesuaikan dengan standar Amerika sehingga seringkali bertentangan dengan budaya Islam serta adanya homogenisasi budaya Muslim yang seringkali dikurangkan atau bahkan dihilangkan dalam karakter Muslim di film-film. Singkatnya, pergeseran persepsi atas gambaran Muslim dalam budaya populer AS dilandaskan atas tiga factor yang saling berkaitan; kapitalisme, representasi, dan globalisasi.

Introduction

In the beginning of the 21st century, Muslims were portrayed as terrorists to the western world, including the United States. Since the attack of September 11, 2001, terrorism became a major national security threat to the United States. The Twin Towers and Pentagon attacks were the most serious national security failures in American history (Jamali 2018, 263). As a result, the Bush administration immediately implemented several anti-terrorism policies. These policies were extremely detrimental for Muslims as they contributed to the deterioration of Islam's image and the rise of Islamophobia. The stereotype of Muslims as terrorists or enemies to the West has also been reflected in Western popular culture, such as in Hollywood films.

However, in recent years, the portrayal of Muslim in the popular culture has gradually changed. Muslims are beginning to receive positive attention instead of being labeled as the bad guy or another negative stereotype. According to Mamdani, the current image of "good Muslims" are being characterized as those who accept and follows the Western values (Mamdani 2002, 767-768). For example, *Elite (2017)*, one of Netflix's Original Series, features a Muslim woman as one of its main characters and exemplifies the positive relationship between Muslim and Western youth. Consequently, this raises the question of what factors or circumstances have led to the shift of Muslim image in the United States popular culture.

Previous research has found that there is a relationship between popular culture across a variety of fields. A study conducted by Khansa Salsabila examines the relationship between popular culture–focusing on Netflix Original Series in general–and the implementation of cultural imperialism (Salsabila 2021, 15-25). Another study by Constance Duncombe and Roland Bleiker explores the relationship between popular culture and political identity (Caso & Hamilton 2015, 36-42). Although many scholars have examined popular culture and its relationship to factors such as culture and politics, there has been no research to date that focused on how the globalization process has shaped the Muslim image through popular culture. Given this, this study was conducted applying a qualitative method in order to analyze the United States' transnational approach to globalization in shaping the Muslim image through popular culture. Thus, this research aims to explain the process of the United States globalization through popular culture and how it shapes the Muslim image.

Research Method

The research applied a qualitative method. The subject of this research is the United States and how the globalization process has shaped Muslim image through popular culture is the object of this research. All of the research sources are from secondary data. The author obtained the data from a variety of sources, including books, journals, official government websites, e-books, and the internet. The data was then collected and processed so that the author could understand it and answer the research question.

In this research two frameworks will be utilized. The first framework is intended to define what is meant by popular culture in this research. In order to demonstrate this, the author will use the conceptualization of popular culture as "mass culture" by Storey (2018) which refers to the definition of popular culture as heavily commercialized through industrial forms such as radio, record, film, and TV shows (Storey 2018, 8).

The second framework is the transnational approach to globalization by Sklair (2007) which explains the globalization process. This approach enables theories of globalization regarding cultural homogenization and heterogeneity within the United States' popular culture (Sklair 2007, 104-106). The transnational approach used in this research will focus on the cultural-ideological sphere and attempt to place this research on the globalization debates across several categories that Sklair has listed.

Table 1
Sklair's Four Categories of Transnational Approach to Globalization
Source: (Sklair 2007, 104-106)

No	Categories	Definition
1.	Capitalism as the central issue of globalization	There are an increasing number of cultural practices that have become transnational practices through the activities of transnational corporations.
2.	Capitalist Globalization and the Cultural Imperialism of Westernization	Exploitation of the values and beliefs of powerful societies on weaker societies
3.	Globalization that proposes homogenization and hybridization	The elimination and blending of values from different cultures, where capitalist globalization encourages either homogenization or hybridization depending on which will be more profitable.
4.	Consumerism as the cultural ideology	Excessive consumption has affecting the majority of the population on a global scale.

All these categories of transnational approach to globalization are in accordance with the discussion in this research, which focuses on emphasizing the globalization process through popular culture.

Results and Discussion

The United States globalization process from 2017 to 2022 has witnessed significant development and changes in terms of shaping the Muslim image through its popular culture, especially in terms of films and TV series. Through Sklair's transnational approach, this research discovered the changing portrayal of Muslim character is a form of capitalizing on current popular culture trends which focus on diversity to satisfy the preferences of American audiences, thus then lead to other consequences of globalization. Those consequences include the act of westernization, homogenization, hybridization, and consumerism with detailed explanations provided in the Table 2.

Table 2
Research Results based on Sklair's Four Categories of Transnational
Approach to Globalization (Sklair 2007, 104-106)

No	Categories	Results
1.	Capitalism as the central issue of globalization	Film and TV series which portray Muslims are created to make profit. It is the form of capitalizing on events happening at the time. For instance, *Bodyguard* (2018) was released when Muslim became a trending topic in the United States.
2.	Capitalist Globalization and the Cultural Imperialism of Westernization	Muslim characters are being westernized as it being portrayed of what happened in the *Elite* (2017) series. The film producers trying to infuse Western culture into Muslim culture which reduces the important values in it.
3.	Globalization that proposes homogenization and hybridization	Most of the Muslim images presented in the United States popular culture are ones of homogenization and hybridization as can be seen in the *Elite* (2017) and *Mo* (2022) series.

4.	Consumerism as the cultural ideology	The portrayal of Muslim characters in the United States is to satisfy the representation desires of the Muslim community. As a result, this will increase the amount of profit, as evidenced by *Ms. Marvel's* (2022).

Globalization and the Use of Popular Culture in the United States

The discussion of globalization, in conjunction with popular culture is a heavy topic. It is intuitively difficult to imagine films like Iron Man or Miss Marvel having a significant impact on such a profound thing as globalization. Nonetheless, popular culture has indeed played an important role. Moreover, it may potentially be interconnected with world politics. It is frequently conceptualized in the discipline of international relations (Grayson et al. 2009).

Essentially, in world politics, the state uses popular culture in a variety of ways. In fact, popular culture is extremely important in both times of peace and war/conflict, and in the understanding of international conflicts. During peace time, states deploy popular culture to develop soft power and engage in cultural diplomacy practices. Meanwhile, during times of conflict, countries constantly build and reconstruct a shared understanding of what the conflict is about, what the state's core interests are, who is the enemy, and what alternative policies exist (Press-Barnathan 2017, 168). This is frequently reflected in the countries' popular culture. As stated by Weldes and Rowley, states create, deploy, and exploit popular culture as/for propaganda (Weldes & Rowley 2015).

Based on Storey's understanding, popular culture has known to be heavily commercialized (Storey 2018, 8). The term of "heavily commercialized" within the concept of popular culture leads to the concept of capitalism. In the United States, the distribution of popular culture or the "commercialized" popular culture existed even before the onset of World War I. At the time, United States cinema was a relatively degraded domestic industry with limited international distribution (Curtin 2020, 91). Even though the U.S. government relations with film and broadcasting companies deteriorated during the 1930s, their interests realigned during World War II, and major media companies were handsomely rewarded for their patriotism in the aftermath. Further, American media companies expanded their transnational influence after the World War II and Cold War, bringing nearly a century of cultural

hegemony (Curtin 2020, 89). Therefore, the United States benefited greatly from the dissemination of their popular culture at the time.

In this context, popular culture is classified as a component of transnational practices. As explained by Sklair, transnational practices are activities that occur within cross-state boundaries but do not originate from state institutions, agencies, or actors even though they are frequently involved (Sklair 2007, 97).

Capitalism as a Central Issue of Globalization

Sklair bases the context of capitalism as a central issue of globalization on two major factors driving this phenomenon. First, the emergence of a global economy based on new production, finance, and consumption systems, fueled by globalizing transnational corporations (TNC) (Sklair 2002, 36). Second, the concept of global culture which focuses on transformations in the global scope of specific types of TNC's, such as those that own and control mass media, for instance, television channels (Sklair 2002, 36). On this basis, it is possible to conclude that globalization is influenced by the global economy and global culture, which are inextricably linked to production, consumption and transnational actors. Sklair also stated in this context that an increasing number of cultural practices will become transnational practices mediated through the activities of transnational corporations (Sklair 2007, 104). In this research, the term transnational corporation refers to any TV series and film producers or company, such as Netflix, Disney+, and so on. Meanwhile, the activities of transnational corporation refer to the popular culture, because popular culture is currently globalizing cultural practices through media such as films and TV series. Therefore, the concept focuses on globalized cultural practice through popular culture, with capitalism serving as one of the driving forces (Sklair 2007, 104).

Nowadays, the majority of popular culture aired and released in the United States is highly adapted to a certain perspective that is thought to provide considerable profit. Therefore, since the aim is to gain profit, the momentum or events that are being discussed at the time are often elevated in popular culture to attract the public's attention. High popularity generates high income profit. This is still happening in the United States, as evidenced by the slowly changing image of Muslims in its popular culture.

For instance, *Bodyguard*, one of Netflix's original action-themed series, was released in 2018. In this series, Netflix features a female Muslim character named Nadia (Vincent et al. 2018). In the first episode, she was portrayed as a Muslim woman who was brainwashed by her husband to the point where she almost committed an act of terrorism by carrying out a suicide bomb on a train. A twist later reveals that she is the mastermind behind the terrorist attack. At the time the series was released, according to Tell MAMA's annual report, there was an increase in anti-Muslim or Islamophobic attacks in 2017 and there were 1,023 verified attacks in 2018 (Khan 2020)**.** In short, before and after the series was released there were ongoing attack on Muslims in the United States. It seems like films and TV series producers saw this as an opportunity and released this kind of films knowing that they would gain more attention by doing so. Though the series still depicts Muslim as "the bad guy" it got nominated for two Emmys and won a BAFTA Award (Khan, 2020).

Based on this, it can be said that the use of a viral topic or issues in popular culture to gain attention is common in the film and mass media industries. As Sklair (2007) said, this emphasizes that capitalism is indeed a central issue of globalization.

Capitalist Globalization and the Cultural Imperialism of Westernization

As previously stated, popular culture and globalization are intertwined with capitalism as the center issue. Indeed, since the 1970s, multinational corporations based in the United States have dominated production and distribution of media-culture on an international scale. After World War II, the American state did not directly dominate, but strove to consolidate the U.S. corporate media monopoly so that it could be used to spread its ideology related to capitalist mode of production, the liberal democratic state form, and the consumerist lifestyle (Mirrlees 2006, 199). Since then, the United States' dominance has persisted.

Currently, cultural issues depicted in the United States popular culture are highly adapted to a certain perspective. For example, when the cultures of countries, other than the United States are broadcast in American media, some of the cultural elements are changed to make them more appropriate and acceptable to American audiences. Therefore, for most people who will never visit the United States or meet Americans in person, their understanding of the United States will be filtered through the lens of American popular culture, and vice versa. Americans will also

only see and understand other cultures through the lens of their popular culture. As a result of this bias, opportunities for one culture to dominate another emerge which in other terms is known as cultural imperialism.

The term cultural imperialism was coined in the 1970s and it is based on the Edward Said's concept. According to Said, cultural imperialism consists of two processes: cultural dominance and cultural expansion from one country to another, as well as the development of another country's culture (Gudova 2018, 28). To simplify, cultural imperialism occurs when one culture spreads and dominates other cultures. This is in line with Sklair's understanding of cultural imperialism, which he defines as the exploitation of the values and beliefs of powerful societies on weak societies (Sklair 2002, 167). An example is the U.S. cultural strategy, which has portrayed Muslims as terrorists at every chance following the 9/11 incident. Conversely, they spread only good news about the U.S. ideology, values, culture, and people. The consequences of bias in broadcasting culture through American popular culture create conformity with the dominant culture, and cultures other than American culture are considered backward. According to Mamdani, the current image of Muslims in the U.S. media is divided into "good Muslims" and "bad Muslims" (Mamdani 2002, 767-768). In Western media, bad Muslims are those who reject to include Western values in their lives, while good Muslims are those who accept and follow Western values (Mamdani 2002, 767-768). This is what has been seen in development of the Muslim image in the U.S. popular culture.

In 2017, Netflix, one of the U.S. entertainment companies, released an original series entitled *Elite*. In this series, Muslims are no longer portrayed as terrorists, which is usually the norm in most popular culture in the United States. This series portrays Muslim characters not as Muslims should be, but as those who have incorporated American culture. This series contains a scene in which one of the main characters, a Muslim woman named Nadia, removes her *hijab*. Initially, she removed her *hijab* because school regulations prohibited her from wearing one. The series went on to portray Nadia as a Muslim who felt burdened by Islamic teachings. She felt burdened and oppressed by all of Islamic teachings she got from her family and felt a need for "freedom". The notion of "freedom" in this context refers to the American concept of freedom, which consists of three components: the absence of opposition, the ability to act, and the ability to act out desires (Beitzinger 1973, 475).

Consequently, Nadia, who represents Muslims, was portrayed as oppressed because she had to wear a *hijab*. This perspective influences a bias in American society, where the dominant culture does not wear a *hijab*. Therefore, there is a dominant cultural inequality here, which resulting in a cultural imperialism phenomenon. This appears to demonstrate that Muslim in general feel pressured by their religion; however, this is, in fact, the American perspective, in which their ideology promotes "free will".

Another Muslim character in the series, Nadia's brother Omar, is portrayed as gay. With the inclusion of this storyline, the series producer perhaps wants to raise a human rights issue which are also hot topics nowadays. It is impossible to deny that this also appears to be in line with the U.S. ideology, which supports free will and the right of every human being to do whatever they want. This would not have been an issue if Omar had not been depicted as a Muslim. At a closer look, among all of those characters in the *Elite* series, Omar was presented as homosexual as if the producers wanted to create an impression that being a Muslim is a dilemma or an obstacle in Omar's life. In this context, cultural imperialism occurs because Islamic teachings are deliberately described as restrictive and wrong because they do not allow Omar to love anyone.

Based on the points made above, this shows that Muslims are being westernized in this series and it seems like the producer is trying to infuse the U.S. or Western understanding of Islamic values and cultures. Throughout the storyline, the series appears to convey the impression that Islam is opposed to teenager "freedom" or desires. It tries to convey the impression that all Muslims must rebel to live a happy life; otherwise, they are nothing more than "oppressed" teenagers. This is consistent with Sklair's assertion (2002) that cultural imperialism is the exploitation of powerful societies' values and beliefs on weaker societies.

Globalization that Proposes Homogenization and Hybridization

As previously stated, most American popular culture reflects consumer taste. This is evident in how American popular culture is now beginning to incorporate other cultures, such as people of colors, Muslims, and others. Previously, most of their popular culture only focused on white America. However, the depiction of other cultures in American popular culture may be intended solely to meet market and 21st-century demands. Although the United States is known for its diverse

community, some people still do not readily accept the cultural flows. Hence, when other cultures are represented in the U.S. popular culture, the producers tend to incorporate these cultures into the existing American culture. To do that, they will either reduce or completely eliminate existing cultural differences. The consequence of reducing cultural differences is that changes might be induced in cultural perceptions. This is the case with the current shifts in perceptions of Muslims.

This adoption of the American way of life by other cultures is damaging cultural differences, leading to cultural homogenization. Cultural homogenization can be defined as a state-led policy aimed at cultural standardization which overlaps between country and culture (Conversi 2010, 1). Meanwhile, according to Sklair, cultural homogenization is an action that eliminates differences within a cultural society (Sklair 2007, 106).

The concept of cultural homogenization may appear to be similar to Westernization, perhaps because they are indeed closely related. However, they are actually different from one another. Westernization emphasizes the term "dominating culture" or "cultural dominance," which in this case, is the American culture trying to dominate other cultures, such as Islam. As explained by Sklair, Westernization is part of cultural imperialism which he has defined as the exploitation of the values and beliefs of powerful societies on weaker societies (Sklair 2002, 167). Meanwhile, cultural homogenization emphasizes the term "reduce" or "eliminate" when it comes to other cultures, resulting in the creation of one single culture. Nevertheless, Westernization and cultural homogenization are inextricably linked.

In the *Elite* series, one can see how cultural homogenization and Westernization coexist (Montero and Madrona 2018). Nadia, a Muslim woman in this series, is portrayed as oppressed because she is required to wear a *hijab* (Montero & Madrona 2018). This perspective is based on American cultural values, which are obviously distinct from Muslim values. This constructs a value gap between the two cultures, which leads to the dominance of American cultural values. According to Sklair, this is what Westernization means, as explained in the previous chapter. It emphasizes the exploitation of values or beliefs by powerful societies over weaker societies (Sklair 2002, 167).

Meanwhile, cultural homogenization can be seen in the removal of *hijab*, which is part of Muslim women's culture. The portrayal of the *hijab* as unimportant for Muslim women can be considered as an action that seeks to reduce or eliminate Muslim values. As Sklair explained, cultural homogenization is an action that eliminates differences within a cultural society (Sklair 2007, 106). This demonstrates that efforts are being made to homogenize Muslim identity through popular culture. It seems like Muslims must behave in a certain way to be accepted in U.S. society. According to Alikhani, six out of ten Muslims said they did not see any issue with adhering to U.S. culture and values while also being devoted Muslims. Furthermore, 56% of Muslims believe that the majority of Muslims who immigrate to the U.S. today prefer to adopt an American way of life rather than remain distinctive from the larger society (Alikhani 2017,16).

Nonetheless, interactions between American and Muslim cultures or other cultures do not always result in the elimination of cultural differences. Instead of abolishing differences, the producers can still maintain the diversity of cultures. Here, they tend to combine elements or values from different cultures, leading to cultural hybridization. Sklair's concept in this regard actually argues that because capitalists are primarily interested in profits, capitalist globalization will encourage homogenization where this appears to be the most profitable path and hybridization where it does not (Sklair 2007, 106). Sklair's definition of cultural hybridization refers to blending elements or values from different cultures (Sklair 2007, 106).

An example is the *Mo* series, another Netflix original series that was released in 2022. This series depicted a Palestinian Muslim man named Mo and his everyday life as a Muslim-American (Amer & Youssef, 2022). In the series, Mo is seen balancing American and Muslim cultural values. Unlike the *Elite* series, which appears to attempt to eradicate the portrayal of Muslim culture entirely, Mo highlights existing cultural differences. For example, he greets people with *"Assalamualaikum,"* and reads the Quran– two actions which are clearly not part of Western culture. However, at the same time, he also works at a striptease club and has a relationship outside of his marriage; he lives with his Mexican girlfriend. In Islam, premarital relationships are forbidden, and premarital chastity is expected (Franceschelli 2017, 1).

The depiction of Muslim culture side by side with American culture in this series is what is meant by cultural hybridization. As per Sklair's definition, cultural hybridization refers to blending elements from different cultures (Sklair 2007, 106). Cultural hybridization can be a two-way process in which American society is influenced by non-American community ones as non-American communities are influenced by the United States (Crothers 2018, 31). However, it does not always result in an equal exchange of cultures (Crothers 2018, 31).

The unequal cultural interaction that takes place between America and the non-American society, which refers to homogenization and hybridization could be compared to the logic of orientalism, which Edward Said described as the differential treatment of non-western communities (Praveen 2016, 47-48). This refers to the perception of Americans towards non-American societies that are not based on existing facts, but are based on American perspectives and ideas instead. For instance, as previously said, the *hijab* is depicted in the United States popular culture as being less significant for Muslim women. Meanwhile, in fact, it is actually at odds with the reality of Muslims.

Consumerism as the Cultural Ideology

A central argument for using this theoretical framework is that the involvement of Muslim characters or Muslim representation in U.S. popular culture is part of the strategy to shape consumerism as the cultural ideology. Sklair's interpretation of "consumerism as the cultural ideology" or "culture-ideology of consumerism" refers to how excessive consumption has evolved from being a practice exclusive to the wealthy throughout human history to a phenomenon affecting the majority of the population on a global scale (Sklair 2012, 1). In terms of popular culture, there has been a shift regarding how people enjoy or consume it. In recent years, people have preferred to watch movies using SVOD (subscription video on demand) services or streaming platforms rather than in theaters or on television. This has affected people's behavior in regarding how they consume movies on a global scale. This has resulted in increased movie consumption because movies and TV shows have become more accessible and can be watched anytime from anywhere.

Sklair assessed cultural ideology of consumerism based on two factors. First, the arrival of capitalism in the 1950s, which began a new phase of globalization (Sklair 2012, 1). Since then, significant changes

have taken place in economic production, such as the development of capitalist productivity factories and the distribution of goods and services with the use of advanced technology. Furthermore, during the golden age of capitalism, a new class of globally integrated transnational corporations and transnational capitalists originating from the United States began to govern politics, fueled in large part by technological developments (Sklair 2012, 1).

The second factor is that structured global mass media quickly establishes the consumerist style, spreading the cultural ideology of consumerism (Sklair 2012, 1). In summary, Sklair thinks that capitalism and structured global mass media are the reasons for the establishment of culture-ideology of consumerism. This is closely related to the previous discussion in which consumer taste determines the themes raised by producers in their films and television series, which involves the practices of cultural homogenization and hybridization aimed at pursuing the consumerist culture ideology. As explained in the previous chapter, with the trend of cultural diversity in the 21st century, most film producers are adding diversity to their shows or movies. This has given minority groups within the United States society, such as Muslims, representation.

Based on the Pew Research Center, when measured by percentage of audiences by country, around half of Muslims from each country consume a significant amount of U.S. popular culture. For instance, 57% of Tajikistan Muslims say they enjoy Western popular culture. Preferences for Western entertainment vary widely in Sub-Saharan Africa ranging from 71% in Guinea Bissau to 29% in Ethiopia. Half of Malaysian Muslims enjoy western entertainment or popular culture, and 41% of Indonesian Muslims state the same opinion (Lugo et al. 2013, 134). Although currently there is no data that can accurately predict how many Muslims watch U.S. popular culture that includes Muslim images, the data presented above is sufficient to describe how much U.S. popular culture Muslims consume in general. This data could be one of the reasons why U.S. film producers are beginning to change the image of Muslims in their popular culture. They are expecting more and more Muslims to consume U.S. entertainment.

However, unfortunately not all representation attempts through popular culture have been successful. Not long ago, in 2022, Disney released *Ms. Marvel*, their newest superhero series which highlight a Muslim protagonist character. When the first episode of the show was

released, Muslims responded positively. This was due to the fact that the series portrays the Muslim image quite well, better than other U.S. TV series that have previously been released. For instance, the series portrays how the main character, Kamala Khan utters "*bismillah*" before starting her driving exam and all the Muslim characters just naturally say *Salam* when they greet each other (Ali 2022). Fans, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai, expressed their delight over the release of this series as the first Pakistani Muslim superhero (Kaur, 2022). They felt like they were finally being represented in U.S. popular culture and slowly moving away from the label of "terrorism" as part of their identity. Judging from the rise in frequency and changing portrayals of Muslim in U.S. popular culture, it is undeniable that this series could have been released to attract more viewers from the minority, taking advantage of the 21st-century trend of including minority and underrepresented people.

On this point, Sklair's statement of consumerism as a cultural ideology is in line with what is happening. Large audiences, who mostly are Muslims, watch the series and have given positive reviews about this series that highlights the Muslim character. Lucy Mangan wrote a review of the series in The Guardian, stating that the series plot is glorious and it is not as "woke" as some might claim (Mangan, 2022). Another reviewer, Muhammad Zaheer, stated that the *Ms. Marvel* series helped him relate as a Muslim. *Ms. Marvel* feels like a celebration of diaspora communities to him (Zaheer, 2022).

Even so, not everyone welcomed the *Ms. Marvel* series so positively. It seems like *Ms. Marvel* received only positive feedback from mostly Muslim fans, while others criticized its diversity by calling it too "woke" and "cringe-worthy" (Kaur, 2022). Even though *Ms. Marvel* was quite successful in gaining the attention of Muslim community, it was not attractive enough for the general American audiences who are mostly white. As a result, *Ms. Marvel* is currently the lowest-rated series in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. It only received a 6.2 out of 10 rating on IMDb (Ms. Marvel, n.d.). At this time, it appears that the popularity of *Ms. Marvel* is still limited to the Muslim community who find the show relatable. Therefore, Sklair's statement seems limited in this context. Theoretically, if examined from Sklair's statement, the representation of Muslims in *Ms. Marvel* should be able to attract audiences because Sklair has defined consumerism as a cultural ideology that has evolved in accordance with the current situation. In the *Ms. Marvel* series, Disney+

appears to be adapting the 21st century trend of minority issues that has begun to widely spread to popular culture; however, Disney+ only succeeded in gaining a large Muslim audience to watch the series while most of the American audiences rejected it.

This is in line with what Matrix said, that the audiences often watch a film or movie because they feel a sense of connection to a community or what is represented in it (Matrix 2014, 127-128). It might also be the reason why the general American and Western audiences have not welcomed the series; they lack a sense of connection to it. Furthermore, the different depiction of Muslims in *Ms. Marvel* compared to previously released series or films may also be a reason why the general American audience lacks enthusiasm for the series. Therefore, Sklair's statement regarding consumerism as the cultural ideology, which refers to how excessive consumption has evolved throughout history, is limited in this context (Sklair 2012, 1). It only occurs in certain community, which in this context is the Muslim community.

Conclusion

Since 2017, the image of Muslims, which had frequently portrayed negatively, has gradually shifted to a positive side where the United States producers have begun to include Muslim characters as protagonists in their TV series and films. For instance, in *Bodyguard (2017), Elite (2017), Mo (2022),* and *Ms. Marvel (2022).* The globalization process that occurs in United States popular culture has been studied in this research using Sklair's four categories of transnational approaches to globalization which concludes of four categories; capitalism as a central issue of globalization, capitalist globalization and cultural imperialism, globalization that proposes homogenization and hybridization, and consumerism as the cultural ideology.

Based on this, it can be concluded that the changing image of Muslims in United States popular culture is closely related to three interconnected factors: capitalism, representation, and globalization. This is consistent with Sklair's transnational approach to globalization, which sees capitalism as an issue closely related to globalization, which is further supported by cultural values that are indeed related to existing representations.

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