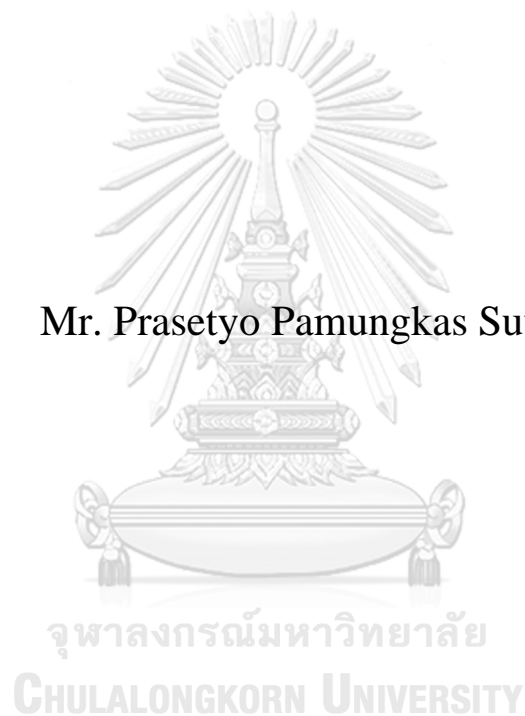


Understanding Femininity in Beauty Pageant Industry: A Case
Study of *Puteri Indonesia* Pageant

Mr. Prasetyo Pamungkas Suwardi



A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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ปุตตรีอินโดนีเซีย (Puteri Indonesia) เป็นเวทีการประกวดความงามที่เก่าแก่ที่สุดในประเทศอินโดนีเซีย และถือว่าเป็นกรณีศึกษาที่เหมาะสมสำหรับการวิเคราะห์แนวคิดความเป็นสตรีของอินโดนีเซีย การศึกษานี้ครอบคลุม 3 ประเด็นสำคัญ ได้แก่ ประวัติความเป็นมาของการประกวดปุตตรีอินโดนีเซีย เป็นการสร้างรากฐานและที่มาของแนวคิดความเป็นผู้หญิงในการประกวดปุตตรีอินโดนีเซีย ความเป็นผู้หญิงที่สร้างขึ้นนั้นมีความสัมพันธ์กับอุดมการณ์การควบคุมและจัดการเพศสภาพของประชาชนภายใต้รัฐบาลของอดีตประธานาธิบดีซูฮาร์โต (Soeharto) ซึ่งมีพื้นฐานมาจากวัฒนธรรมชาวประเภอกับภูมิหลังของเจ้าของเวทีประกวดปุตตรีอินโดนีเซียที่เป็นสมาชิกของราชวงศ์ชวา ซึ่งส่งผลให้แนวคิดความเป็นหญิงแบบ “ปุตตรีเคราตอน” (Puteri Keraton) นั้นถือเป็นมาตรฐานความเป็นหญิงที่เหมาะสมสำหรับผู้เข้าประกวด ประเด็นต่อมา การศึกษานี้จะวิเคราะห์สคริปต์หรือตัวบทที่ใช้สำหรับการประกวดปุตตรีอินโดนีเซียผ่านทฤษฎีของจูดิธ บัตเลอร์ (Judith Butler) ซึ่งผู้วิจัยพบว่าการประกวดปุตตรีอินโดนีเซียได้ผลิตซ้ำและมีส่วนปลูกฝังคติเกี่ยวกับความงาม โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งลักษณะของผู้หญิงซึ่งกำหนดโดยสมาชิกอาวุโสและผู้มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสียของการประกวด ประเด็นที่สามคือการสัมภาษณ์อดีตผู้เข้าประกวดนางงามในเวทีปุตตรีอินโดนีเซีย ซึ่งผู้วิจัยพบว่าการได้ว่าเป็น “ปุตตรี” (Puteri) นั้นทำให้พวกเธอนั้นถูกคาดหวังจากสังคม โดยการที่พวกเธอจะต้องคงความเป็นหญิงที่เหมาะสมหรือ “ปุตตรีเคราตอน” ไว้แม้หลังจากประกวดสิ้นสุดลงแล้วก็ตาม หากไม่ปฏิบัติตามหรือคงไว้ซึ่งความคาดหวังนี้ก็จะส่งผลต่อการถูกวิพากษ์วิจารณ์จากผู้จัดงานและสังคม ในขณะเดียวกัน หากปฏิบัติตามได้อย่างเหมาะสมตามความคาดหวังนี้ก็จะส่งผลดีและสร้างโอกาสต่างๆ ในชีวิตของพวกเธอ

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Prasetyo Pamungkas Suwardi : Understanding Femininity in Beauty Pageant Industry: A Case Study of *Puteri Indonesia* Pageant. Advisor: Assoc. Prof. MONTIRA RATO, Ph.D. Co-advisor: PORRANEE SINGPLIAM, Ph.D.

Puteri Indonesia, the oldest running beauty pageant in Indonesia offers an interesting site to analyze the construction of femininity within the country. The study will cover three scopes in this study; first is the historical formation of *Puteri Indonesia* pageant, which sets a foundational construction of femininity in *Puteri Indonesia* pageant. The study will observe how the constructed femininity is intertwined with the gender propaganda of the Soeharto regime that is based on Javanese idea that coupled with the background of the owner of *Puteri Indonesia* as a member of Javanese Royals as resulting in *Puteri Keraton* deemed appropriate for feminine women. Second, the study will analyze the script in *Puteri Indonesia* pageants through performative lenses of Judith Butler where it argues that *Puteri Keraton* is being repeated and stylized through the beauty camp and its training. Particularly, how feminine attributes are monitored and shaped by the seniors and stakeholders of the pageant. Third is the interview with former contestants of *Puteri Indonesia* where the study found that their *Puteri* title put expectations on them to embody the *Puteri Keraton* long after their pageant days. The failure to perform it correctly results in punishment by the organizer and society, meanwhile the success to perform it correctly will land them opportunities in their lives.



Field of Study:	Southeast Asian Studies	Student's Signature
	
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Year:	
		Co-advisor's Signature
	

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale and Background

Discourse on beauty pageants mainly centered on how the industry promotes strict and narrow conception of femininity. However, the supporters and or people who are involved in the industry think that beauty pageant is one of many ways to celebrate womanhood and femininity as Miss Universe 1999 from Botswana, Mpule Kwelagobe said in her final interview during the competition:

“Personally, I think, Miss Universe is a symbol of woman as well as she is celebrating her femininity.”

Then, is it true that Miss Universe or any beauty pageants celebrate femininity? Feminists argue that beauty pageants are the cultural producers of idealized femininity (Balogun, 2012; Banet-Weiser, 1999). The way ideal femininity has been circulated is as problematic as Susan Bordo argues that the concept of femininity is a culture’s way to suppress women because it dictates what women should wear and how women should behave. The practice of femininity at extreme level would lead women to utter demoralization, debilitation, and death (Bordo, 2001).

Despite the criticism, beauty pageants remain popular in some parts of the world especially in Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines, Thailand, as well as Indonesia, the country I come from. Even in the Philippines, beauty pageants become their main favorite leisure after basketball (Balayan, 2018). In Thailand, beauty pageants are not only limited to cis women but also cater to the trans women with the creation of Miss Tiffany Universe in 1984 that takes place in Pattaya annually (The Telegraph UK, 2018). In Indonesia, at the time this paper is written, there are at least five national level beauty pageants (Puteri Indonesia, Miss Indonesia, Puteri Pariwisata Indonesia, Miss Earth Indonesia, and Miss Grand Indonesia) and dozens of smaller scale beauty pageants being held. Among these, Puteri Indonesia remains as the oldest and is considered as the most prestigious beauty pageant in Indonesia.

The studies on beauty pageants revolve around their political power, economic value, national identity, sexuality, as well as the impact of beauty pageants on female body image (Balogun, 2012; Banet-Weiser, 1999; Boonbongkarn, 2001; Cohen, 1996). Sarah Bennet-Weiser in her book titled “The Most Beautiful Girl in the World: Beauty Pageants and National Identity” rejected the notion that beauty pageants are merely created for entertainment purposes only. She further explored the idea that beauty pageants [are in fact situated as a cultural practice] which deserve intellectual attention especially since beauty pageants are intertwined with public spectacle and display as well as their articulations of dominant norms of femininity. Furthermore, she also explained that performance of gender is highly visible since there are disciplinary practices that construct women as feminine and position women as unproblematically desirable.

Van Esterik (1996), wrote how beauty pageant became very important in Thailand’s socio-political situation. She explored the idea that in Southeast Asia, there are indigenous concept concerning beauty to be displayed and evaluated. Especially in Thai culture; grace, elegance and beauty are appreciated. However, beauty is often used as a means to enforce women’s subordination. The Thai state is a responsible institution in constructing, reproducing, and spreading the ideal model of Thai femininity across region and classes. This Thai femininity is attributed with gentleness, silence, and virtue which are intertwined with grace, composure, and beauty. According to her, a beauty pageant is a means to persuade women to conform into that category which enable the subordination of women to men.

In a similar vein, this study will analyze the construction of femininity in the context of Indonesian socio-political dynamics. By carrying out this study, the insight on how Indonesian women negotiate with the traditional feminine value will be obtained which will help to understand their position in Indonesian society, economy, and politic.

Focusing on the oldest beauty pageant in Indonesia; *Puteri Indonesia*, this study was carried out with qualitative methodology; textual analysis and interview, in order to

gain perspective on different aspect within Indonesia shaped the way femininity is being portrayed in the pageant and furthermore affect people who are involved within the industry understand its idea. Judith Butler's theory on gender performativity will be used in this study as she explains that gender is a stylized repetition of acts which is being repeated continuously to the point that it is considered as normal in the society. Butler believes that gender identity itself is not stable, but it stabilizes the gender norms in the society. One reason that I believe her theory is fitting is because *Puteri Indonesia* pageant is being broadcasted annually on national television and watched by a considerable huge number of people according to the high rating of the show (Wowkeren, 2019). Therefore, it is possible that the pageant's portrayal of femininity would affect the way people understand femininity in Indonesia and further strengthen the notion of enforcing traditional gender norms.

Three analysis will be presented in this study; first is historical facts of *Puteri Indonesia* pageant itself which includes its relationship with the reigning regime and connection with Javanese Royals, second is the analysis of the script in *Puteri Indonesia* pageant through performative lenses, and third is the dialogue with former contestants of *Puteri Indonesia*.

In Chapter II of this study, the brief history of the *Puteri Indonesia* pageant, the qualifications for contestants as well as the selection process of the pageant will be presented. Further in Chapter III, I will discuss the development of the *Puteri Indonesia* pageant in which I argue that portrayal of femininity in the *Puteri Indonesia* pageant is mainly shaped by the stakeholders' (organizer and government) idea of how feminine Indonesian women should be. Their idea is influenced by the traditional culture, mainly Javanese culture, and the religious believe that majority of Indonesian believe in. Lastly in Chapter IV, I argue that *Puteri Indonesia* pageant's portrayal of femininity is divided into three aspects; mannerism, sexuality and gender roles. Moreover, I also present how women who participate in the pageant negotiating the standard femininity of the pageant with their own concept of femininity, what motivates them to compete as well as what they gain by participating in this institution.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How do Indonesian women who compete in *Puteri Indonesia* and Miss Universe pageant negotiate the different notions of femininity in those pageants?
2. What is the impact that affects women competing in *Puteri Indonesia* in terms of their understanding of their own femininity?

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To examine how Indonesian beauty pageant industry operates through *Puteri Indonesia*, the study will provide a glimpse of how socio-political dynamics in Indonesia helps to construct the notion of femininity that Indonesian society accepts.
2. The study will explore how Indonesian women negotiates with the different conception of femininity beyond the scope of Indonesia while competing at Miss Universe.
3. To explore how rigid cultural expectations of being *Puteri Indonesia* limit the women participating in the pageant to practice their femininity beyond the traditional understanding of how feminine Indonesian women should be.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

1.4.1 Gender Performativity

The theory of gender performativity was first coined by Judith Butler in her 1988 essay titled 'Performative acts and gender constitution: an essay in phenomenology and theory' and further discussed in her 1990 book, 'Gender Trouble'. In this theory, the notion of gender according to Butler, is performative rather than given. Using psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and speech-act theory, Butler explores the ways that our social reality is not given but rather created continuously through language, gesture, and symbolic social sign (Butler, 1988).

Furthermore, Butler explores the idea of gender as not a stable identity but rather an identity which constituted social temporality through a stylized repetition of acts; bodily

gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitutes the illusion of an abiding gendered self and thus reproducing historical situation (Butler, 1988). In her understanding, gender is like a pre-existing script in a theater that an actor must perform. This script needs to be rehearsed by an individual actor to reproduce gender as reality. Butler then argues that by understanding gender as something that is performative rather than expressive, then “there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction” (Butler, 1988: 528).

Although Butler suggests that gender is merely a fiction which is being reproduced repeatedly, we live in a world where gender is made with a model of truth and falsity that serves as social policy of gender regulation and control (Butler, 1988). If someone performs their gender wrong, punitive consequences await them. These punitive consequences are enacted as strategy of survival for gender identity and can take form as discrimination and marginalization for those who fail to perform the illusion of gender reality (Butler, 1988).

This theory will be used in order to analyze the data that I gather through textual analysis of *Puteri Indonesia* pageant, discourse on social media, as well as interviews with former contestants of the pageant.

1.5 Hypothesis

1. Despite the differences between the notion of femininity in *Puteri Indonesia* and Miss Universe pageant, Indonesian women competing at Miss Universe should embrace the westernized notion of femininity enforced in Miss Universe while maintaining the traditional form of Indonesian femininity.
2. The notion of *Puteri Indonesia* winner status is encrypted within the pageant contestant after post competition due to rigid cultural expectation.

1.6 Research Outlines

1.6.1 Scope of Study

This study will focus on two editions of *Puteri Indonesia* and Miss Universe pageants; 2013 and 2019. There are several reasons why those two editions are chosen. First, the pageant ownership. Prior to 2015, Miss Universe organization was owned by Donald Trump. However, he sold his ownership of the organization to the international modelling agency WME/IMG in 2015 (Insider, 2020). During Trump ownership, he was notorious for enforcing patriarchal fixation onto the pageant, especially on how he controlled the appearance of Miss Universe contestants. For example, Miss Universe 1996, Alicia Machado from Venezuela was shamed repeatedly by Trump due to her weight gain during her reign. Further, she was forced by Trump to exercise in a gym with dozens of reporters and cameras (Barbaro & Twohey, 2016). Thus, by considering analyzing the pageant ownership would give insight on how the ideal femininity is being enforced differently in these different ownerships.

Moreover, the airtime of Indonesian delegates at Miss Universe final will also be considered. *Puteri Indonesia* competing at Miss Universe pageant did not always make the semifinals round which limits their airtime only to the opening number segment. Therefore, to choose editions where *Puteri Indonesia* made it to semifinals is very crucial to the study because it allows for deeper analysis on their performativity and their relevance to the larger society. The 2013 and 2019 are the editions where *Puteri Indonesia* made to semifinals. In 2013 edition, *Puteri Indonesia* 2013, Whulandary Herman, ended 7 years drought of placing at Miss Universe pageant where she competed until the first cut of the pageant which was swimsuit competition. Her first placement since 2005 would also give a useful insight in analyzing the discourses of Indonesian pageant fans on why she made it to the semifinal. In 2019 edition, *Puteri Indonesia* 2019, Frederika Alexis Cull made history for placing at the top 10 of Miss Universe for the first time. This opportunity made her airtime at Miss Universe to be the longest compared to her predecessors and her achievement was highly reported in Indonesian media.

Analyzing the success of *Puteri Indonesia* who competed in the Miss Universe pageant 2013 and 2019 will help to understand how they came to terms with the different notions of femininity in *Puteri Indonesia* and Miss Universe as well as providing glimpses of their transformation process as a way of negotiating the different layers of femininity and further how Indonesian society expects how *Puteri Indonesia* should be.

1.6.2 Methodology

The study was conducted by using the qualitative approach; textual analysis and interview. The textual analysis focused on reading academic literature, news, and beauty pageant forum in order to understand how *Puteri Indonesia* pageant notion of femininity is being shaped. Further, focusing on two editions of *Puteri Indonesia* pageant; 2013 and 2019, I analyzed how its understanding of femininity is being translated into live broadcast.

In addition, semi-structured interview was also conducted in order to gain insight and possible negotiations related to femininity in *Puteri Indonesia* and Miss Universe pageant from people who are directly involved with the pageants. The subject of the interview will include pageant trainers and participant of *Puteri Indonesia* pageant. Before competing in any beauty pageants, many prospective contestants undergo trainings to prepare them for the pageants. The training includes styling, catwalk, gesture, as well as personality. Hence, if we consider beauty pageant competitions as a theater where Butler based her performativity theory on, femininity is the script, contestants are the actors, and pageant trainers are the directors who are responsible in directing the contestants to understand the femininity script of the pageants. Thus, the interview will be useful in gathering more understanding of the femininity conception as well as how they handle the society expectation that comes with the title of *Puteri Indonesia*.

1.6.3 Significance of the Study

1. The study will provide an understanding on how Indonesian beauty pageant industry constructs its concept of femininity and how people who are involved

in the industry make sense of its concept which further act as a path for Indonesian women to follow their role in the economy, politics, and society.

2. In addition, the study will open doors for further research on how Southeast Asian countries construct and enforce femininity upon women through its growing beauty pageant industry.

1.7 Literature Reviews

1.7.1 Femininity in Indonesian Setting

By understanding how femininity is and or has been constructed within Indonesia, we can get insights on the conception of femininity of the parties involved in the beauty pageant industry which will further resulted in a stronger ground of this study. In this section, the discourse will be centered on the construction of femininity in Indonesia based on the gender norms that have been ingrained during the state formation process.

Some scholars agree that during the New Order regime led by President Soeharto, the government was actively involved in the propagation of gender ideology not only by the laws and the regulation they created but also propaganda from the state sponsored women's organizations (Robinson, 2009; Suryakusuma, 1996). Furthermore, Suryakusuma argues that the regime tried to foster the idea of 'State Ibuism' which defines women's role as their husband's supporter and sees women dependency to men as ideal.

Ida (2001), argues that this concept of femininity that the regime upheld is a manifestation of traditional Javanese culture mixed with Islam fundamentalism. Indonesian women are identified as women of Yogyakarta and Surakarta royal family where women's role and status in society are defined by the role of women in the royal family which dictates that women should be loyal to their husbands, be ideal housewife, and mother for her children. Soeharto, the longest ruling president of Indonesia with 32 years came from a Javanese family and Ida argues that Soeharto treated himself as a 'Javanese King' since the authority of royal family had been taken over by the national government. With his strong hold of Javanese values, Soeharto and his family took the nationalist ideology into their own hands.

The regime also utilized the trope of *kodrat* which is derived from Arabic and connotes God's will or God's omnipotence, with the related meaning of 'the power of nature' and 'nature of character'. Regarding its use in Soeharto's regime, *kodrat wanita* (*wanita* meaning women) was used to promote women's social role based on their preordained biological capacities. Thus, limiting women's role as mother and subordinate to men. Furthermore, the state framed sanctioned masculinity which organized around the idea that men should be the leader inside and outside of household (Robinson, 2009).

Even after the fall of Soeharto's regime in 1998, the ideal femininity of women as their husband's subordinate is preserved not only by the society but also from the Indonesian women as well. Ida (2001), mentions that even though many married women are out and about in workplaces, many Muslim Indonesian women believe that in order to be able to work, they need to ask their husband's permission beforehand. Furthermore, many Indonesian, especially those from the urban middle-class are constantly negotiating whether they should stick to the traditional value or to embrace the modern women's ideal. In this case, modern women are perceived as having a modern lifestyle following the global movement for example, delaying marriage as well as working to help family's economy and becoming more critical towards traditional Indonesian custom.

1.7.2 Feminism and Beauty Pageants

1.7.2.1 Feminism in the West

To understand the history of feminist movement in a chronological manner in the West, it is often written in the wave narrative which was coined by Marsha Lear in 1968 (Gamble, 2006). In summary, the first wave feminist movement started to grow in between First and World war with the aim of achieving the rights for women to cast vote. The second wave is believed to be the revival of its predecessor which began in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Their movement is more complex as its aim is beyond the equality of political rights to a much broader range for equality between sexes. The third wave started to proliferate in the early 1990s and it often criticizes the second wave due to its lack of focus on women's differences. The third wave itself aims for

the movement to be more inclusive toward the difference such as race, ethnicity, class, nationality, religion and put more emphasis on their intersectionality which resulted in the struggle. Further, it foregrounds queer and non-white issues as an attempt to depart from the hegemony of white middle-class (Evans & Chamberlain, 2015; McAfee, 2018).

Another point of view to understand feminism and its movements is by categorizing it according to its different perspectives on how to achieve gender equality. The first perspective is radical feminism which views male supremacy is the root of women's suffering and discrimination, thus it calls for radical reordering of society in order to eliminate the domination of men in all social and economic context. It is often criticized as an elitist idea because most of radical feminist are belong to white middle-class group of women which limited their gender relations, thus, making them unaware of the privilege they benefited from their race and class (Willis, 1984). The second perspective is liberal feminism which views women are capable to obtain equality by their own choices and merit. Its view is very individualistic, and it argues that societal believe holds which views women as less intellectual and physically capable than men are false and only perpetuates women's discrimination in the society (Tong, 1989). The main criticism on this perspective is that its individualistic focus makes it inadequate to see how social structures and values are created to discriminate women (Bryson, 1999). Emerging perspective of feminism is intersectional feminism that views inequality is not created equal, inequalities that exist are not separated but rather interacted and overlapped with each other further only exacerbates the inequality and oppression. Thus, equality can only be achieved if inequalities in all aspects are eliminated (UN, 2020).

1.7.2.2 Feminism in Indonesia

In Indonesia, where many in the populations are conservatives and hold patriarchal value, the concept of feminism is unpopular and received bad rep as a Western idea that is not suitable for Indonesian society, especially with the growth of religious conservatism (Diani, 2016). However, if we trace back the history, the idea of women fighting for their rights and equality can be found since the early 20th century. One of

the most well-known feminist figures in that era is Raden Ajeng Kartini, a woman born in Javanese aristocrat family whose letters to her Dutch friends telling her fights to receive education similar to her brothers and her rejection over arranged marriage at young age have become the symbol of woman's emancipation (Beekman, 1984).

Historians argue that the pre-1965 era of Indonesia is a period where women's movement had advanced and progressed. Starting from the first Women's Congress in 1928 where women talked about being independent as well as rejecting polygamy to women teacher's movement that aimed to teach women in remote villages to read and write (Blackburn, 1947; Diani, 2016).

One notable women's group in that era is Gerwani (*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia* or Indonesian Women's Movement). The group was very active in the 1950s and had a strong affiliation with now banned political party, PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia* or Indonesian Communist Party). Their fight focused on emancipation, social and gender justice, as well as violence against women. However, after the failed coup attempt by PKI in 1965, communists and their sympathizer were massacred by the state which resulted in Gerwani's disappearance. It was mystified as a bunch of crazy women who danced around naked at night. It was not only Gerwani, but other women's groups as well. These women's groups were later replaced by the New Order state-sponsored women's group that did not fight for women's right but rather associations of the wives whose husbands worked in government institutions (Wieringa, 2002).

According to Wieringa cited in Diani (2016), since the collapsed of New Regime in 1998, the discourse of women's movement have become regressive due to the increase of sharia-based bylaws. Nowadays, the women's movement is using the Islamic feminism where they are trying to develop new understanding on Islam and how the Quran does not oppress women but its interpretation by male clerics that make Islam as it is right now (Diani, 2016).

1.7.2.3 Feminists on Beauty Pageant

Feminists argue that beauty pageants are the cultural producers of idealized femininity (Balogun, 2012; Banet-Weiser, 1999). The way ideal femininity has been circulated is as problematic as Susan Bordo argues that the concept of femininity is a culture's way to suppress women because it dictates what women should wear and how women should behave. The practice of femininity at extreme level would lead women to utter demoralization, debilitation, and death (Bordo, 2001).

Furthermore, in the 1960s and the 1970s there were major incidents involving feminists protest on beauty pageant. According to Gay (2018), Miss America 1968 sparked a feminist revolution conceived by radical feminist, Carol Hanisch, where they threw objects symbolizing oppression into the Freedom Trash can and shouting that the Miss America in itself is a symbol of misogyny. In November 1970, a group of feminists from Women's Liberation activists in the UK stormed the stage of the Miss World pageant where they threw flour bombs and disrupted the contest (BBC, 2014). In recent years, protests from feminist groups on beauty pageants are still happening. In 2011 and 2014, London Feminist Network protested against the sexist and degrading nature of the pageant (Greco, 2014).

In Indonesia, beauty pageant still receives criticism from women's group. Siti Aminah, women's activist from *Asosiasi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan* (Indonesian Women's Association for Justice) mentioned that even though beauty pageants glorify the diversity of beauty of Indonesian women from west to east Indonesia in which each part has their own ethnic groups, in practice, the beauty that it always showcases is what the beauty market constructed. One obvious example according to her is the height standard for the contestants (BBC, 2018).

What is more interesting, when Magdalene.co, an online female magazine that discuss gender related issue, shared an article published in its website to twitter criticizing beauty pageant, the responses were intriguing. Even though there were some who agree that it is objectifying women, however there are also women who criticized the article because they believe that competing in a beauty pageant is an act of self-actualization

and there is nothing wrong with women making their own choices. The public responses were similar when the controversy of Indonesian woman participating at the Miss Universe pageant 1996 occurred, Maria Pakpahan, a prominent feminist figure, did not have any objection on the swimsuit round and further saying that competing at the Miss Universe is a form of self-actualization and her rights to express herself in an international competition. This contrasting opinion can be resulted from the different perspective of those feminists. Maria's view is very similar to the idea of liberal feminism in which Banet-Weiser (1999) argues that most pageants are characterized by the ambivalence of contemporary "liberal" feminism, which encourages individual achievement, self-determination, and civic responsibility, while simultaneously promoting very conventional notions of beauty. So, even though competing at beauty pageant can be seen in a positive light by feminist, it still is problematic because despite the women's effort to have self achievement, this achievement is still tied to the patriarchal system and males' approval.

1.7.3 Study on Puteri Indonesia

Despite the debates going on between feminist groups and also the public, the study on *Puteri Indonesia* as the oldest beauty pageant in Indonesia remains limited to the ideal beauty standard in terms of physical appearance (Maulida, 2018), used Thwaites model to analyze the construction of slim bodies in the *Puteri Indonesia* 2002. She found that fashion is a part of the identity of a *Puteri Indonesia* contestant. Furthermore, the hosts in the final event kept on complimenting the ideal slim figure and beautiful face of the contestants is how *Puteri Indonesia* pageant produces the ideal Indonesian beauty. Winditha (2019), uses Roland Barthes' semiotic method to analyze the beauty myth in the *Puteri Indonesia* 2019. She found that despite its effort to showcase the different types of beauty, the pageant still managed to modify it and resulted in showcasing the strict physical beauty standard.

Due to the limitation on the previous studies on the *Puteri Indonesia* pageant, this study aims to dig deeper on how the pageant constructs and enforces its conception of femininity beyond the physical appearance.



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CHAPTER II

HISTORY AND SELECTION PROCESS OF THE PUTERI INDONESIA PAGEANT

In the previous chapter, I have discussed how current concept of Indonesian femininity is influenced by the government propaganda, feminists' opinion on beauty pageants as well as previous studies on the *Puteri Indonesia* pageant as the oldest national level beauty pageant in the country. Therefore, in this chapter, I will discuss the brief history of the pageant from its conception in 1992 until the pageant went on a hiatus in 1996. I will discuss in detail what happened to the pageant which lead to its temporary hiatus.

Moreover, I will also discuss they selection process of the *Puteri Indonesia* pageant from its criteria to choose contestants, auditions, as well as the final show. However, it should be noted that the discussion on this sub-chapter is based on the current process since the information on the 1990s *Puteri Indonesia* pageant are limited and not accessible for the duration of this study.

2.1 Brief History of the *Puteri Indonesia* Pageant

Puteri Indonesia (translated into Princess of Indonesia) was first held on 1992 and organized by Yayasan *Puteri Indonesia* which is a part of Mustika Ratu Tbk, a cosmetic company founded by Mooryati Soediby, an entrepreneur from Central Java and now Yayasan *Puteri Indonesia* is headed by Putri Kuswisnuwardani, the daughter of Moeryati Soediby. The pageant seeks women who possess the 3B character; brain, beauty, and behavior to be sent to compete internationally at the Miss Universe pageant.

Unlike beauty pageants which had been held before *Puteri Indonesia*, there was no swimsuit parade during the competition to avoid getting banned from the government due to the Decree No. 0237/U/1984 signed by the Minister of Education and Culture, Mr. Nugroho Notosutanto in 1984 which categorized beauty pageant into two aspects; the one with positive impact and the one with negative impact. In this decree, beauty pageants that are categorized as positive need to have these criteria:

1. Promoting the use of domestic products

2. Demonstrating and preserving regional custom and culture for the development of national culture
3. Stimulating national achievement and creativity
4. Demonstrating and competing contestant's talent and hard work

Meanwhile beauty pageants that fall under the negative category are the one which fit the criteria as follows:

1. Conflicting with the religious belief of the community
2. Not reflecting the nation's social norm
3. The judging criteria is based on appearance and descending to fulfil base desire (*selera rendah*)
4. Causing the sense of inferiority on people who are in the same age group of the contestants
5. Disrupting social order.

From this decree, *Yayasan Puteri Indonesia* did not want its pageant to fall under negative criteria and hence removing the swimsuit parade would not conflict with the concept of *aurat* in Islam which is considered as a sin if women displayed their body parts to the public. Furthermore, it is also considered a sin for men to look at women's *aurat*, hence women are required to dress in a modest way to avoid it. Due to the embedded patriarchy of the society, the limitation and control are only enforced to women even though in *Al Qur'an surah An-Nur* (24-30) itself, Allah commands men to lower their gaze from looking at forbidden things (women's *aurat* included).

Moreover, *Puteri Indonesia* was born during the New Order regime under Soeharto's leadership in which feminist scholars argued that during this regime, the state government actively constructed the idea of womanhood derived from cultural values of Javanese and Islam fundamentalism which further strengthen the domestication role of women (Ida, 2001). Hence, the social norm being implemented is influenced by the Islam perspective, therefore having swimsuit parade will go against the norm.

Puteri Indonesia pageant continued until 1996 where there was a controversy surrounding Alya Rohali, *Puteri Indonesia* 1996 who was sent to Miss Universe 1996 at Las Vegas. The controversy focused on the notion that wearing a swimsuit in public is an indecent act especially for Indonesian women. The most vocal figure to oppose her participation was Mien Sugandhi, the Minister of Women's Affairs. In her argument, she stated that the Indonesian government never agreed to beauty pageants and their criteria of judgment which measures women's body. Her objection was further strengthened by an argument saying that Indonesia is a religious country and it is not proper for women to display their bodies for the public eyes to see. Moreover, she also thought that it is not appropriate for Indonesia to participate in such festivities especially since the first lady, Tien Soeharto had passed away that year (Rifki, 1996). Due to this controversy, *Yayasan Puteri Indonesia* was called by the Ministry of Women's Affairs to explain the situation. The government also created an inter-ministry task group which consists of Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Religion, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs to further discuss the matter. It seemed that the group issued a warning to *Yayasan Puteri Indonesia* for its participation at Miss Universe because there had been no *Puteri Indonesia* pageant since 1996.

In 2000, two years after Soeharto regime was demolished, *Puteri Indonesia* pageant reemerged with the same format. However, in this early year, the organizer did not send the winner to Miss Universe pageant until 2005. There controversies regarding the swimsuit portion remain but the government does not put themselves in the contra position, chose to remain neutral and even supports the national pageant to be held due to the fact that the government regarded them as the brand ambassador of Indonesia's national brand since during the preparation camp of *Puteri Indonesia*, the Ministry of Tourism always supported the trainings to the contestants with regards to tourism of Indonesia. Moreover, during the final night of *Puteri Indonesia* there would always be questions asked to the contestants on Indonesian tourism sector on what they would do to promote the industry if they are chosen as *Puteri Indonesia* to represent Indonesia on the international stage.¹

¹ Data were collected from the Final Night of *Puteri Indonesia* 2013 to 2017 on the official Youtube account of *Puteri Indonesia*

2.2 Qualification and Selection Process of the *Puteri Indonesia* Pageant

2.2.1 Qualifications

In the *Puteri Indonesia* pageant, the contestants who are competing at national level would represent the provinces she resides in or where her family came from. In order to be able to do that, potential contestants should pass the audition or win the provincial pageants. According to the *Puteri Indonesia* website, *Yayasan Puteri Indonesia* is looking for women with 3B criteria which stands for Brain, Beauty, and Behavior in which the organizer elaborates more as:

“Brain means having vast knowledge, competence, and independence. Beauty means being able to take care of herself and beautiful inside and outside. Behavior means believing in God, having personality, life ethics, and contributing to the society”

According to textual analysis conducted by Iriani (2013), by putting ‘brain’ as the first criteria, it has big impact in influencing the public opinion on the pageant as it distinguishes *Puteri Indonesia* with other beauty pageants. Furthermore, the public would see *Puteri Indonesia* is not a stereotypical beauty pageant which emphasize more on judging the women’s outer appearance only.

In general, having 3Bs is a qualifier in order to compete nationally. However, these 3Bs are translated into more detailed qualifications as can be seen below:

1. Indonesian citizen aged 18-25, (max. 25 years old on the final night), unmarried, student/employee with minimum height of 170 cm.
2. Provincial contestants should reside or came from the province she would like to represent.
3. Possess vast knowledge on general issue, tourism and culture of Indonesia, as well as environment.
4. Good looking, intelligent, and good personality.
5. Fluent in foreign language is a plus. Having special skills or achievements in specific are would be prioritized.

2.2.2 Selection Process

As previously mentioned, in order to be eligible to compete on the national level, there are two paths that prospective contestants can take; through provincial level or through open audition in Jakarta. In this sub-chapter, I will discuss the selection process on those two paths as well as the selection process of the national stage of the *Puteri Indonesia* pageant.

2.2.2.1 The Puteri Indonesia at Provincial Level

The selection process of the provincial level pageant usually follows the national level *Puteri Indonesia* pageant which includes preparation camp and final show. During preparation camps, the contestants would receive class from government institutions, beauty and manner class, and would visit the sponsors. The main judging process during this camp is in-depth interview with the judges even though their behaviors during the camp would also be taken into account.

After the camp is finished, they would have to compete on the final show. Since the number of provincial contestants were usually under 15 contestants, they would usually go for the top 5 contestants on the first cut. The top 5 contestants are those who score the highest on the in-depth interview. Then, the top 5 contestants would go to questions and answers segment. Three contestants with the highest score would go to the top 3 and receive another round of questions and answers which later will determine who amongst them can represent the province to the *Puteri Indonesia* pageant in Jakarta.



Figure 1 Preparation Camp of Provincial Level Puteri Indonesia Pageant in East Java (Source: Instagram @puteri.jatim)



Figure 2 Final Show of Puteri Indonesia East Java (Source: TribunNews.com)

2.2.2.2 Audition Process

For contestants who want to represent the provinces that have no provincial selection, they can apply directly to *Yayasan Puteri Indonesia* by filling out and sending out the application form to Graha Mustika Ratu, the headquarter of to Graha Mustika Ratu, the headquarter of *Yayasan Puteri Indonesia* in Jakarta. If the national organizer think that they are eligible, they would be called for the audition process in a certain period of time.

During the audition process, the prospective contestants would have to measure their height and weight and then go into a room to be interviewed by the stakeholders. The interview mainly revolves around their backgrounds and their reasons of participating in *Puteri Indonesia*. I mentioned earlier that a candidate should reside in a particular province, however it is possible that she can represent another province if the stakeholders think she is eligible as long as that contestant has any relatives or her immediate family live or come from that particular province. The audition process is relatively short because usually after all contestants finish their interview, the organizer will announce the result in the evening or the day after.



Figure 3 Audition Process of the Puteri Indonesia 2019 Pageant in Jakarta (Source: Liputan6.com)

2.2.2.3 Selection Process on the National Level

After all candidate from both provincial pageant and audition process have been chosen, they will gather in Jakarta for the preparation camp. The duration of the preparation camp usually between 7 to 10 days. The activity can be held in Jakarta but in some years depending on the availability of the sponsors, some activity will be held in other locations. For examples in the 2017 and 2020 editions, the contestants travelled to Bali and East Nusa Tenggara to do official photoshoot.

There are various activities during the preparation camp beside doing photo and video shoot. Most of the time, the contestants will attend seminar or lectures by government institutions such as Ministry of Tourism and The Indonesian Commission of Corruption Eradication. Other activities include sponsor visit and rehearsal for final show.

During this camp, the main judging criteria is in-depth interview where they would enter a room filled with judging panels consist of stakeholders, sponsors, and government officials. This interview is very crucial in order to choose the top 10 or top 11 who will be advancing in the final show. Moreover, there are three competitions beside the in-depth interview. These competitions however are not the deciding factor for the top 10 or top 11 but rather special awards for deserving contestants. These three competitions are talent, traditional costume, and evening gown with a touch of traditional culture competition. Unlike in-depth interview, these competitions are held openly on the same day in the public so the fans can watch them live. The day when these competitions are held is called the Talent Night of *Puteri Indonesia*.



Figure 4 Puteri Indonesia Contestants Attended Seminar during Preparation Camp
(Source: Liputan6.com)



Figure 5 Talent Night of Puteri Indonesia 2017 (Source: Liputan6.com)

On the final show, it is divided into several segments. The first segment is called opening number where all contestants introduce their names, ages, academic background, and the provinces they represent. During this segment, they will wear short cocktail dress except for the candidate who wear hijab. After the opening number, the contestants will change their attire into long evening gown to be paraded on the stage. Then, the hosts will announce the list of contestants advancing to the top 10 or top 11.

The top 11 only started in 2017 where 10 contestants are from the highest score during in-depth interview and one contestant from the fan vote.

The top 10/11 then will change their attire again before entering the questions and answers (Q&A) segments. Before 2019, the first round of Q&A is the deciding judging criteria for top 5/6 candidates. However, in 2019 the format changed following the new format of the Miss Universe pageant where the contestants are required to do a speech on the social works they are involved in or current issues that they are passionate about.

Unlike the Miss Universe pageant that has swimsuit and evening gown competitions, the *Puteri Indonesia* pageant does not have those. Hence, for the top 5/6, they will have to enter another Q&A round where each contestant will receive different questions from various topics. The topics can include philosophical questions, government programs, or current issues. However, for government program related questions, the questions are always in connections with the seminars that they received during training camp.

Then, the top 3 will be selected to enter the final question segment where they will receive the same question. Based on this segment, the winner will be crowned. The 2nd runner up will be given the title of the *Puteri Indonesia Pariwisata (Puteri Indonesia Tourism)* and the right to represent Indonesia at the Miss Supranational pageant. The 1st runner up will be given the title of the *Puteri Indonesia Lingkungan (Puteri Indonesia Environment)* and the right to compete at Miss International. The winner will be given the title of the *Puteri Indonesia* and the right to represent Indonesia at Miss Universe. The three winners will have their own crown which design are inspired by Borobudur temple in three different colors. The colors are red, green, and blue for the winner, 1st runner up, and 2nd runner up respectively.



Figure 6 Puteri Indonesia DKI Jakarta 5 during Opening Number Segment of Puteri Indonesia 2017 (Source: Indonesian Pageants)



Figure 7 Crowning Moment of Puteri Indonesia 2020 (Source: Missosology.org)

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE *PUTERI INDONESIA* PAGEANT

Previously in the Chapter II, I have discussed the brief history of *Puteri Indonesia* pageant in which I have highlighted some important issues related to the pageant starting from the birth of the pageant up until now. However, in this chapter, I will provide detailed information on the changes that *Puteri Indonesia* pageant have been through during certain period that would possibly affect the construction of femininity of the pageant itself. The changes are inevitable to fit the socio-political situation on the given time. Thus, in this chapter, the discussion will be divided into several sub-chapters based on the period of the development of the *Puteri Indonesia* pageant itself.

3.1 The Puteri Indonesia pageant during New Order Indonesia (1992-1996)

3.1.1 Puteri Indonesia and Puteri Keraton

In Chapter I, I have mentioned that the government under Soeharto command was very active in spreading propaganda which affecting the construction of gender identity of Indonesians. Ida (2001) argues in her paper that the government propaganda was influenced by *Keraton* in Central Java; both in Yogyakarta and Surakarta where it defines women's role and status to mirror Royal Javanese women's status where they are required to be loyal to their husband and to be the ideal wife and mother to take care of her family. In addition, the term *Kodrat Perempuan* derives from Islam fundamentalism was also constantly used to determine what women should do and look.

This idea is translated from Mooryati Seodibyo (founder of *Puteri Indonesia*), as a royal member of Surakarta Sunannate, she was born and raised in the palace where she learned the knowledge of Javanese herbal medicine prior her success in running Mustika Ratu company (van Dijk & Taylor, 2011). Therefore, there was a chance it had influenced her in constructing the ideal femininity adopted in *Puteri Indonesia* pageant. This phenomenon did not go unnoticed by the pageant fans. According to my observation in pageant forums such as Missosology and beauty pageant fan pages in Facebook as well as Instagram, they often use the term '*Puteri Keraton*' to explain the

feminine traits that *Yayasan Puteri Indonesia* desires. According to the Great Dictionary of Indonesian Language, *keraton* (or *kraton*) means royal palace or a complex where the royals reside in. Moreover, the word *keraton* derives from Javanese language '*ka-ratu-an*' meaning the residence of *ratu* (traditional horrific name for king or queen). *Keraton* itself also bears a significant importance for traditional Java cosmology (Behrend, 1989). Hence, '*Puteri Keraton*' can be translated into royal princess, however, this definition is deeply associated with Javanese royals.

However, there is no clear guideline in order to explain the demeanor of '*Puteri Keraton*' itself. Therefore, I looked at the discourse of Indonesian pageant fans at Missosology and found that there are some specific behaviors that always come up in the discussion. These traits are "calm, genteel, reserved, soft spoken, and innocent". I would also argue that these '*Puteri Keraton*' traits are similar with the term '*Kunlasatri*' that exists in Thai society as the epitome of the ideal feminine behavior of Thai women. '*Kunlasatri*' is translated as 'properly reared woman' who possess these traits; genteel, virtuous, modest, and daughter of an illustrious family (Singpliam, 2018). Singpliam also argues that '*Kunlasatri*' is not only a term but a cultural concept that is often used to practice rhetorical power to regulate and limit women's behavior within patriarchal society. Using Abhrasa Hongsakul, the first Miss Universe from Thailand as an example, she observed that Abhasra was trained to choose her attire and to behave in an appropriate manner as the representation of Thai modesty.

3.1.2 The Controversy

As previously mentioned in Chapter II, Decree No. 0237/U/1984 issued by Ministry of Education and Culture divided pageants into two categories; the good and the bad. However, this decree did not directly ban Indonesia from competing in any international beauty pageant if the Indonesian representative did not engage in any activity that was considered taboo and against the social and religious belief. As evidence, in 1991 Indonesia won Miss ASEAN competition with Indira Soediro who was later crowned as *Puteri Indonesia* 1992 as representative (Abdul, 2017). The purpose of Miss ASEAN was to choose an ambassador for the economy, society, and policy in Southeast Asia (IndoPageants, 2010). There was no swimsuit round in this pageant, hence the

Indonesian government gave permission not only for Indonesia to compete but as the home country for the pageant to be held. Miss ASEAN was the only exception unlike Miss Universe in which the swimsuit competition is one of the main judging elements.

Puteri Indonesia was allowed to be held in 1992 because there was no swimsuit round in judging criteria; contestants would be judged only by their ability in answering questions from the judges and also the fact that *Puteri Indonesia* pageant always introduces a theme that is supported by the government; ranging from promoting a certain regional culture, tourism, as well as creative economy. In its advertisement, *Puteri Indonesia* publicly mentioned that the winner would be sent to represent Indonesia to the Miss Universe pageant as a means to get her international achievement similar to prominent international women figure. In other words, *Yayasan Puteri Indonesia* believed that competing at Miss Universe is one of the ways for Indonesian women to contribute to the country by making the country successful in the pageant as it would give Indonesia international recognition.

“If the world recognizes Jodie Foster, Benazir Bhutto, Aung San Suu Kyi, Yayuk Basuki, Hillary Clinton, Margareth Thatcher, Susie Susanti, Steffy Graff, and Chelsea Smith because of their achievements, maybe it is your time for the world to recognize you!”

-Kartini, No. 576, 1996

After a hiatus of 8 years, in 1992, Indira Soediro represented Indonesia for the first time at the Miss Universe pageant. However, due to public protest, Indira was forced to withdraw before the final round. After her, *Puteri Indonesia* who went to Miss Universe would only act as an observer; not actually competing. But, in 1996, Alya Rohali who was *Puteri Indonesia* 1996 was sent to actually compete at Miss Universe 1996 in Las Vegas, Nevada, and this time she competed until the final. Her participation made public headlines and controversies in Indonesia due to whether it is appropriate or not for Indonesian women to wear a swimsuit in public as well as body measurement as criteria as can be seen in Chapter II.

In her defense, Alya explained that body measurement was conducted by the organizer for the sponsors to make clothes for the contestants during the competition and did not count as a factor in judging. Furthermore, when she was accused of being immoral due to her swimsuit, she mentioned there are Islamic countries such as Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, and Malaysia competed at Miss Universe. For Malaysia however, there was a fatwa which bans ethnic Muslim Malay women to participate in beauty pageants. This fatwa was implemented in 1996 (Syahirah, 2013). Alya's argument might be rooted due to the common misconception of Indonesians. Many Indonesians believe that Arab nations (excluding Turkey) adopt similar culture and system to Saudi Arabia; the land where Islam was born and sharia law is being implemented (al-Qurtuby, 2017). Hence, if those countries with stricter Islamic law can allow women to participate at Miss Universe pageant, why couldn't Indonesia?

Alya's participation was also backed up by a prominent feminist figure, Maria Pakpahan. Maria did not have any objection on the swimsuit round and further saying that competing at Miss Universe was Alya's means for self-actualization and her rights to express herself in an international competition.

Women are regarded as the symbols of the nation, literally and figuratively. Nira Yuval-Davis cited by (Puri, 2008) mentioned that there are five ways women are included in the nation building process which are (a) as biological producers of members of ethnic collectivities; (b) as reproducers of the [normative] boundaries of ethnic/national groups [by enacting proper feminine behavior]; (c) as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture; (d) as signifiers of ethnic/national differences; and (e) as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles. In her work Davis highlighted the notion of women as the bearer of nation's honor. As the discourse of this notion, women should behave in a "proper" way and dress in a "proper" clothing in order to serve their purpose. Therefore, the Indonesian government's concern about Indonesia's participation at Miss Universe can be seen as its way to protect the image of Indonesia in the international community. Indonesian women parading in revealing clothes would contradict the Indonesian's government effort of showing that Indonesia is a Muslim

country. Moreover, government participation could be seen as the masculine power in protecting the nation from Western influence; in this case the way their women are dressed since appearing in public wearing revealing clothes; swimsuit to be exact, could ruin Indonesia's image as a religious country as the Ministry of Women Affairs had stated.

3.2 The Puteri Indonesia Pageant during Reformation Era (2000-2012)

3.2.1 The Rebirth of The Puteri Indonesia Pageant

Massive controversy in 1996 led to the dismissal of *Puteri Indonesia* pageant the year onwards until the year of 2000. On the beginning of the new millennium, Indonesia had just passed two years of one of the biggest political change the country ever faced; the reformation. In 1998, Soeharto finally resigned after 32 years being President as a result of massive protest. This turn of event is known as reformation which Indonesia started the transition to be fully democratized.

During this era, the notion that *Puteri Indonesia* should behave as '*Puteri Keraton*' was also solidified by how some of the winners were awarded royal title by *Keraton Surakarta Hadiningrat* (Priambono, 2017). Furthermore, Nadine Alexandra Dewi Ames (*Puteri Indonesia* 2010) had mentioned in an interview that the figure of *Puteri Indonesia* is an obedient woman (Yulianti, 2011). Her interview showed that even before a contestant is awarded the title as *Puteri Indonesia*, her behavior is already scrutinized and limited to conform to the expectations of the people surrounding her in the organizers on how woman should behave in the public space.

3.2.2 Returning to the Miss Universe Stage

Miss Universe Organization had offered Indonesia to return to compete in Miss Universe and given the option to wear a one-piece swimsuit instead of bikini, but *Yayasan Puteri Indonesia* told them that they were not ready. However, in 2004, Miss Egypt as representative Muslim country who competed at Miss Universe 2004 was invited and appeared publicly on the final night of *Puteri Indonesia* 2004 which was broadcasted nation-wide (Moore, 2005). Jennifer Hawkins, Miss Universe 2004 along with *Yayasan Puteri Indonesia* stakeholders met with President Megawati Sukarnoputri

(Casey, 2004). These measures were possibly taken in order to gain favor from the public and the government for participation at Miss Universe.

It was in May 2005 when *Yayasan Puteri Indonesia* sent its first delegate to Miss Universe after a hiatus for almost a decade with *Puteri Indonesia* 2004 winner, a 25-year-old law graduate from Bangka Belitung province, Artika Sari Devi. Artika's participation at Miss Universe was as expected stirred controversies among the public even though she achieved top 15 placement for Indonesia for the first time, particularly amidst massive protest from Muslim groups. The protest for this pageant then again was revolved around the swimsuit round; whether it is appropriate or not. In order to tone down the public protest for her participation, Artika made a statement that during the competition, she would not bare too much skin and promised that she would only wear a one-piece swimsuit instead of a bikini during the competition as her way to show respect to Islamic modesty (Moore, 2005). To justify this, Mooryati Soedibyo mentioned that participating at Miss Universe serves a good purpose, mainly cultural exchange which will then lead to promotion of Indonesia's tourism, products and arts and further help the tourism industry that was taken aback due to the Bali bombing which occurred in 2002 (Casey, 2004).

The controversies peaked in 2006 when Nadine Chandrawinata, a Eurasian represented Indonesia at Miss Universe. The controversies around her not only revolving around the swimsuit (during press photoshoot, she wore bikini but later opted for one-piece swimsuit during preliminary round) but also her language ability as well as her acting career choice. She was booed at *Puteri Indonesia* 2005 due to her inability of answering the question and famously mocked because at Miss Universe she accidentally refers to Indonesia as a 'city' instead of 'country'. Furthermore, she appeared in a movie which her role portrays 'naughty girl' character; smokes, tongue-kisses, and shows her navel. It was criticized as offensive toward the sexual and religious ideal in Indonesia (Pausacker, 2015). Another Eurasian in 2010, Nadine Alexandra also raised controversy about her language ability, but this time not her English but rather Indonesian. She was criticized by the media for not speaking Bahasa Indonesia fluently

to the extent that one online media, Tribun News, questioned her winning as being unfair. Their depiction is far from the idea of '*Puteri Keraton*' itself.

In this period, we can see how the government has started to shift their opinion on *Puteri Indonesia*. This administration seemed aware about the history between *Puteri Indonesia* and Soeharto's administration and yet chose a neutral ground and refrained from any controversies by taking side even though they were still in doubt whether beauty pageant can actually become profitable for Indonesia's tourism industry (Casey, 2004; Detiknews, 2005). Further, this neutral position might happen because of the ruling government under Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono which prioritized internal conflict resolution i.e., Aceh conflict as well as terrorism eradication (Bappenas, 2007). Therefore, the cultural mission that *Yayasan Puteri Indonesia* brought in its participation at Miss Universe pageant was not strong enough to get government's attention and full support.

3.3 Current Time (2013-2020)

3.3.1 Indonesia, the Rising Pageant Powerhouse Country

After the year of 2005 when Indonesia made its first placement at Miss Universe, Indonesia had not been successful to repeat the success in the following years after. Many *Puteri Indonesia* winners that were sent did not get enough attention from the international pageant fans and were labeled as 'clapper'. The drought ended when Whulandary got crowned as *Puteri Indonesia* 2013 as she was called to the top 16 semifinalists at the 2013 edition of Miss Universe pageant in Moscow, Russia. The success got repeated year after year and out of eight editions of Miss Universe pageant from 2013-2020, only once did Indonesia fail to be successful. However, these achievements had put Indonesia to be considered as a country to watch along with the Philippines in Southeast Asia.²

It is important for *Puteri Indonesia* who competes at Miss Universe to perform different feminine criteria based on the respective pageant. One Indonesian fan in *Missosology*

² From 2013 to 2020, The Philippines won two crowns of Miss Universe, three top 5/6 placements, two top 10 placements, and one top 20 placements.

who went by the username Kelseric when discussing a candidate of Puteri Indonesia 2015 wrote:

“In my opinion, let Kyku (contestant of Puteri Indonesia 2015) follow Yayasan Puteri Indonesia’s guideline which prioritizes genteel and obedient women. If she wears revealing clothes and shows off her body, how would the stakeholders in the organization react? Elvira (Puteri Indonesia 2014) was also modest and acted like ‘Puteri Keraton’ during Puteri Indonesia but once she competed at Miss Universe, she acted as if the Elvira at Puteri Indonesia 2014 is already dead and reincarnated into a flirty and liberated woman.”

(My translation) (Missosology, 2015)

From that comment, I would argue that the performative aspect of gender came into play when Elvira competed at *Puteri Indonesia* 2014. Elvira realized that she needed to conform to the gender construed by the organizer. Furthermore, I would argue that Elvira practiced the strategy of survival which Judith Butler mentioned in her work during her competition at *Puteri Indonesia* to avoid being punished for her failure to perform femininity; to lose the competition or getting labeled as a ‘clapper’. For example, in 2017, Bunga Jelitha Ibrani, *Puteri Indonesia* 2017 was considered a mega favorite at Miss Universe due to her looks and her overall stage presence. However, she failed to fulfill the expectation of Indonesian fans and received many bullying in her social media account and blame her lack of English skill is what made her failed (Nurul, 2017). She also received nomination of *El Tocuyo* Award after the pageant from international fans.

During this period, beauty camps began to proliferate. Beauty camp is a beauty school where the aspiring beauty queens train prior competing. In this camp, women are trained how to dress, makeup, walk, behave, and speak like a ‘proper’ beauty queen. As we can see, *Puteri Indonesia* managed to secure consecutive placement at Miss Universe when the winners were sent abroad to train at beauty camps. According to Judith Butler (1988), the concept of stylization of the body and that gender is constructed through acts which can be considered as performative accomplishments. In this respect, I would argue that a beauty pageant is a theater stage where beauty queens

are the actors to enact the femininity script from the organizers; *Puteri Indonesia* and Miss Universe. Furthermore, I argue that beauty camps held similar role to the directors in the theater who help these beauty queens to fully understand the femininity script they need to perform at the pageant and in some way helps the beauty queens to survive and attain the normative femininity which will lead them to success in the beauty pageants they will participate.

3.3.2 Puteri Indonesia, Wonderful Indonesia, and Unity in Diversity

The Indonesian government started to advocate for the nation branding program called *Wonderful Indonesia* in order to strengthen Indonesia's image in international community and resulted in the increase of investment, tourism, jobs, and exports due to Indonesia's low ranking in the Anholt GfK nation branding index in 2009 which positioned Indonesia at number 43 from 50 countries had set an urgency to strengthen Indonesia's nation branding. Indonesia's ranking was also lower than Thailand and Malaysia which ranked at number 34 and 38 respectively (Lestari & Aprilia, 2013). Ever since, *Puteri Indonesia* has been consistently addressed to be the brand ambassador for this brand. It is interesting to see the shift of government support in this era. *Puteri Indonesia* has been capitalized for market liberalism purpose and thus Indonesian women's beauty is understood as an appealing commodity to promote the desirability of Indonesia as tourist destination (Pausacker, 2015).

Further, in March 11th, 2019, three days after *Puteri Indonesia* was held, President Jokowi invited not only the winners but all contestants of *Puteri Indonesia* as well as the reigning Miss Universe 2018, Catriona Gray of the the Philippines to the Presidential Palace. The purpose of this visit was to give political lesson especially in using their rights to vote (Jordan, 2019). These young women with the title *Puteri* earned a celebrity-like status and politicians are often using celebrity influence to appeal young people to be more active in civic engagement and voting (Nisbett & DeWalt, 2016). The fact that 2019 is Indonesia's political year and President Jokowi 2nd term election, it is not surprising that this development occurred.

In recent years, the controversies regarding swimsuit competition has been very low compared to the previous years. Pausacker (2015) observes that Islamic Defenders Front have no longer campaigned against the 'pornographic' aspect of Indonesian beauty queens since Putri Raemawasti competed at Miss Universe 2008 in Vietnam. The attention has now gone towards the achievement that *Puteri Indonesia* has even though *Puteri Indonesia* in this era opt for bikini instead of one-piece swimsuit like what their predecessors did during the early participation. It gives more freedom for these women to wear things that they are comfortable with without being afraid of the public backlash due to her choices.

What makes it more interesting is the fact that Islamic radicalism has been reported to be on the rise this past decade and even President Jokowi during his first term in the office have struggled from the political attack from Islamic opposition (Crouch, 2016). I suppose that the possibility of economic growth and international exposure trump how the government views beauty pageant in general. It is also similar with the motives with *Puteri Indonesia*, the possibility of getting more job opportunities after being successful in the pageant could play into factor on why they become a lot braver in a sense of wearing bikini. Lawson and Ross (2010) conducted a study where they tried to connect country's economic freedom and their success at Miss Universe pageant. The result showed that more developed countries in terms of economic freedom are less likely to be in the semifinalists at Miss Universe. It could indicate that women in those countries have more opportunities in getting a decent job and less likely to compete for socio-economic status by participating in a beauty pageant. In addition, Butler (1988) wrote that gender is identity instituted through stylized repetition of acts. In that sense, *Puteri Indonesia* contestants have worn swimsuits confidently at Miss Universe year after year and this act has been normalized as the norm for *Puteri Indonesia*. Hence, the dissipation of swimsuit controversy from general public.

What is more interesting, when Magdalene.co, an online female magazine that discuss gender related issue, shared an article published in its website to twitter criticizing beauty pageant, the responses were intriguing. Even though there were some who agree that it is objectifying women, however there are also women who criticized the article

because they believe that competing in a beauty pageant is an act of self-actualization and there is nothing wrong with women making their own choices.

In contrast with previous Eurasian *Puteri Indonesia*, Frederika Alexis Cull in 2019 also received criticism because when she was crowned, she was not fluent in Bahasa Indonesia. Therefore, in her media interviews she speaks with Bahasa Indonesia mixed with English a lot. However, the narrative around her was made to be more positive after she placed as top 10 at Miss Universe. The media narrates her criticism as a fuel for her to learn more and to prove that she deserves the title of *Puteri Indonesia* (Saputri, 2020). I suppose, as long as *Puteri Indonesia* gives the sense of pride and joy through her achievement at Miss Universe, she already contributes a lot to the country and therefore her ‘flaws’ for not becoming the embodiment of ‘*Puteri Keraton*’ could be forgiven.

I would argue that the challenge that the *Yayasan Puteri Indonesia* face come within its internal organization; the lack of diversity. Indonesia is a big country with hundreds of ethnicities and the task to find a ‘standard Indonesian beauty’ is difficult since ethnic types ranging from Melanesian to Malay (Beech, 2001). Even though in 1995, Moluccan representative, Susanti Manuhutu managed to win *Puteri Indonesia*, up until now the representatives from eastern Indonesia have not yet to win *Puteri Indonesia* title.³ The highest placement for Papuan representative was Olvah Hamid from West Papua in 2015 where she managed to be in the top 5. I would also argue that it is quite difficult for women with darker skin tone to win the main title. Mustika Ratu as the company that invested in *Puteri Indonesia* is a cosmetic company that has whitening products in its line-up and they often use *Puteri Indonesia* as their brand ambassador. Hence, it is difficult for women with darker skin tones to win. According to L. Ayu Saraswati (2012), Indonesian history of racial formation especially in making light skin as ideal is deeply transnational, beginning from 9th century from Aryan Indian in Java, 19th to early 20th century during Dutch colonialization, then Japanese colonialization

³ Indonesia is divided into three depending on the time zone; western Indonesia includes Sumatera, Java, and some part of Kalimantan, middle Indonesia includes Sulawesi, Bali, Nusa Tenggara, and some part of Kalimantan, meanwhile eastern Indonesia includes Moluccas and Papua.

which still considered dark skin as abject form of femininity to US pop culture during the post-colonial era.

Then, diminishing and disregarding the beauties from ethnic minority would contradict the slogan of Indonesia which is *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* or Unity in Diversity. In my understanding, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* means that despite the differences in skin color, hair, cultures, dialects, languages, etc., if we believe in Indonesia's ideology, we are still part of the country. Thus, excluding certain groups of people because they do not fit the stereotypical standard of beauty means we consider them as the Other and do not belong. Hence, it is the reason why putting emphasis on diversity and inclusivity on the national stage like *Puteri Indonesia* pageant is important to prove that heterogeneity is the principle that builds the country.

3.4 The Future of Puteri Indonesia

3.4.1 Enhanced Power Relation with the Government

In December 13th, 2019, Putri Kuswisnu Wardani, the daughter of Mooryati Soedibyo, CEO of Mustika Ratu as well as the Chairwoman of *Yayasan Puteri Indonesia*, was inaugurated as the only woman out of nine Presidential Advisory Council in the Presidential Palace. She was chosen due to her experience and expected to give meaningful advice for President Joko Widodo with regard to micro economy. Her position in the government would secure *Puteri Indonesia* for the government support and open new doors for *Puteri Indonesia* to be involved in various government activities beyond Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. On March 12th, 2020, Top 6 of *Puteri Indonesia* were inaugurated as the ambassador of The People's Consultative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat /MPR*) (Aritonang, 2020). This step was not surprising since the chairman of MPR has been consistently present at *Puteri Indonesia* pageant as a judge since 2018. However, this proves that *Yayasan Puteri Indonesia* has strong connection in the Indonesian government both in the executive as well as in the legislative.

Another important meeting with the government was the meeting with the newly appointed Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Wishnutama Kusubandio. The

meeting took place in January 9th, 2020 and published in the official Instagram page of *Puteri Indonesia*. Even though the meeting was narrated as discussions to report the achievement of Top 3 *Puteri Indonesia* 2019 as well as the plan regarding *Puteri Indonesia* 2020, many speculated that this meeting was to discuss the possibility of Indonesia to host Miss Universe pageant. Wishnutama himself is one of the youngest ministries in the cabinet and many pageant fans put hope to him to pave the way for Indonesia to host Miss Universe since he was responsible to handle the successful event of Asian Games 2018. Furthermore, if it becomes a reality, many Indonesian pageant fans expect that Miss Universe in Indonesia will copy the success of Miss Universe 2018 in Thailand as this edition received positive reviews due to its successful incorporation of the host country's culture on the stage and performances (Global Beauties, 2018).

Based on the recent events I've mentioned, *Puteri Indonesia* can still maintain its current relationship with the Jokowi administration until 2024 when his term ends. However, the organizer needs to be careful in terms of who they will support in the upcoming election to maintain this current status or even beyond.

3.4.2 More Representation for Ethnic Groups

One key point that I highlighted in the previous chapter is *Puteri Indonesia* is yet to incorporate more diverse representation of beauty in their set of winners even though many would argue that *Puteri Indonesia* is putting it into work since from 2013, only one winner that is mixed blood. It is also one of the first national pageants in the world that allows women who wear hijab to compete even though it is nearly impossible for hijabis to place at the Top 3 since they will automatically be sent to international pageants that require them to wear a swimsuit.⁴

But where does that put provinces that are known to be populated with dark skinned ethnic groups? The last eastern Indonesia representative to win the crown was in 1995. The Indonesian pageant fans probably do not help either. They still glorify mixed-blood

⁴ Usually, the hijabi contestant represent the conservative province of Aceh. Aceh is the only province in Indonesia that incorporates Sharia Law.

beauty as their ultimate bet. From social media, their wishlists for the upcoming *Puteri Indonesia* pageants are *Indo* looking. It is very rare to see women with dark skin from ethnic groups especially Melanesians to be in fans wishlist. When compared to other countries in South East Asia, Indonesia is still behind Vietnam. In 2017, Vietnam crowned H'Hen Niê, the first and the only woman from an ethnic minority group that won the title of Miss Universe Vietnam. Her appearance was also against the stereotypical Vietnamese beauty with her tan skin and her short pixie hair (Lim, 2018). Did it hinder her from being successful in Miss Universe pageant? No. At Miss Universe 2018, she was one of the media darlings during the competition and managed to land the top 5 placements, the highest placement of Vietnam at Miss Universe. At Miss Universe 2019, we can see the similar pattern. Birta Abiba Þórhallsdóttir, Miss Universe Iceland 2019 became a heavy favorite and secured the top 10 placements. Her appearance is not stereotypical of an Icelandic since she is partially Congolese. In USA, diverse representation was also obvious. In 2016, 2017, and 2010 black women were crowned consecutively as Miss USA. Since 2016, the ratio of women of color in the list of top 15 placements were also increased to the point that in 2017, seven out of top 10 candidates were women of color (Carra, 2017).

Therefore, I would argue that even though putting diversity into account is important remembering the fact that it is an integral part of Miss Universe organization, by giving Indonesian women from ethnic minority group, it will give them more platform for their voices to be heard and further normalize them as a part of Indonesia without being afraid to be discriminated due to their skin color especially when last year in 2019, a group of Papuan students in Surabaya got attacked and resulted in the increase of racial tension in Papua (BBC, 2019). I also realized that it would be difficult to do so as the general public might see the Papuan *Puteri Indonesia* as a token winner chosen by the organizer just for the sake of it.

However, it is quite difficult to have an abrupt change in the way Indonesian fans and *Puteri Indonesia* because I have seen a lot of debates on social media regarding Miss Universe 2019 winners. Despite the praises from western media towards Zozibini Tunzi for being a black woman from South Africa who won the pageant through her moving

speech, Indonesian fans still prefer the 1st runner up, Madison Anderson from Puerto Rico who fit the Eurocentric beauty standard with her blonde hair. Further, it goes to say that in Indonesia, it is an advantage if an aspiring contestant is *Indo* since she would receive more support from the fans in comparison to other contestants especially the one from ethnic minorities. This glorification over *Indo* goes beyond that. Not only they are considered more beautiful or more stunning, it is always assumed that these *Indo* beauties are fluent in speaking English (even though it's not always the case i.e. Nadine Chandrawinata) which would be beneficial for Miss Universe pageant due to its emphasis on speech competition.

But I have seen that young generation of Indonesians have become more aware on this issue. Reflecting on Black Lives Matter movement in the USA, more people are trying to educate themselves on the discrimination of ethnic minority in Indonesia and the hashtag Papuan Lives Matter are also surfacing. The discourses are not only limited to how Indonesian military and the police are continuously oppressing people from Papua but also how Indonesian beauty industry seems to neglect the existence of people with darker skin tone. In social media, especially Twitter, people are calling out local cosmetic brands that provide limited shade of foundation which quite often their darkest shade is far lighter than the skin tone of many Indonesians. Hopefully, Mustika Ratu as the company behind *Puteri Indonesia* will provide diverse range of skin tone for their cosmetic products due to these demands and later we can see that women with darker skin color from ethnic minorities can have their spotlight in the competition do well.

CHAPTER IV

THE ESSENCE OF BEING *PUTERI INDONESIA*

In the previous chapter, I have discussed how the *Puteri Indonesia* pageant have evolved throughout the years; what caused the changes as well as what could be changed in the future. In this chapter, I will discuss the portrayal of ‘*Puteri Keraton*’ femininity in the pageant from textual analysis of the show focusing on its 2013 and 2019 editions as well as the interview result from the former *Puteri Indonesia* pageant contestants.

4.1 Stakeholders’ Perspective

4.1.1 Mannerism

4.1.1.1 Women who value traditional culture

Traditional culture is integral part of the *Puteri Indonesia* pageant. Each edition, the show chose one province out of 34 provinces in Indonesia to be incorporated as the theme of the final show. Its culture then will be displayed in various aspects; dresses, music, dances, as well as the stage design in order to portray Indonesia as country with diverse cultures as well as to promote tourism industry of the particular province.

“The thirty eight contestants of Puteri Indonesia will show their best and are supported by the culture and they will wear beautiful dresses which will enhance their beauty and elegance”

Rahma Landy, Host of Puteri Indonesia 2013 (My translation).

That particular sentence spoken by the host of the pageant indicates that in *Puteri Indonesia*, traditional culture is very important as a part of their identity as Indonesian women. Not only that their manner is in accordance with the culture that Indonesians uphold, but also their attire will incorporate traditional fabric and pattern to showcase that being proud of the culture can still make women look beautiful without looking outdated.

In terms of attire in *Puteri Indonesia*, the contestants would get different attire as they went further to the elimination. The 2013 and 2019 when the theme of the pageant was based on West Nusa Tenggara, there were five different looks being shown:

Table 1 Attires and Hair Styles of Contestants in the Puteri Indonesia 2013 and 2019 pageant

No.	Segment	Edition			
		2013		2019	
		Dress	Hair	Dress	Hair
1	Opening	Cocktail dress with traditional fabric	Loose; some were straight, wavy, and curly	Cocktail dress with traditional fabric	Loose; some were straight, wavy, and curly
2	Opening	Long dresses; some were with traditional fabric.	Loose; some were straight, wavy, and curly	Long dresses; some were with traditional fabric.	Loose; some were straight, wavy, and curly
3	Top 10/11	Modern <i>kebaya</i>	<i>Konde</i> or <i>Sanggul</i>	Modern gown with the inspiration from birds in West Nusa Tenggara	Loose
4	Top 5/6	Modern <i>kebaya</i>	<i>Konde</i> or <i>Sanggul</i>	Modern gown	Loose
5	Top 3	Modern <i>kebaya</i>	<i>Konde</i> or <i>Sanggul</i>	Modern <i>kebaya</i>	<i>Konde</i> or <i>Sanggul</i>

We can see that the similarity between the two editions remain in the opening and top 3 segments. In 2013 edition, the attire and their hairdo were inspired by the traditional culture. *Kebaya* which is Indonesia's national dress originates from the 15th century of Majapahit Kingdom in Java commonly worn by noble women (Triyanto, 2010) meanwhile *konde* or *sanggul* is a hairbun extension attached to the back of the head commonly worn as a set with *kebaya* by women in Java and Bali. In 2019, the sponsor designers were not focused on how to make a traditional dress like *kebaya* to be modern but rather tried to take inspiration from other aspects of Indonesia or the theme province in a modern gown. Still, the final contestants will ultimately go back to *kebaya* and *konde* to solidify their identity as women who value traditional culture even though the *kebaya* was not originated from the province the pageant took the theme of. This concept helps to strengthen the notion that in nation building process, women are the site of the reproduction of culture (Davis in Puri, 2008).

4.1.1.2 Women who are educated, polite, and religious

One of the most important segments in the *Puteri Indonesia* pageant to showcase contestants' educational background is in its opening number. During this segment in *Puteri Indonesia*, contestants are introduced by their name, age, academic title or occupation, and the provinces they represent. However, in 2013 edition, contestants' academic title or occupation was only shown in the info board of the telecast. Meanwhile in 2019, the contestants' themselves mention it loudly during the opening number. I suppose this change was made in order to make it clearer to the audiences that women who are competing on *Puteri Indonesia* stage came from well educated background. Some contestants even decided to put their educational title despite having a career in modelling industry. For example, Whulandary who eventually won the 2013 edition put her student of Faculty of Communication status even though she already had a well established career as a model since 2008 (Fimela, 2014). Further in the 2013 edition, the contestants who were called to the top 10 had small talk with the hosts prior the questions and answers (Q&A) segment. If some contestants are fluent in foreign language, the hosts would ask them to showcase their language ability and the crowd would give loud applause for these contestants. However, this part was not available probably due to the telecast duration being cut off from four hours to three hours. Still, we can see that *Puteri Indonesia* highly values higher educational background and that the contestants can be a good role model for Indonesian women to pursue education.

Not only are *Puteri Indonesia* the embodiment of young, highly educated Indonesian women, they are also well mannered; polite, genteel, and religious. For example, in 2013, all contestant always put themselves as someone younger by addressing the hosts with greeting word '*Kak*'. Even though there was no small talk session in 2019, but the act of being polite can be seen by contestant's way of asking permission. Frederika Alexis Cull, prior to answering her question in the top 6 and also top 3, asked permission by saying:

"May I answer the question in English?"

She chose to ask permission probably aware that many in the audience do not speak English and it displayed her politeness because she seemed concern that maybe the

judges or audiences would not understand her answer. In the same time, she also displayed her high education background by being able to speak English fluently and received validation by the audiences who cheered loudly after she asked permission.

Despite the requirement to be eligible to compete in *Puteri Indonesia* one has to have at least graduate from high school, Indonesian fans highly prefer candidate that has university degree, even better, university degree from abroad. Knowing this situation, before competing, *Puteri Indonesia* 2017, Bunga Jelitha, enrolled to a university even though at that time she was already 25 years old and already graduated from high school for seven years.

The small talk session in 2013 edition also gives insight on how the contestants display their religious attitude. During the top 5, two contestants were asked about how they are feeling and both expressed their gratitude to God because of their achievement to reach this point. Whulandary, representative of West Sumatera used the word '*Alhamdulillah*', Arabic word to express gratitude to Allah (KBBI, 2016). Meanwhile Nadia Ingrida of DKI Jakarta 3 said she is grateful to God for helping her to be in the top 5. Aside from the religious aspect, expressing gratitude to God is also a way to display their modesty and humbled women. Further, it is also their way to win viewer's support because showing their modesty will make them appear as this ideal woman who is not only pretty, but she is also full package with her knowledge and sweet personality. In that sense, by putting these aspects in its live broadcast, *Puteri Indonesia* is trying to show the public that the pageant is not a mere 'beauty contest' that puts more emphasis on women's physical appearance but rather it values contestants' background over their appearance.

4.1.1.3 Women who are aware of current issues and who support Government program

In this portrayal, the contestants of *Puteri Indonesia* are required to be fully knowledgeable on the latest issues in the country. Both editions offer similar idea but the issue they brought up is different and relatable to the year the event being held. In

2013, the issues that were brought up are globalisation and gender. Meanwhile in 2019, they were election, social media, and gender.

The globalization issue that was drawn into the Q&A, was created in a way that it threatens the culture and identity of Indonesian. *Puteri Kalimantan Barat*, Ayu Ravianti, was asked on how to deal with the negative impact of globalization in order for Indonesia to not lose its essence as a country and free nation. She answered by mentioning the “Four Pillars of the Nation and State”; Pancasila, 1945 Constitution, Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, and further these pillars are important for Indonesia’s freedom as well as for the nation to be more ethical and have more integrity. The term four pillars itself was introduced by People’s Consultative Assembly of Indonesia (MPR RI) in 2009 to remind society on those four values which society seems to forget. However, this term was heavily criticised due to its uncertainty and its potential to abolish the nation’s history (Hastangka, Armawi and Kaelan, 2019). Even though the term for her very specific answer was controversial, she probably knew about the term and the program from the lecturer she received during the preparation process as it is a common knowledge that *Puteri Indonesia* contestants would be given lecture from various government official. Therefore, to perform as *Puteri Indonesia*, one should be aware of government program and be able to spread around to the public.

Due to the change of the format in *Puteri Indonesia 2019* which follows the new format of Miss Universe, instead of Q&A in the top 10, the contestants were given sixty seconds to give speech related to the current issues that they are aware of. Their speech varied but somehow correlated with each other. From the election that created tension between two groups of voters, social media and its negative effects toward women, as well as violence and exploitation against women. This new format enabled these contestants to voice up their opinion without the constraints of question which led them to answer it following their knowledge that they received by the government officials. However, during final question, the top 3 were asked the same question, “What is the meaning of the election from younger generation perspective?”. The question was tailored specifically to the younger generation since at that time, it was predicted that

the participation of younger generation would be considerably low and the government massively socialized the campaign to vote (Debora, 2019). Thus, even though the contestants were given more freedom in voicing their opinion, they were still stricted to voicing it in allignment with government agenda.

4.1.2 Sexuality or Lack Thereof

Both editions of *Puteri Indonesia* pageant lack any portrayal of sexuality of the contestants. The only notable moment during the pageant that touches on this aspect was when *Puteri Sulawesi Utara 2013*, Novia Mamujaja, answer the question during top 10 segment. She was asked about her knowledge on cervical cancer, she answered in a scientific manner that it is caused by human papilloma virus (HPV) and can be prevented by vaccine as well as avoiding free sex. I argue that Novia's answer was safe considering that if she would answer it by promoting safe sexual practice, she would be criticized by the public that she promotes free sex to the people who are watching especially younger generation. The idea of engaging in premarital sex especially for women in Indonesia is shameful and women should refrain from practising such an act. Thus, it is very common in Indonesian society to exhort the virtue of virginity of women as it reinforces the adverse effect of premarital sex (Davies, 2015).

Other issues that radical feminist often bring when discussing about beauty pageant is the sexual objectification of female bodies. Beauty pageant is criticized to allows its viewers in heteropatriarchial society to derive pleasure from seeing women parading in swimsuit and beautiful gown. The way the contestants pose and stare at the camera are also associated with 'male gaze' (Wright, 2017). In this respect, I found that both editions of *Puteri Indonesia* incorporate this aspect especially when the contestants are parading with their evening gowns and *kebayas*. As Wright (2017) mentions, the pose of women looking over their shoulders and then stare at the camera is a sign of women leaning into 'male gaze', this type of pose were performed by most of the contestants in both editions of *Puteri Indonesia* pageant.

Then, the portrayal of women in *Puteri Indonesia* seems to be very contradictory. On one hand, *Puteri Indonesia* should act accordingly in her poses and stares to be desired

by men but on the other hand she should be able to maintain abstinence. This is indeed a set of standard for women to follow in a patriarchal society. If women are comfortable in their sexuality, they will be called derogatory names, they will be slut-shamed which is very dangerous. Even though this message is not very obvious but it will definitely influence the mindset of people especially young girls who watch the broadcast every year.

4.1.3 Gender Roles

Puteri Indonesia 2013 and *2019* included the discussion on '*kodrat*', the term that is often used to explain gender roles in Indonesia based on the biological sex they were born into. The question that appeared in the top 10 segment of 2013 edition blatantly mentioned that being a mother is a woman's *kodrat*. Then, the question led to the dilemma that Indonesian women are facing, whether pursuing a career is not abiding to the *kodrat* or not? The similar question also appeared during the top 6 segment of the 2019 edition. Both contestants; *Puteri DKI Jakarta 3* in 2013 and *Puteri Sumatera Selatan* in 2019, also delivered similar answers in which they argued that given the biological physiology, women are able to give birth, hence becoming mother is inevitable. However, women also have rights to be productive and to pursue career. Therefore, there should be a balance between *kodrat* and women's rights. Moreover, in 2013 edition, during the final walk segment, Maria Selena, former *Puteri Indonesia*, passed a message to her successors:

“My message to young generation Puteri Indonesia, be a strong, independent, and hard working woman who do not forget her ‘kodrat’ and responsibility as a woman”

(My Translation)

Thus, the portrayal of gender roles in *Puteri Indonesia* pageant were still rooted in biological determinism that was mainstreamed by New Order regime; *kodrat*, that put women in a more passive role, obedient to male member of the family, nurturing, and their main vocation is in marriage and motherhood. Despite the fact that many women in urban area of Indonesia are becoming more progressive to pursue career, the society

still expect them to embrace their destiny as wives and mothers. To be a single career woman is still perceived as being deviant (Ida, 2001).

4.1.4 The Shift in the Direction

As the main title of *Puteri Indonesia*, she has to represent the country at Miss Universe pageant. To be more specific, she competed at Miss Universe during the IMG era which many believe that these two eras have different ideas on how they chose their winners. According to Natalie Glebova, Miss Universe 2005, during her interview in Indonesia, she elaborated that during Trump's ownership, it was all about the appearance of the contestant. Trump even told her that Miss Universe is the sexiest woman in the world. However, in the new ownership, even though looks still matter but a contestant does not have to fit in a specific mold.⁵ Furthermore, in order to be successful in IMG era, a woman should be career driven, ambitious, well rounded, has a brand and message that could make her inspirations for millions of women around the world (Fernando, 2020).

This shift in the Miss Universe pageant is translated into their pageant format in which during the first round of the final judging, the contestants are required to present a speech related to topics they are passionate about; ranging from their background, advocacy, and other inspiring topics. Knowing that Miss Universe pageant is moving to that direction, *Puteri Indonesia* tries to follow that path and now looking for a woman with a mission to be crowned as *Puteri Indonesia*. Their first trial was in 2019 when *Puteri Indonesia* started to incorporate the speech round and chose Frederika Alexis Cull as the main title holder. Her public speaking skills especially in English is considered as one of the best in that batch. She has also been working with a project called Voice for the Voiceless to help Indonesians to register for birth certificates. The trial paid off as Frederika was able to enter the top 10 of Miss Universe pageant, the achievement that no *Puteri Indonesia* before her could achieve.

⁵ It could be reference to Miss Canada 2016 who participated at 63rd edition of Miss Universe in Manila, The Philippines. She is perceived as plus size and made into the top 9 and successfully surpassed the swimsuit competition. Her placements made controversies because her body type was considered 'too big' for Miss Universe standard by many international fans.

Thus, even though the criteria of *Puteri Indonesia* in regards to femininity was pretty much remained the same with '*Puteri Keraton*' as its core, the pageant has now expanded its definition as it is now looking for women who can bring mission and hopefully change in the society but at the same time maintaining the status quo that Indonesians still believe.

In hindsight, the contest has started to embrace the notion to challenge traditional gender roles in a form of women voicing their opinion on social issue and not disregarding them but rather amplifying those opinion and ideas on national broadcast via speech competition. This segment also helped the contestants to showcase their involvement in social work and spread awareness of the issue they are passionate about. However, despite their diversity slogan in the broadcast, the contest still failed to introduce ethnic minority to the spotlight. Hopefully, *Puteri Indonesia* can finish this task because I started to notice some changes in regards to diversity of women's bodies in the top 11 of *Puteri Indonesia* 2019. One of the semifinalist was Anoushka Bhuller from North Sumatera who is considered by many as a plus size contestant and does not fit to the slim figure that the contest is often associated with. Furthermore, the top 3 in this edition were also belong to the shorter side as they are standing around 170 cm. In the past editions, *Puteri Indonesia* preferred to crown contestants who stand more than 175 cm.

4.2 Former Puteri Indonesia Contestants Perspective

In this sub-chapter, I would be discussing the result of the interview I have conducted with five former *Puteri Indonesia* contestants in order to get understanding on how these women perceive femininity in *Puteri Indonesia*. These women participated in different editions, represented different provinces as well as different background. Some of them underwent training prior to competitions and some did not.

Table 2 Interviewees' Background

No.	Interviewee	Province	Age (On Interview)	Training	Competed at another pageant
1	A	West Sumatera	32	No	Yes
2	B	Jakarta	28	No	Yes
3	C	Riau	27	No	Yes
4	D	North Sulawesi	22	Yes	No
5	E	Riau	23	No	No

Even though interviewee A did not receive any training, she competed in local pageant as a warm up before she auditioned for *Puteri Indonesia*. Now, she established a beauty camp which was successful to produce winner of *Puteri Indonesia* two times in a row and she also is the trainer for interviewee E. Interviewee B competed in an international pageant years prior to *Puteri Indonesia* where she ended up as a winner. Interviewee C competed in another national pageant in Indonesia called Miss Indonesia (or Miss World Indonesia), meanwhile interviewee D and E were not familiar with beauty pageant industry at all despite the fact that interviewee D received training.

4.2.1 Initial Understanding of Puteri Indonesia's Femininity

My interview started by asking the interviewee what kind of femininity in *Puteri Indonesia* pageant that they understood prior to participating in the pageant. Their answers were pretty similar by pointing out that being *Puteri Indonesia*, a woman not only should be pretty in appearance she needs to be intelligent and well mannered.

"I think, the notion of femininity in Puteri Indonesia is translated into their 3B slogan; Brain, Beauty, and Behavior. In which, brain means the knowledge that someone has. Beauty, well... there's no definite standard on it. And for me, the most important part is the behavior, it should reflect the behavior and attitude that most Indonesian accept"

Interviewee D

“The idea of femininity in Puteri Indonesia is that a woman should be ‘a proper woman’”

Interviewee B

In terms of beauty, Interviewee E had a contrasting opinion with Interviewee D. She thought that *Puteri Indonesia* still prefers the type of beauty that media prefers. Her opinion comes from how *Puteri Indonesia* is sponsored by a cosmetic company and the winner would be featured in its advertising, therefore the pageant is still looking for someone whose beauty is commercial and can be commodified. In Indonesia, being *Indo* is an advantage in the entertainment industry since they are perceived to be beautiful. Even though if a person does not have caucasian blood, as long as he/she has Eurocentric features, they still considered beautiful.

Similar to interviewee D, all of them put emphasis on behavior as the most important criteria a feminine woman in *Puteri Indonesia* should have. Even the term ‘proper woman’ was deliberated by interviewee B, she further mentioned that this aspect refers to women’s behavior. As if in agreement, during the interview, interviewee A also mentioned that this notion is shaped by the traditional value that Indonesian holds. According to the interview, their idea of good behavior of a woman in *Puteri Indonesia* before competing are as follows:

1. Genteel
2. Friendly
3. Respectful
4. Calm
5. Graceful

Furthermore, Interviewee C added that the behavior and the mannerism *Puteri Indonesia* is Javanese Princess-like or ‘*Puteri Keraton*’. In fact, she was the only one who specifically mentioned it. When was questioned further regarding this, she responded that she has been a fan of beauty pageant and had envisioned herself to participated in *Puteri Indonesia* since she was a child. She also watched the pageant

religiously and conducted research on the pageant, thus seemingly knowledgeable in the field.

“The founder of Puteri Indonesia is Javanese so I think because of that, they are looking for the Javanese Princess type”

Interviewee C

Unlike interviewee C, the other four interviewees were not avid fans of beauty pageants. Hence, they could only describe their understanding by broad explanations. The notion of ‘*Puteri Keraton*’ is also only used and understood by Indonesian pageant fans or people who are involved with the beauty pageant industry. From the interview, these interviewees elaborated that their initial understanding comes from the live broadcast of *Puteri Indonesia* that they watch when they were younger. As Judith Butler (1988) had mentioned, gender is a stylized repetition of acts which the society continuously enforces hence making it as the norm. Through live broadcast, *Puteri Indonesia* is continuously spreading its idea of how feminine Indonesian women should be and influence its audience to grasp it as the norm for women. From the interviews, I did not hear any resistance from the women in regards to this and assumed that all of those things are normal for Indonesian women. It could happen because the interviewees watched the pageant at such a young age where they had not been exposed to other conceptions of femininity. Thus, ‘*Puteri Keraton*’ is solidified in their unconsciousness.

4.2.2 The Puteri Indonesia Experience

Most of the interviewees disclosed that prior to participating in *Puteri Indonesia* they were a little bit tomboy-ish in a sense that they did not use make up that often, wore jeans and t-shirts instead of dresses, did not know how to sit and walk like a beauty queen, one of them even worked in an oil mining company which is dominated by males. Then, how did they come to terms with their own femininity and negotiate with the set standard that *Puteri Indonesia* has?

Interviewee D chose to go to a beauty camp directed by interviewee A. Interviewee A’s beauty camp is considered a big deal due to its success in producing two *Puteri*

Indonesia's winner in a row and also Interviewee A's reputation as she was also a former runner up to *Puteri Indonesia* title. To be eligible as a trainee, a prospective trainee has to undergo strict CV screening and interview by her and her partner before she sent her application form to *Puteri Indonesia*. The training includes public speaking, catwalk, manner and pose, make up, even helping the trainee to find sponsors for their dresses, gowns, and traditional costume.

Interviewee D admitted that she is not '*ngondek*' and rather stiff in her movements due to her background as basketball athlete. She found it difficult to meet the expectations of gestures and demeanor of a beauty queen. However, her training helped her to unveil her potential in public speaking. During our interview, she told me that she was bullied by her peers in school because of her formal way of speaking. But fortunately, her trainer told her that it was actually an advantage for public speaking especially in *Puteri Indonesia* where contestants are required to talk in front of important figures during preparation camp.

On the contrary, Interviewee E did not go to any beauty camp and thought it was not something necessary. Instead of having a heads up on how to behave *puteri*-like, her learning was all during the preparation process. She observed the demeanor of her predecessors and the female stakeholders of the pageant during the lectures session even though she kind of struggled to perform those demeanor since she was not used to it due to her work background in a male dominated field. Further, Interviewee C also mentioned that during the preparation process, contestants also received catwalk and pose training during the rehearsal by assigned choreographer prior to the final night.

Similarly, the behavior and mannerism are being repeated by the seniors and stakeholders in the pageant for the contestants to observe, imitate, and perform. Even if their demeanor outside of the pageant did not meet the certain expectations of those who are in power to the point that they are struggling, they will still perform those 'standardized' behavior at their best.

4.2.3 Beyond *Puteri Indonesia* Pageant

Once the pageant is over, it does not mean that they would not need to maintain the *Puteri*-like behavior. There are certain obligations, protocols, and expectations given to them as early as the first time they were chosen as '*Puteri Daerah*'. This sub-chapter will elaborate more on these interviewees' experience post participating in *Puteri Indonesia*.

Two of the interviewees; A and B ended up as runner up and the winner of *Puteri Indonesia* pageant. Therefore, they received a contract to stay in a shared apartment provided by organizers during their one year reign.⁶ The contract is filled with their duties and responsibilities as Interviewee A explained:

"I did not remember exactly what was written in the contract. But what I do remember is that there were several behaviors that are forbidden. For example, drinking alcohol and smoking are forbidden. Then, if I was about to go out during night time, I had to inform the chaperone regarding my whereabouts. Definitely no marriage under this contract. Not that I did all of those stuff, but if I did, I would receive warning letter from the organizer and if that happens couple of times, I could be dethroned. One more thing, if I were in a public scandal, for sure the organizer would strip me of my title".

Interviewee A

Her confession suggests that being *Puteri Indonesia* means a woman has to be subjected into a situation where all of her movements being monitored and controlled. At the time she had the runner up title, social media was not a thing that everyone in Indonesia had access to. In my experience as a fan and member of online discussion board, during that time *Puteri Indonesia* organization seemed to be very exclusive in a sense that they shared a little information on their activities to the public and only licensed media would get invitations for their event. However, the time has changed and social media has become a big phenomenon that beauty queens have to be savvy in

⁶ Interviewee A and B did not compete at the same year. But this facility is given to the top 3 winners of *Puteri Indonesia*

utilizing it. It comes with a price, though. Social media has enabled fans to monitor beauty queens' every movement including *Puteri Indonesia* to the point that Interviewee C felt she needs to be mindful for everything that she posts in social media.

“I need to be certain that I behave properly especially in social media. Because, there is always possibility that if I make any mistake, someone will capture it and post it in their Instagram stories in order to shame me”

Interviewee C

I suppose that the ‘mistake’ interviewee C meant is behavior outside of what the public thinks a *Puteri* should be. Thus, it would be difficult for these women to go back to their initial mannerism due to the fact that they could be punished by fans and general public as a misbehaved *puteri* even though she was not the winner of the pageant. In this case, once a woman is recognized as ‘*Puteri*’, she needs to perform the ideal femininity of *Puteri Indonesia* both on and off the stage. Thus, performing femininity is not her own choice anymore but rather Indonesian society expect her based on the collective assumption of what *Puteri Indonesia* is which is ‘*Puteri Keraton*’ in order to avoid societal punishment of failing to perform and embody the femininity that has been dictated to the society.

Thus, is there any *Puteri* that failed to perform this strategy of survival? And at what cost did she had to pay? One notable figure is Angelina Sondakh, *Puteri Indonesia* 2001. In 2012, she was sentenced to jail on a corruption case.⁷ She failed to perform her gender, her femininity as *Puteri Indonesia* since she committed a deed that is deemed disrespectful. Some media even questioned whether she could still be called a *Puteri Indonesia*. Yet, the organizer did not strip her of her title due to the fact that her contract had already expired and she should be able to keep the title as her achievement. Moreover, the organizer can only give support accordingly to the law (Tarigan, 2012). On the contrary, in 2019, former contestants of *Puteri Indonesia* were caught in an online prostitution case. The organizer quickly responded by saying that those women

⁷ At that time, Angelina was serving her second term as a member of parliament

no longer had any association with *Puteri Indonesia* since their contracts had already expired and they did not have any right to use the title. Furthermore, the organizer could sue them if they used their title after the contracts had ended. This response was very different compared to Angelina's. Both actions are considered immoral in the Indonesian context but if one is involved with prostitution, the consequence she will face is worse. In Indonesian context, people especially women who are involved in prostitution are often labelled as '*sampah masyarakat*' or society's trash due to the negative stigma that they are the source of sexually transmitted disease and AIDS (Zulfiqar, Fitriah and Paselle, 2014). I argue that is the reason why the organizer seemed to treat Angelina's case better than the other even though corruption is still bad, she is not associated with '*sampah masyarakat*'. In addition, by deeming the prostitution act, the organizer may want to maintain its status as elite and not lowly, hence the people within its affiliation including the women with the title '*puteri*' are at the same level.

4.2.4 Negotiating with Miss Universe

“When I was crowned as Puteri Indonesia, my first duty was to accompany Miss Universe during her visit to Indonesia. I was teased by her as she told me to be relaxed because she thought I was too stiff; especially when I sit. In my defense, I was not stiff, it is just the way we, the Puteris are taught to sit”

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Interviewee B

From the interview, we can see how *Puteri Indonesia* and Miss Universe differ in terms of mannerism. What *Puteri* thinks as a proper way to sit for women is considered as nervous and stiff. In details, Interviewee B explained the unwritten guideline for *Puteri* to sit; straight, not leaning, head high, hands on the lap and never cross legs. Even though she told me that that is not the way she sits in her daily life, but after she was crowned and had to perform it during her duties, she often get caught by her friends to perform the *Puteri* sit in casual setting. The way she performs her femininity in this case is influenced by habit and repetition of acts that are deemed feminine by society and people who are in control thus making it the new normal for her.

Not only the off stage mannerism that differs, as a trainer, Interviewee A elaborated that the on stage gesture of both pageants are different. At *Puteri Indonesia* stage, the contestants are required to look more approachable by giving warm smiles for example. However, at Miss Universe, contestants are expected to have a demanding for attention stage presence as well as fierce facial expression. In that sense, the training to prepare for *Puteri* and Miss Universe might differ.

Going back to Interviewee B, who is the only one from the list of people I have interviewed to experience the Miss Universe stage, she admitted that she did not have any difficulties for her on stage persona since her decades of experience in the modelling industry have helped her. As a model, she needs to be able to showcase what designers' have envisioned in their clothes by her walk, pose, and facial expression. Thus, she has no problem to be sweet in *Puteri Indonesia* stage and fierce at Miss Universe stage. However, she put more emphasis on her off stage manner and demeanor as she wanted to embody the Indonesian woman's demeanor during the competition. Not only from the way she sits as she explained earlier, but also the way she bowed down whenever she walked in front of others as it is considered as the polite manner in the Indonesian context. Her gesture seemed to showcase the duality of Indonesian women have to deal with; at some point they are expected to appease the idea of modern women which needs to be self-confident, fierce, and with a mission but at the same time they need to conform to the traditional notion of femininity in the country; genteel, polite, and modest. This contrasting duality is performed based on different audience; during the on stage performance at Miss Universe stage where international audience expects women to appear modern, Interviewee performed this idea. However, off stage where she interacted with people directly, she tried to embody her identity as Indonesian women. This approach is quite different from *Puteri Indonesia* where contestants are expected to performs '*Puteri Keraton*' on and off stage. Here at Miss Universe, Interviewee B performed two different types of femininity.

Performing '*Puteri Keraton*' by any means is not without a purpose. According to Interviewee A, performing '*Puteri Keraton*' helped her to be recognized and

remembered by contestants as well as the organizer of the international pageant she participated.⁸ She was recognized as a very friendly contestant who always offered warm smiles to everyone to the point that whenever other contestants tried to describe her, it was her warm and sweet gestures that was first mentioned by them. In that same vein, Interviewee B's attempt on '*Puteri Keraton*' could give a positive impression on her by the fellow contestants and also the chaperones meanwhile her more fierce side persona was beneficial to give memorable impact for the judges and international audiences who watched her performance on stage.

4.2.5 Post *Puteri Indonesia* Pageant

I have discussed in the previous part regarding the societal expectation given to the '*Puteri*'s once they have their title and the obvious difference in terms of performing the feminine selves between *Puteri Indonesia* and Miss Universe. Here, I would like to discuss what they gained after competing in the pageant in terms of their understanding of their own femininity and other factors that may influence their life.

There are different results which interviewees come to terms with their own femininity post pageant. For a contestant who claimed to already conform to the traditional '*Puteri Keraton*' mold before *Puteri Indonesia* like interviewee A, she considered that her understanding of femininity is somewhat shifted. For her, being a feminine woman was all about performing '*Puteri Keraton*' for her own individual gain. But, looking at how *Puteri Indonesia* have evolved from the year she competed, she now thinks that the ideal feminine woman should be able to deliver a message to the public and have an impact on society. Meanwhile, for a self-proclaimed tomboy girl like interviewee B, she admitted that her understanding of feminine Indonesian woman remains the same since she believes that the portrayal of femininity in *Puteri Indonesia* represents her understanding on how Indonesian women should be. However, in the past, she did not perform that femininity despite her understanding and once she became *Puteri*

⁸ After winning runner up title in *Puteri Indonesia*, she went to represent Indonesia at Miss International. Even though the criteria of Miss Universe and Miss International are different, I brought up her testimony to elaborate why it matters to perform '*Puteri Keraton*' in the international pageant scene.

Indonesia, she is now more active in performing and embracing that traditional idea of femininity.

According to most of the interviewees, performing femininity gained them benefit especially in career. They believe that the grooming, etiquette and manner they have learned from the pageant have helped them in job interview and stepping up their career. For example, they now know how to behave properly in front of people who hold power in the government which resulted in job offer in ministries. For Interviewee E who is working in a male dominated field, she earned respect from her male colleagues as she can prove that she has a feminine side and is no longer dismissed as merely a woman.

Their experience suggests that they cannot exist fully outside of institutionalized expectations of being a *Puteri*. Their success is determined by how well they are embracing and performing the traditional notion of femininity in which even though the context may be different, I argue that their re-established femininity is fitting to what the character Gracie Hart experienced in the movie *Miss Congeniality*. Gracie's transformation from a hardheaded female FBI agent who couldn't care less about being a proper woman in the beginning of the movie to a woman who is embracing her femininity while balancing between romantic desirability and professional success is the happy ending for women in US standard (Ivey, 2017). In the case of Interviewee E, from my experience when I studied in the faculty of Engineering during my undergraduate study in Indonesia, it is quite often for women who are there to be seen not as women but rather men. They are expected to have the stereotypical personality traits of men and sometimes if they show their feminine side, they will be teased for that. In that case, it is very rare to see women in the engineering field putting on make up and dressing up, thus seeing Interviewee E walking down the runway with high heels and beautiful dress and reaffirming the traditional concept of femininity is a shocking moment for her colleagues, hence why they start to consider her as a woman and respect her more due to the realization that she is a feminine woman who can do the same job as men. Another example, government institutions often hold public events and invites public figures. Having the title as *Puteri*, they are often hired as speakers for the event and since they had learned the manners that these people in government prefer, they

can do the task really well (by performing the rigid traditional concept of Indonesian femininity) and are highly likely to be hired for another event. Hence, reaffirming and re-establishing their own femininity are crucial aspects for their career and how people in their surrounding see them.

4.2.6 The Public's Understanding

In Chapter IV, I have mentioned how Indonesian pageant fans characterized femininity being portrayed in *Puteri Indonesia* pageant as '*Puteri Keraton*'. According to research conducted by Zanzabela (2019) who interviewed the perception of Indonesian Pageants community of brand image of Miss Indonesia pageant, the *keraton* traits are unique to *Puteri Indonesia* and easily distinguishable by common viewers based on the dress and hairstyles of the contestants wore which are very traditional Javanese look. In his research, the fan can also elaborate how Miss Universe pageant has shifted forward to find women who have substance and personal value rather than conventionally beautiful women.

Even though many of the fans understood those concept, there is a duality that I have observed in discussion forum regarding it. For example, in Detik Forum, contestants often get shamed and called as wild or having bad attitude for hanging out at night club. However, some of the fans in the forum would go into the contestants' defense by saying that it is no longer taboo for women to go out in night club. In fact, in Miss Universe pageant, there is always a day for the contestants to party at night club (Detik Forum, 2019). This shows that there are some fans who are very conservative in seeing femininity and would monitor the *Puteris*' behavior to make sure they behave accordingly based on the common notion of '*Puteri Keraton*'. On the other hand, there are fans who are more laid back and accepting to some extent. This group still would not tolerate the *Puteris* if they got caught drunk, use drugs or got involved in prostitution.

For me personally, I have observed that the way many of the fans behave are quite hypocritical. They can be very conservative and then change to another side and vice versa depending on the contestants. If the contestant is their favorite, they would give

her some slacks if she get caught doing things that are beyond 'Puteri Keraton'. For example, if a contestant likes to make jokes and do goofy stuff, she would be praised as very relatable and funny. However, if she is not their favorite, she would be criticized to be more mature and behave more properly. These duality and hypocrisy of the fans are very harmful toward women in the pageant since basically, they can never win. There will always be people who will throw negative comments and bullying to them whether they can reaffirm their femininity or not. Previously, I have mentioned regarding the strategy of survival by performing *Puteri Keraton* properly to avoid punishment in the form of bullying. However, seeing that the fans are often hypocritical, the choice for the pageant contestants are not "to be bullied or not" but rather "to be bullied harshly or lightly".

Further, their understanding is mostly heteronormative. It can be observed on their reaction toward Angela Ponce, Miss Universe Spain and also the first trans woman to compete at Miss Universe. In an Instagram post by Pageant Crown Warriors that shows the clip of Angela's speech on Miss Universe 2018, Indonesian pageant fans gave positive feedback on her fight, however despite that, they do not consider her as *perempuan tulen* or real woman. It should be noted that the attitude toward Angela shifted after the pageant. Initially, many could not fathom and accept that a trans woman could participate in an institution that they believe only belong to cis gender woman. They would call Angela using derogatory names in Bahasa Indonesia like *banci* or *bencong*, the words that are often used to insult trans woman. Angela's speech helped to soften this attitude even though the general response was still neglective to consider a trans woman as a woman.

It is however, quite difficult to see any progressive change in near future. Many fans still believe that trans women have their own space in a pageant world which is a beauty pageant targeted for trans women, Miss International Queen for example. The only way to change their view rapidly is by allowing and normalizing trans women to compete at *Puteri Indonesia*. *Puteri Indonesia* often uses the jargon from Women's March movement but they failed to recognize one point of the movement which is to be inclusive to all gender and recognize trans women as women. However, if let's say for

the next year edition, *Puteri Indonesia* will start to accept trans women in its pageant, there will be another problem that the organizer will face. One of the problems that it will face is from *Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia* (KPI) or Indonesia's Broadcasting Commission which in its regulation forbid any broadcasts which show activity that violates social norm. Several shows had received warning because of their display of transgender on their shows. It goes to say that heteronormative view from the fans and discrimination against trans women are a systemic problem within Indonesia in which a progressive change will only possible if the government has provided the platform for the society to move further.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Puteri Indonesia as one of the longest running beauty pageants in Indonesia has a very strong bond with Javanese culture that shapes the way the pageant sees and portrays femininity; *Puteri Keraton*. However, its notion of femininity did not solely come from traditional Javanese views but rather a mixture of government influence as well as religious value that majority of Indonesian believe in. Despite the challenge faced by the pageant during its early days, it can still maintain its relevance to Indonesian audiences due to its strong connection to the ruling government.

Being broadcasted annually and watched by large numbers of viewers, *Puteri Indonesia* helped to shape Indonesian's view on femininity especially those who watch are the fans of the show including aspiring contestants. There are various ways which these women attempted to negotiate their own femininity with *Puteri Indonesia's*, it could be by training from beauty camps or for many, by observing seniors and stakeholders during the preparation camp. The negotiation between the gaps of their femininity and the *Puteri Keraton* femininity affects their understanding on what ideal Indonesian women which undermines their own femininity and thus making their understanding of Indonesian femininity as singular rather than that it has multiple layers. On different stages of Miss Universe, *Puteri Indonesia* who participated on it also negotiate with the different notions of femininity. However, the rigid concept of *Puteri Keraton* acts as barrier to fully embrace feminine characters idealized on the Miss Universe stage.

Further, the success of performing the gender correctly will ultimately open doors for the contestants, in terms of economy, politics, and society. Jobs as public speakers and offered by government are some of the career path that former *Puteri Indonesia* can take. However, at one point, their title can also be utilized by the ruling government in politics; either in election or in nation branding.

This study has shown that beauty pageant industry can be a tool in perpetuating traditional gender norms and ideals created by stakeholders (government, religious groups, and organizers) to the general public despite the diversity of culture and ethnicities in Indonesia. Southeast Asia within itself is arguably very diverse and the region's beauty pageant industry is growing rapidly. Some countries like the Philippines and Thailand have been more successful by having four and two Miss Universe winners respectively. If generalization from Indonesia's case is applied to Southeast Asian, the southeast Asian women's view on femininity in the region can be influenced by this industry as well. To be more specific, the influence of this industry would be similar to countries that experienced dictatorship and government-controlled media to spread its propaganda and where there is one culture being collectively mainstreamed.

Working on this study, there are several limitations that I have encountered. First is the availability of the information related to the *Puteri Indonesia* pageant in the 1990s, especially the availability of the recorded footage of the pageant. Some useful information might be available in the archive of Indonesia's National Library located in Jakarta. However, since the study was conducted from Bangkok, Thailand, that information could not be accessed. Second, during the interview with former contestants, they tend to answer the questions as if they were on the pageant stage. By doing this, they often tried to be very diplomatic and did not give their truthful opinion. Hence, it is necessary to understand their backgrounds in order to interpret and analyze the answers. In the future, if similar study was about to be conducted, it is advisable to go through national archive of the newspaper of the particular country being studied. Moreover, prior to interview former beauty queens, it is crucial to give understanding that they do not have to put on their beauty queen persona and not be afraid to be judged by their answers and opinions.

Furthermore, this study did not aim as an endorsement for the *Puteri Indonesia* pageant but rather aimed to provide an academic discussion of the pageant. After conducting this study, there are several criticisms that I have on this pageant. First is that the pageant is hypocritical in interpreting diversity. The pageant prided itself as to value

the diversity of Indonesian cultures and its people. However, it is only a jargon or simply a theme for the final show in order to gain support from the government. In the end of the final show, the contestants would be dressed up in Javanese attires and hairstyles even though the theme of that year was not Java. It showcases how big is the influence of Javanese culture in the pageant. Not only attires but also the notion of femininity that the pageant constructs and enforces is rooted from Javanese culture, '*Puteri Keraton*'. Moreover, the pageant has always excluding women from ethnic minorities from the top 3 which might perpetuate the negative stigma that women from ethnic minorities are not beautiful and/or smart enough to deserve the crown.

The second criticism is that the *Puteri Indonesia* pageant tends to cherry-pick the Women's March movement for their own benefit to be seen as an institution that empowers women. In the show, the pageant claimed to support the Women's March movement and its value. However, the pageant only provides spaces for cis gender women as it always indicates that in order to be a 'proper woman', she should be able to give birth and cares for her own off-spring as what it is believed in '*kodrat*'. It definitely contradicts with the vision of the movement as it is now including the fight for LGBT rights as well as it also validates the identity of trans women as women.

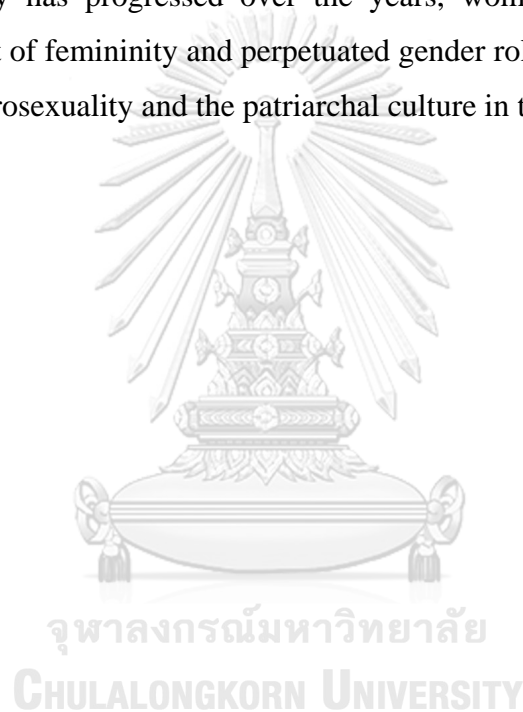
My criticisms of the pageant can also be taken to a broader context of Indonesian society. Indonesians value themselves as respecting *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, but the ethnicity and religion issues are still happening. In terms of leadership, all of the presidents of the country are Javanese (excluding B.J. Habibie, he was Soeharto's Vice President and only ascended to be president when Soeharto resigned in 1998). Recently, in Jakarta's governor election in 2017, survey conducted by Populi Center found that the ethnics and religions issue increased during the campaign, for example the campaign for not voting non-Muslim candidate and for those who vote on that candidate, their dead bodies would not be accepted for prayers in local mosques. One of the candidates on that election was Basuki Tjahja Purnama who is Christian and from Chinese ethnic (Lestari, 2017).

Discrimination against ethnic minority also happened recently. In August 2019, Papuan Student Dormitory in Surabaya was under siege by local groups and the military. The students were accused as part of *Gerakan Papua Merdeka* (Free Papua Movement) and they destroy Indonesia's flag as it is considered an act of treason. However, the military did not do any proper investigation on the accusation (CNN Indonesia, 2019). Following the event, massive protests happened in Papua and West Papua regarding the act of discrimination and racism against their group. In handling the situation, Indonesian government through the Ministry of Communication and Information proceeded to do throttling or disconnecting the internet access in Papua and West Papua. They argued that it was done in order to limit the spread of hoax news. However, in June 2020, Indonesian Supreme Court ruled the action as a violation against the law (Briantika, 2020).

Those two examples indicate that even though on paper the country itself is built by different people from different ethnic groups and religions, all of these groups do not hold the equal power and status in society. The majority holds the power and the minority are often get discrimination to the point that their rights of getting and spreading information are taken away. Moreover, many Indonesians are not ready for this conversation by putting the label of Social Justice Warriors for people who are trying to raise awareness on this issue in social media. Many are still blinded by their own privilege thus making them unable to recognize this issue.

The hegemony of heterosexuality and the perpetuated gender roles resulting from it can also be used to define womanhood in Indonesia. I have mentioned a couple of times on '*Puteri Keraton*' as the ideal femininity of Indonesian women. One criterion of it is the ability to bear a child. This does not only exclude trans women, but also cis women who are unable to bear a child. They are often seen as failures and not complete. In marriage, they would be blamed if the marriage ends in divorce since they cannot create a complete family. Furthermore, because of this reason, they cannot refuse to be in a polygamy as a compensation for their husbands.

The development of the *'Puteri Keraton'* concept in the *Puteri Indonesia* pageant as it now includes women who are ambitious, career driven, and empower other women, also reflect the situation of Indonesian women especially those who live in urban area. It puts burden on women as now they are expected to be superwomen who can have it all, both career and family, even though the current situation making it next to impossible for young, urban, working class women to achieve and in the end left them no choice to quit their career in order to take care of the family as the traditional gender roles expect them to do (Setyonaluri, 2019). In the end, as much as the claims that Indonesian society has progressed over the years, women are still bound to the traditional concept of femininity and perpetuated gender roles that are the result of the hegemony of heterosexuality and the patriarchal culture in the country.



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APPENDIX

A.1 Glossary

<i>Aurat</i>	:	A word used to refer to body parts that are forbidden to be shown to the public. Men's <i>aurat</i> starts from the navel down to their knees. Women's <i>aurat</i> is their whole body except face and palms.
<i>Banci</i> or <i>Bencong</i>	:	Deregratory words to refer to trans women.
Beauty Camp	:	A term used by the pageant community to refer to a training camp for aspiring beauty queens who want to participate in beauty pageants.
<i>Bhinneka Tunggal Ika</i>	:	Indonesian jargon from Sanskrit language means Unity in Diversity.
Clapper	:	A term to describe contestant or a country who do not get called to the semifinal round. The term is inspired by contestants who are clapping in the background when other contestants get called. Hence, the term 'clapper'.
<i>El Tocuyo</i> Award	:	Formerly known as Ruth Occumarez Award is a fun award given to contestants who received massive hype during Miss Universe competition but failed to be in semifinalists. El Tocuyo is derived from the city where Mariam Habach of Venezuela mentioned during Miss Universe 2016 opening number. Ruth Occumarez was Miss Dominican Republic 2002. Both overly hyped and were considered as front runners but failed to be in semifinalists.
Feminism	:	A range of social movements, political movements, and ideologies that aim to define, establish, and achieve the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes.
<i>Ibu</i>	:	An Indonesian word for mother
<i>Indo</i>	:	A slang used in Indonesia to refer to a biracial person, usually mixed-race with Caucasian blood.
<i>Kak</i>	:	A word used to address someone who is older in Bahasa Indonesia
<i>Kebaya</i>	:	An Indonesian traditional dress for women.
<i>Keraton</i>	:	An Indonesian word derived from Javanese language to refer to royal palace
<i>Keraton Surakarta Hadiningrat</i>		Royal Sunannate Hadiningrat is one of Javanese monarchies that still exist in Indonesia. It is located at the city of Surakarta, Central Java and was established in 1745 by King Pakubuwono II.
<i>Kodrat</i>	:	A word derived from Arabic and connotes God's will or God's omnipotence, with the related meaning of 'the power of nature' and 'nature of character'
Missology	:	An international beauty pageant discussion forum
Miss America	:	A scholarship-based beauty pageant held in the USA since 1921. It is different with Miss USA in terms of the selection process, criteria, and the ownership

- Miss Earth Indonesia : A national level beauty pageant in Indonesia to choose representative to the Miss Earth pageant. This pageant is under El John foundation.
- Miss Grand Indonesia : A national level beauty pageant in Indonesia to choose representative to the Miss Grand pageant. The license owner of the pageant has changed a couple of times from El John to *Yayasan Puteri Indonesia* to now *Yayasan Dunia Mega Bintang*.
- Miss Indonesia : A national level beauty pageant in Indonesia under *Yayasan Miss Indonesia*. The winner of the pageant will be sent to Miss World pageant.
- Miss Tiffany Universe : A specific beauty pageant for trans women in Thailand first held in Pattaya in 1984
- Miss Universe : An international beauty pageant held annually since 1952 by US based organization called Miss Universe Organization. The ownership of the organization has changed a couple of times. Previously it was owned by Donald Trump but now it is owned by international modelling agency WME/IMG
- New Order : An era in Indonesia where Soeharto was in the position of presidency. The era lasted for the duration of 32 years from 1966 to 1998.
- Ngondek* : A slang term used to describe gentle and graceful demeanor, especially for men. The term is used to stereotype gay men in Indonesia because it is considered very feminine unlike men who are expected to be masculine. However, Indonesian pageant fans use it for women whose demeanor is very feminine. Some even associate the term *ngondek* with how pageant contestants from South American countries (for example Venezuela) behave in front of camera and on stage.
- Perempuan* : An Indonesian word for woman
- Preparation Camp : A duration in a beauty pageant where the contestants are competing in a preliminary competition, doing rehearsals. And other various activities prior to the final night or the coronation night.
- Puteri* : Indonesian word translated into princess
- Puteri Keraton* : Translated into the Royal Princess
- Puteri Indonesia* : The oldest running beauty pageant in Indonesia in which the winner will be sent to the Miss Universe, 1st Runner up to the Miss International pageant, and 2nd Runner to the Miss Supranational pageant.
- The pageant is under *Yayasan Puteri Indonesia* and a cosmetic company, PT. Mustika Ratu.
- The pageant name can be translated into Princess of Indonesia
- Putri Pariwisata Indonesia* : A National level beauty pageant under El John Foundation. It is different from the *Puteri Indonesia Pariwisata* title given to *Puteri Indonesia* 2nd runner up.
- Wanita* : An Indonesian word for woman

Wishlist	:	A term known in pageant industry as prospective candidates to compete at certain pageant.
Quran	:	The holy book of Islam
Yayasan	:	An Indonesian word for foundation

A.2 List of Interview Questions

1. What do you think shapes the idealized Indonesian women in *Puteri Indonesia* pageant?
2. Do you think you fit in the expectations of what should be the ideal *Puteri Indonesia*?
3. Could you tell me the effect in which you realize that you meet or do not meet the standard of ideal woman in *Puteri Indonesia* pageant?

