

Beyond Anpanman the (Super)hero: Investigating Figures of Hero and Idol in *BTS*'s Songs

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ABSTRACT

Released in May 2018, the song "Anpanman" by the world's most popular K-Pop boy group to date, BTS, shares the idea of being a hero by setting an example from the Japanese superhero Anpanman. Anpanman, whose head is made of red bean paste-filled pastry, is well-known for his superpower ability to share parts of his head to those in need. This humble and self-sacrifice mode of helping others seems to be the basic idea of the song, to represent what BTS is about. This essay aims to further dissect the song lyrics of "Anpanman" to show the ambivalence presented between the concept of hero and superhero (termed here as (super)hero). The discussion goes further to juxtaposing the concept of hero/superhero with idol, a term used as another one of BTS's songs "Idol". Considering that in K-Pop, being an idol is practically a dream job, it is therefore paramount that in discussing the songs, this essay highlights the paradox of what it means to be a hero/superhero with an idol. Within the frame of network analysis, the discussion is conducted specifically along the line of the effects that digital culture has, which helps the spreading of BTS's popularity and persona globally. In this light, this essay argues that beyond the songs, a problematic view on what it means to be a hero and an idol is projected. Ultimately, the discussion concludes that such an ambivalent view potentially leads to a reconceptualization of a superhero figure.

Keywords: Anpanman; BTS; digital culture; idol; (super)hero

INTRODUCTION

Amidst today's rapid flow and internationalization of K-Pop around the world, the idea of taking a closer look at the concept of hero, superhero, and idol came to mind after coming across *BTS*'s 2018 song "Anpanman". *BTS* enthusiasts can see that the song lyrics reflect what *BTS* is about; the K-Pop boy band coming from an underdog label (Big Hit Entertainment), offering simply their creativity in making music to make the world a better place. Discussion on "Anpanman" and "Idol" within academic realm has so far been non-existent, let alone discussions on the two songs and their relevance to the concept of hero or superhero. This fact alone prompts the paramount nature of conducting this research.

The most recent and also the most viral research on *BTS* is one conducted by Harvard on *BTS*'s success to its relationship with the producer (Elberse and Woodham, 2020). Prior to this, Manggong (2018) theorized *BTS*'s construction of popularity due to the distinct characteristics of the seven members. Manggong (2019) also discussed *BTS*'s contribution to the youth in terms of making them more active by following the choreography of *BTS*'s songs. In another essay, which has more relevance to the discussion of this essay, Manggong (2020) observes *BTS* LINE webtoon as a manifestation of digital culture. These researches provide a context on *BTS*'s popularity and influence to the global digital world.

As an attempt to create a discourse on the discussion of *BTS* and the songs "Anpanman" and "Idol", it is therefore highly reasonable to say that the analysis on the two songs in this essay becomes important. Other than attempting to create such a discourse, this research is also pursued as an attempt to fill the gap on research about *BTS* in general or *BTS*'s songs in particular, as there is no previous research discussing this particular object of research. The aim of this essay is thus to show the shift of concept between a hero, a superhero, and an idol based on the two songs. The analysis will show that this shift signals an ambivalent perception on a conventionalized heroic or super heroic figure, which is the main argument of this essay. The discussion of the two songs ultimately leads to a conclusion that the ambivalent view of the concept of hero, (super)hero, and idol shows a reconceptualization of today's superhero figure.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The objects of study are *BTS*'s songs: "Anpanman" and "Idol". The English song lyrics are obtained online from Youtube from lyrics videos by Jaeguchi that provide the Korean, Romanized, and English translation of the lyrics. The analysis is conducted on the English translation of the song lyrics by looking particularly at its interpretations on hero and superhero in the four elements of the lyrics namely: introduction, verse, pre-chorus, and chorus. The comparison of the songs will highlight the paradoxical shift on conveying the concept of hero, superhero, and idol.

The research method used to conduct the analysis refers to theories and concepts on critical discourse analysis by van Dijk (2015) and Fairclough (1995) as well as multimodality by Kress (2010). In the discussion, critical discourse analysis helps to break down the three levels of analysis of the song lyrics from description, interpretation, and explanation in both discourse and discourse analysis dimensions (Fairclough, 1995). Multimodality, on the other hand, helps to link the meaning and message interpreted from the song lyrics with the choreography of the song on stage, since gestures also contribute to the presence of culture (Kress, 2010).

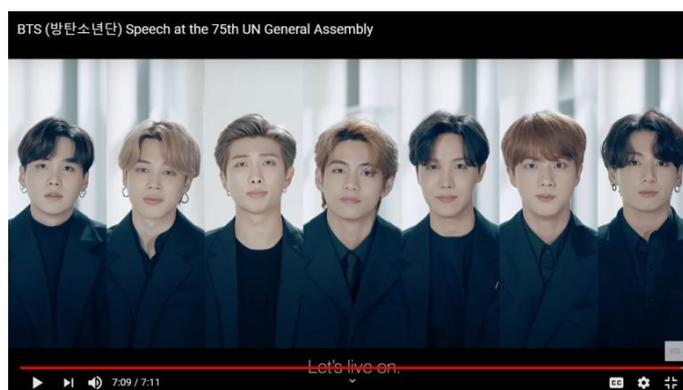
The English-translated version of the songs is analyzed by breaking it down into parts of song structure namely: introduction, verse, pre-chorus, and chorus. Afterwards, by adopting the levels of discourse analysis, description, in this case text analysis, is conducted by describing the main ideas identified in each part of the song lyrics. Next is identifying the theme from the description of main ideas on each part, by paying attention to how the theme in each part is linked, be it by repetition, juxtaposition, or contrast. The next stage of the analysis is interpreting the duality and ambiguity from the themes. The analysis also considers the choreography of “Anpanman” on stage to give hints of the visualization of the Anpanman figure as a superhero figure.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

BTS, “Anpanman”, and “Idol”: A Brief Introduction

Bangtan Sonyeondan (BTS) which translates as Bulletproof Boy Scouts was formed in 2012. The name projects the newbie’s image as a rookie group that has to strive and compete with other big names in the K-pop music industry like Big Bang and EXO, to name a few. *BTS* consists of seven members: Kim Seok Jin (Jin), Min Yoon-gi (Suga), Jung Ho-seok (J-Hope), Kim Nam-joon (RM), Park Ji-min (Jimin), Kim Tae-hyung (V), and Jeon Jung-kook (Jungkook).

Figure 1. *BTS* members from left to right: Suga, Jimin, RM, V, J-Hope, Jin, and Jungkook after delivering a speech at the 7th UN General Assembly on September 23, 2020
(Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5aPe9Uy10n4>)



The boys released their debut single in 12 Juni 2013 called 2 COOL 4 SKOOL, and this date marks the anniversary of the group. Their main single in this digital album, “No More Dream”, ranked 14th in the Billboard World Digital Songs. This was the first time *BTS* entered the Billboard

charts and this was also a momentum that trajected *BTS* to achieving many more awards in Asia and America.

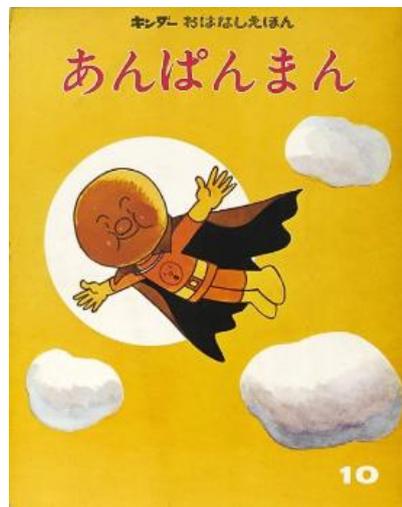
BTS has recently been officially acknowledged as the American sensation by American media, after previously dubbed as the most popular boy band in the world. *BTS*'s world popularity was achieved relatively quickly. In the four years after their debut in 2013, *BTS* has gradually shown their achievements; gaining first rank of its singles in the South Korean and Japanese charts, until it finally managed to steal the attention of the Western world (especially America) in 2017. Their most recent achievement is ranking first on the Billboard charts for their single "Dynamite" in two consecutive weeks. Before *BTS*, another *Hallyu* product that also caught the attention of the American public in 2012 was Psy, a K-Pop soloist who was very popular with his song "Gangnam Style". Psy's popularity in America is further validated by performing at the 2012 American Music Awards. In his performance, Psy is aligned with MC Hammer, the legendary American rapper and hip-hop star. Since its skyrocketing popularity in 2017, with a fanbase spread all over the world, *BTS* has been predicted to be the world's most popular K-Pop boyband. The world popularity of *BTS* makes Ellen Degeneres, for example, parallel the hysteria of *BTS* fans when they arrive at LAX airport, California with the hysteria of The Beatles's fans. *BTS*'s achievements have resulted in world popularity; in the 2013-2018 timeframe *BTS* managed to release a total of 24 singles and albums, with outstanding achievements (Manggong, 2018).

The song "Anpanman" is on their third Korean album *LOVE YOURSELF 轉 'TEAR'*. The album is part of a *BTS*'s Love Yourself series that "bears the message that loving oneself is the beginning of true love. It embodies the pain of boys faced with parting" (ibighit.com/bts). The song "Idol" is on the next album called *LOVE YOURSELF 結 'ANSWER'* which imparts the message that "loving yourself is true love". The *BTS* Love Yourself series is like a novel, having an introduction, development, twists, and conclusion in the end. As part of the series, *LOVE YOURSELF 結 'ANSWER'* is the final piece of the puzzle (ibighit.com/bts). Placed in two albums one after another, the two songs carry a similar message about appreciating oneself.

Anpanman

The superhero Anpanman was invented by Takashi Yanase (6 February 1919- 13 October 2013) from Prefektur Kochi, Shikoku. Anpanman was originally a picture book first published in 1973 with the title *Anpanman* in a monthly comic magazine *Kindaa Ohanashi Ehon* (Kinder Comic Book).

Figure 2. *Anpanman* the picture book
(Source: <https://www.anpanman.jp/about/history.html>)



Anpanman's kryptonite is water. The black line on Anpanman's head is supposed to guard himself from getting water on his head. Anpanman does not eat. He simply gives pieces of his head to feed those in need.

The cartoon series *Sore Ike! Anpanman (Go Go! Anpanman)* first aired in 1988 on Nihon Terebi (Japan Television).

Figure 3. Anpanman in one episode of the *Sore Ike! Anpanman* cartoon series
(Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1I1yEMBDA3k>)



The film was first screened in 1989 with the title *Soreike! Anpanman Kira Hoshi no Namida*.

Figure 4. Anpanman in the film *Soreike! Anpanman Kira Kira Hoshi no Namida*
(Source: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x5j7q80>)



In 2005, Takashi Yanase park was built near Kochi Museum. Following this, Anpanman children's museums were built in Nagoya, Sendai, Kobe and Fukuoka. In 2016, Anpanman's birthday, known as "Anpanman no Hi (Anpanman Day)" on 3 October was launched. Up to the present time, Anpanman continues to be everybody's superhero, not only in Japan, spreading the words of "Ai to Yuuki (Love and Courage)" to the world. On the first edition of the comic book, Yanase wrote:

"Just like children in general, I too really like Superman, or masked heroes. But what I found odd is even though they have big fights, but their outfits remain intact and unspoilt, and I don't understand who they are fighting for. True justice must not (only) be achieved in a form of a machismo, it also needs to show the hero's deepest scar" (<https://www.froebel-kan.co.jp/anpanman/>).

This is how Anpanman came about. In an interview on NHK TV Gretel no Kamado, Yanase said that the concept of a superhero is based on the notion that the ultimate truth is "helping those who are famished" not winning over a battle against the villain. The basic concept is thus: when you are helping others, do not fear of getting hurt, throw away your ego, and help others.

In its early years of publication, on battling against Baikinman, Anpanman's nemesis, Anpanman was presented as a strong instead of a kind figure.

Figure 5. Baikinman, Anpanman's nemesis
(Source: <https://www.behindthevoiceactors.com/tv-shows/Soreike-Anpanman/Baikinman/>)



But the fact that Anpanman acts for others, not for himself, is still the main moral of the story. Anpanman's strength has to be highlighted so that he can protect his maker, Jamu Ojisan. The known version to date, *Sore Ike! Anpanman*, highlighted Anpanman's kind heartedness instead of his strength. Anpan (red bean-filled pastry) was chosen as Anpanman's head because it has to do with Jamu Ojisan's past when it was difficult for him to find something to eat. A friend handed him anpan, and he felt very blessed with the gift. Yanase also mentioned that Anpan was chosen to show that the hero is hard on the outside, but soft on the inside. Anpan is also a hybrid food, with Western pastry on the outside and Japanese red bean on the inside. Anpanman also has its allusion from the figure Frankenstein, who looks hard on the outside, but has a soft heart on the inside.

(Super)hero in BTS's "Anpanman" and "Idol"

The analysis will, as a start, have its theoretical framework with reference to the concepts of superheroes as a genre, the convention of a superhero story, and its characteristics as adventure story. Studies on superheroes declare that different from comics which is an art form, superheroes are a genre; it is genre "about transformation, about identity, about difference, and about the tension between psychological rigidity and a flexible and fluid sense of human nature" (Hatfield et al., 2013: 3). This genre, Coogan (2013) observes, requires the superhero convention in the story, which is superpowers, along with its three constituent elements: mission, powers, and identity. In superhero stories, the mission, in particular, gives rise to an adventure story, whose focus of interests are "the character of the hero and the nature of the obstacles he has to overcome"

(Cawelti, 2013: 78). Cawelti further observes that this type of adventure story contains an implicit moral fantasy, that is, victory over death that emerges in different forms, namely: “the triumph over injustice and the threat of lawlessness in the western; the saving of the nation in the spy story; the overcoming of fear and the defeat of the enemy in the combat story” (Cawelti: 78).

A hero is defined as “someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself” (Campbell in Gray II, 2011: 1). To today's youth, this figure is promoted in superhero movies. Movies can be seen as the ideal medium to convey this, with the intention to present a mixture of education and entertainment, which is a mode of learning millennials prefer. The widespread of blockbuster American superhero movies, in effect, “disseminate American ideology throughout the world” (Gray II: 4). The fact that superhero movies are still everybody's favorite indicates that the world is still searching for this ideal figure of “super-powerful individuals who believe in basic human values such as honor, truth, and justice, despite their inner conflicts which may result from their corrupt, dangerous and immoral surroundings” (Gray II: 6). In extension to superheroes as a genre, Lewis (2014) proposes an idea of a superhero afterlife subgenre as a subset of the main superhero genre that focuses mainly on the search of selfhood.

Different from America, Japan has its own distinct concept of superhero. Japan has had its own version of hero genre in anime and live action television. Gomez (2018) notes that American superheroes have the following characteristics:

1. They are usually lone heroes,
2. Their abilities tend to be physically their own,
3. Their reasoning for being a hero is self-imposed, out of a sense of responsibility or desire to protect others,
4. The focus of their sense of responsibility is placed on their connection to the common person they protect.

Japanese superheroes, on the other hand, have the following characteristics:

1. They lean towards being chosen by a higher power or destiny,
2. Their skills come from technology or the suit given to them,
3. Their battles and villains focus more on the fight and the spectacle usually disregarding citizens.

Asians in general, and Indonesians in particular, could easily recognize these distinctions. Most Indonesians' Generation X (those who were born between 1965-1981) might probably have their own fond memories of the early 1980s Japanese series *Voltus V* or the early 1990s *Sailormoon*. In laying out the distinction between American and Japanese superheroes, one can also look at Abel's (2014) observation on the use of mask that leads to a conclusion that “the mask

was a key that illuminated the connection not only between an allegorical fictional world and reality but also between ‘Japanese things’ and ‘Western things’” (Abel: 191).

Despite the complicated historical tie with Japan, South Korea shares certain cultural aspects with Japan, including popular culture. Like South Korea, Japan for instance has their own musical genre called J-Pop in a contesting position to that of Korean Pop, known as K-Pop. With the steady flow of Japanese popular culture, as its neighboring country, South Koreans have also become familiar with some of Japanese superheroes; Anpanman being one of them. Anpanman is so popular that in a survey by Japanese netizens, he ranks 10th in the top ten wish list of Japanese superheroes in the Avengers (Wrigley, 2014). Unlike other more notable Japanese superheroes such as Kamen Rider, Ultraman, or Super Sentai (Power Rangers), Anpanman does not receive the same recognition by Indonesian audience. At least not until the name is made notable by the K-Pop boyband *BTS* in 2018. This is so due to the rapid flow of K-Pop on the Internet.

As part of *Hallyu* (Korean Wave) product (Hong, 2014 and Lee, 2015), K-Pop has become a wave that has to be reckoned with around the world. *Hallyu*, for instance, hit Indonesia through the airing of Korean TV dramas and movies in 2000–2006. To this, Nugroho (2014) notes that “[f]rom 2006 until mid-2008, Korean movies took their toll; then from the beginning of 2009 right through 2012 and going on, K-pop has taken control” (Nugroho, 2014: 19). The rapid flow of information received by Generation Z via the Internet causes the youngsters of this generation to use their smartphones or gadgets as “a portal into many worlds and many lives, ... a personal wormhole, a mobile and magical time-suck that enables to do both good and evil to ourselves and others” (Harrison, 2017: 17). Today’s more participatory world (Gere, 2008) and global connectivity create another form of culture, that is, the digital culture.

Digital technology as the repercussion of the invention of the Internet creates “production and consumption of images, texts and sounds across culture” (Thumim, 2012: 12). Video platforms such as Youtube make it easy for viewers of their videos to access various types and categories of videos that suit their tastes. ARMY (BTS fan), for example, will often be provided with a video thread about *BTS* on the main page of their Youtube account. The existence of Youtube and other platforms, which causes people to spend more time on their gadgets, raises what Ito (2007) terms “digitally augmented sociality”. In his observations about identity and participation in Friendster, boyd (2007: 146) articulates that “[s]ocial network analysis depends on knowing the strength of individual relationships and on having a consistent representation for that strength within the system”. Two individuals A and B, for example, can become friends even though they are not directly connected. The term “friend” or “friend” is actually not quite appropriate to use, because

what exists between the two is just a connection. However, what's most important in relationships in this kind of network is that the term “friend” creates the illusion that the two are friends. Thus, in the case of individuals A and B, it can be said that their “friendship” is built on similar tastes. In the context of *BTS*, this scheme also applies to ARMYs. Their “friendship” is not only tied to a fan base, but also more broadly, namely on various social media platforms such as Twitter, VLIVE, LINE, and Weverse. Social media is a contagious medium, which Peretti (2007) calls “the kind of media you immediately want to share with all your friends. This requires that you take pleasure in consuming the media but also pleasure in the social process of passing it on” (Peretti, 2007: 159). It is with this mechanism that the popularity and persona of *BTS* is built, and the system is made part of the marketing strategy for various products issued by *BTS*, through BigHit management (Manggong, 2020).

Having a look at how the image of superhero is showcased in both American and Japanese cultures, along with the practice of presenting the image of the Japanese superhero Anpanman in *BTS*'s song as part of Hallyu, as well as the role of technology in digital culture as the means to spread the song's message, the analysis of “Anpanman” and “Idol” could not help but to be looked at as a form of multimodality which semiotically creates “constant change, transformation, ‘blending’” (Kress, 2010: 12). The transformation in this case is represented by the shift of the image of superhero, at least to the *BTS* ARMY, or even to the public world in general. In this light, thus, the act of dissecting the song lyrics adopts the method of discourse analysis which “includes linguistic description of the language text, interpretation of the relationship between the (productive and interpretative) discursive processes and the text, and explanation of the relationship between the discursive processes and the social processes” (Fairclough, 1995: 97). In the analysis, the discursive process relies heavily on van Dijk's members-groups type of critical analysis, in which “[l]anguage users engage in discourse as members of (several) social groups, organizations, or institutions; and, conversely, groups thus may act “by” or “through” their members” (van Dijk: 468). This way, the analysis of the song lyrics is conducted by first of all looking at the song structure, the interpretation of the lyrics, and the explanation of the message the songs attempt to convey.

In dissecting the lyrics of “Anpanman” we have provided the following table that illustrates the song's structure:

Table 1. The Song Structure of “Anpanman”

Lyrics	Elements
Waiting for you Anpanman Waiting for you Anpanman	Introduction
I don't have biceps or pecs I don't have a super car like Batman My ideal is a really cool hero But all I can give is just Anpan I've been dreaming of a hero like Superman I jumped hard, high up into the sky I'm not afraid of bruising my knees A delusion of my innocent childhood	1 st verse (sing)
I'm not a superhero, don't want too much I can be your hero, this is a shame I'm really not sure whether this even makes sense But mom, I really need to do it Who's gonna do it if it isn't me? You can call me, say Anpan	2 nd verse (sing)
Waiting for you Anpanman (Lemme hear ya say, lemme hear ya say) Waiting for you Anpanman (Turn it up, turn it up, turn it up) I'll give you more power (Lemme hear ya say, lemme hear ya say) I'll be your strength (Turn it up, turn it up, turn it up)	1 st pre-chorus
Keep spinning and spinning my Anpan Keep ballin' ballin still Bangtan As I open my eyes, I'm a hero but still in the maze That young man, young man, young man. Keep secretly secretly getting covered in bruises But ballin' ballin still Bangtan Even if I'm hurt, I'm the hero Put the fear behind Anpanman, panman, panman.	2 nd pre-chorus
I'm a new generation (Anpanman) I'm a new superhero (Anpanman) What I have is a single blow of this song Lemme say “all the bad men cop out” I'm a new generation (Anpanman) I'm a new superhero (Anpanman) What I have is a single blow of this song Lemme say “all the bad men cop out”	Chorus
Sometimes I'm afraid of all of this Because I became to have so many things that I love Some say, you're almost an old fossil now You're not qualified, just do what you've been doing well But I still want to be a hero, all I can give you is Anpan	3 rd verse (rap)

And a word that you worked hard But I'll fly to you right away if you call me, please call me	
Waiting for you Anpanman (Lemme hear ya say, lemme hear ya say) Waiting for you Anpanman (Turn it up, turn it up, turn it up) I'll muster up the strength a little more (Lemme hear ya say, lemme hear ya say) I'll be your strength (Turn it up, turn it up, turn it up)	3 rd pre-chorus
Keep spinning and spinning my Anpan Keep ballin' ballin still Bangtan As I open my eyes, I'm a hero but still in the maze That young man, young man, young man. Keep secretly secretly getting covered in bruises But ballin' ballin still Bangtan Even if I'm hurt, I'm the hero Put the fear behind Anpanman, panman, panman.	4 th pre-chorus
To be honest, I'm scared of falling and of turning you down But, even if it takes up all my strength, I will be sure that I stay by your side Although I'll fall again, I'll make a mistake again And I'll be covered in mud, I believe in myself because I'm a hero Yeah yeah	4 th verse (sing)
Keep spinning and spinning my Anpan Keep ballin' ballin still Bangtan As I open my eyes, I'm a hero but still in the maze That young man, young man, young man. Keep secretly secretly getting covered in bruises But ballin' ballin still Bangtan Even if I'm hurt, I'm the hero Put the fear behind Anpanman, panman, panman.	5 th pre-chorus
I'm a new generation (Anpanman) I'm a new superhero (Anpanman) What I have is a single blow of this song Lemme say "all the bad men cop out" I'm a new generation (Anpanman) I'm a new superhero (Anpanman) What I have is a single blow of this song Lemme say "all the bad men cop out"	Chorus

The main ideas of the song are mainly on the introduction, the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd verses, the pre-choruses, and the choruses.

The introduction, "Waiting for you Anpanman", immediately expresses the longing for a superhero to come to the rescue. The 1st verse describes the flaws the "I" has compared to the ideal superhero such as Batman and Superman. Yet the "I" realizes that he can only give Anpan to help

while expressing his fearless measures to become a superhero. The 2nd verse again emphasizes that the “I” is not a superhero, yet he reluctantly offers himself as one and expresses that it is the moral thing that he must do. The pre-choruses echo the introduction part, adding that he will give those in need more power and offer them strength. These parts also express his effort of becoming a superhero (“Keep spinning and spinning my Anpan”), yet in doing so, realizing that he is merely an ordinary human being (“Keep ballin’ ballin’ still Bangtan”) until he is finally faced with his flawed superhero self. The chorus repeatedly highlights this figure of a new generation and a new superhero Anpanman. Anpanman’s traits in this part is paralleled with the “I”’s humble super power, which is “a single blow of this song”. The 4th verse shows a very humane confession and sincerity by revealing his fear disappointing those who need him. This part also shows a reassurance that he will be this figure that can be depended upon, no matter what. The 3rd verse resounds what is expressed in the 1st and 2nd verses, emphasizing that despite what others think of him, he will still help others by simply offering a helping hand and reminding others that what matters is the hard work that one does.

After seeing the main ideas proposed in the said song elements, we can say that there is a form of duality and ambiguity presented in the lyrics. The duality can be seen in the parts where the lyrics describes the two sides of the figure: the superhero and the ordinary human being. The ambiguity is described through the longing to help by being a superhero figure and also the self-realization that he cannot be that ideal superhero. The fact that he is not a superhero is made clear repeatedly. But in solace, he can at least offer himself as a hero. If we put this into the context of the album’s concept, we can see that this appears to be the statement it carries: you need to realize who you are and make the best of who you are. In other words, we can say that the message it conveys is that with or without super powers, we can all still be heroes. This is the deciding moment when one realizes and accepts his being; it is the very message that the theme Love Yourself tries to emphasize. The figure of the humble superhero Anpanman thus in this case fits the bill. He simply has the super power of giving out what he has by sacrificing himself so that he can help others. The super heroic traits do not really count here. What counts is the heroic traits of giving his life to something bigger, which is the very definition of a hero provided at the beginning of this essay.

Visually, in the choreography of the song, Anpanman’s distinct super heroic characteristics are also emphasized, as can be seen in the following snippets of the on-stage performance by BTS:

Figure 6. The beginning part of the “Anpanman” choreography (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkLMPihvKaQ>)



Figure 7. The middle part of the “Anpanman” choreography (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkLMPihvKaQ>)



Figure 8. The second middle part of the “Anpanman” choreography (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkLMPihvKaQ>)



We can see in Figure 6 V is posing as Anpanman; raising his left hand and fisting his hand with his right elbow bent backwards, singing “Waiting for you Anpanman”. He is in the middle of the formation, surrounded by the other six members with six different poses. In Figure 7, Jin repeats V’s pose, also singing “Waiting for you Anpanman”. In Figure 8, RM hurriedly hands the supposedly anpan, which is part of Anpanman’s head, to Jimin, who is seen lying on the floor, needing help. The visualization of the song lyrics with the upbeat and cheerful music sends a clear message that the song is playful, yet the idea conveyed in the lyrics is serious.

The next song that deals with self-realization and acceptance is “Idol”, which also alludes to Anpanman. The discussion of “Idol” in this part only focuses on J-Hope’s rap line where the idea of reflecting to the superhero Anpanman is present. The song opens with a rap line by RM saying that he does not care what people think of him, an artist or an idol, what matters is that he is proud of who he is, he knows who he really is, and he is never going to change who he is. The part where the lyrics mentions Anpanman is in J-Hope’s rap line. He is alluding to the Hollywood movie *Face Off* directed by John Woo in an attempt to emphasize the duality a person has. He further raps: “Top star with that spotlight, ay; Sometimes become a superhero, spin it, your Anpanman”. The duality he is focusing here is on being a superstar and a super hero. The juxtaposition of the two paradoxically questions the contrasting traits that the two have. On the one hand, being an idol, *BTS* boys have material possessions top celebrities have. On the other hand, the boys seem to reflect themselves as superheroes, the very figure they do not seem to have in “Anpanman”. Jimin’s line in the song says: “Sometimes I find the longest way to go around”, highlighting the idea that it takes many twists and turns for someone to finally reach the point of realizing his/her identity. In this song, we can see that the boys identify themselves as figures to be accounted for because of their fame and the good influence they spread. The song paradoxically puts the idol on the pedestal, paralleling and questioning its being with the superhero figure.

Unlike the American superhero figures, the (super)heroic figure *BTS* proposes is more moderate. Even less than those Japanese superhero figures whose characteristics Gomez (2018) observes. But this is what makes it better. By showing the weak and strong side of the (super)heroic figure, it would be less burdensome for anybody to consider himself heroes. Another point that this essay would like to highlight is, to argue Gomez (2018), the concept of (super)hero proposes in “Anpanman” does not involve being the chosen one by destiny. The (super)heroic figure proposed here is the figure who knows that he has the means to change the world and uses it. The platform *BTS* earns enables them to spread good words to the youth through their songs. The spread of good words to the youth around the world about accepting and loving oneself, be it a hero, a

super hero, a combination of the two (a (super)hero), and an idol helps the ARMYs reflect on what they could achieve and contribute to the lives around them. The discussion on the songs also shows that in a bigger picture, the *BTS Love Yourself* album series becomes the formula of a superhero story as observed by Cawelti (2013). It has the mission to tell the youth to love themselves through the powers of the song's lyrics, and it reaches its final resolution in finding out one's identity.

CONCLUSION

In dissecting the song lyrics of “Anpanman” and “Idol” the analysis shows that there is an ambivalence presented between the concept of hero and superhero (termed here as (super)hero). In juxtaposing the two songs, the analysis reveals a problematic concept between hero/superhero and idol. The paradox of what it means to be a hero/superhero with an idol is clear; Anpanman's super heroic traits are mortalized into that of a hero, and the platform on which an idol stands enables BTS to relate themselves to superheroes with their songs being their super power. The digital culture which helps the spreading of *BTS*'s popularity and persona globally also helps the spread of good words to the youth around the world about accepting and loving oneself, be it a hero, a super hero, a combination of the two (a (super)hero), and an idol. It helps the ARMYs reflect on what they could achieve and contribute to the lives around them. The discussion of the two songs ultimately leads to a conclusion that the ambivalent view of the concept of hero, (super)hero, and idol shows a reconceptualization of today's superhero figure. The figure of superheroes is reconceptualized in a way that they no longer solely bear the conventionalized characteristics of American and Japanese superheroes as lone heroes, having super power, having the responsibility or desire to protect others, being the chosen one by destiny, and having technology on their side. They are projected more as flawed humble figures who stand side by side with the people they help, offering a helping hand to assist them to realize that they can also be superheroes to others.

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