



A star fighting sexism: Internalized sexism analysis in *A Star Is Born* (2018)

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ABSTRACT

Sexism is not always visible or obvious. Sometimes it can also be seen in women's perceptions and interactions with themselves, which are influenced by society. This study investigates how women can embody internalized sexism. This study uses a text analysis approach. Primary data is taken from the 2018 film *A Star Is Born*, with a specific focus on the character Ally as the female lead. The theoretical framework for this study includes the analysis of internalized sexist behavior by Manne and Bearman and Amrhein, as well as the formal system of the film by Bordwell and Thompson. This study reveals that Ally internalizes sexism, and this is reflected through behaviors such as objectification, invalidation, and derogation. These things show that internalized sexism causes Ally to devalue herself and feel unable to compete in a male-dominated industry. The study concludes that the film depicts a society that perpetuates sexism as a tool to justify that women are considered submissive. The internalized sexism in the film should be brought to light and made to raise awareness of the issue that many people are unaware of. In a broader context, the study suggests that there is a need for more awareness and resistance against sexism and gender inequality.

Keywords: cinematography; gender inequality; internalized sexism; misogyny; sexism

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INTRODUCTION

Fueled by the Fourth Wave of feminism, which is marked by the emergence of new feminist organizations and activist campaigns, women continue to fight for equal rights. Despite being a central focus for organizations like the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), gender inequality persists (Puspa & Larasati, 2021). According to Nasution and Sahira (2021), gender inequality is a system and structure that victimizes both men and women. This is particularly evident in male-dominated industries like Hollywood, where women's appearance is often prioritized, and their talent is overlooked. The idea that women are less valuable than men is a form of hatred against women called misogyny (Evteeva et al., 2024). Misogyny often causes other sexist

behaviors, such as catcalling, where men shout comments about women's appearance while they are walking down the street, treating them as objects. If this action is conducted repetitively to women, it may lead to internalized sexism (Bearman et al., 2009).

Different from externalized sexism, which is visible, internalized sexism is often overlooked and more difficult to address (Bozkur, 2020). Perpetrators of internalized sexism, who could either be men or women, are often not aware of their actions because the actions are conducted unconsciously, such as judging a woman only based on her appearance. This means that internalized sexism needs to be intervened as the perpetrators are not aware of the harm they may have inflicted. Therefore, it is important

to examine internalized sexism so that public awareness of this issue can be raised.

Public awareness of issues such as internalized sexism is also part of the issues addressed by social movements like the #MeToo movement. The #MeToo movement is a popular social movement that attempts to raise awareness of sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and rape culture. A vocal figure in this movement is Rose McGowan, a Hollywood actress and director. She has been a vocal opponent of sexism in Hollywood, calling out casting directors who often abuse their power in Hollywood to hold them accountable for their sexual abuses. In her 2018 memoir "Brave", McGowan shared a detailed account of an alleged sexual assault by Harvey Weinstein, which had resulted in the imprisonment of Harvey Weinstein (Willen, 2021). This is a breakthrough for the #MeToo movement and an acknowledgement of female workers' suffering in the industry under an unequal gender relations environment. Such an environment has objectified women so that the value of women is reduced to merely their appearances.

Such issues can also be found in films. Films can distribute information widely and rapidly. Films can be a powerful medium for conveying a message to the masses (Effendy, 1986). One of the movies that addresses this problem is *A Star Is Born* (2018). *A Star Is Born* is an American classic narrative adapted in 1937, 1954, and 1976, and the recent one is the 2018 remake version with the same title. Directed by Bradley Cooper, it explores themes of love, fame, and personal hardship within the music industry context. *A Star Is Born* (2018) received the MTV Movie & TV Award for Best Performance in a Movie in 2019 and the BAFTA for Best Original Score. This film instantly gained so many positive responses from many people and became a popular film to watch.

The film begins with Jackson Maine (Bradley Cooper), a successful country music artist who battles drug addiction and hearing loss at the beginning of the story. When he meets Ally (Lady Gaga), a gifted singer-songwriter who is still doubting herself and finding it difficult to start her career in the music business, his life takes a drastic turn. Jackson wants Ally to be his prodigy because he is so impressed by her extraordinary talent and sincerity. Mentorship quickly gives way to romanticism in their connection. The hope of chasing dreams and a love story between the main characters as the magnets of the film

might be the site for internalized sexism to be constructed. In the film, the female protagonist Ally is often treated as an object by men throughout the film. Ally's relations with other men are interesting to examine since it indicates that sexism is not a result of a one-way interaction. In the relations, Ally also has the potential to perpetuate sexism, including internalized sexism. According to Bozkur (2020), internalized sexism is conducted by women against themselves or toward other women. Internalized sexism is an involuntary belief by women that sexist stereotypes and myths about them are true.

Several studies have examined various aspects of gender dynamics in *A Star Is Born* (2018). Anita et al. (2019) examined the film's portrayal of patriarchy using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, particularly the triangle of meaning. This study found that the film *A Star Is Born* showed unequal gender relations, where women became objects of domination in a patriarchal system that was subtly packaged as if women had the freedom to choose, when they were controlled by the male power structure. Another study by Setyadi and Ekawati (2021) investigated the linguistic traits of the film's male and female characters using Holmes's (2013) perspective on social aspects and the theoretical frameworks of Lakoff (1973) and Xia (2013) regarding language characteristics. The findings of this research showed that there were gendered language patterns with certain linguistic features that were more typical of male or female speech and were shaped by the context and purpose of the interaction.

Next, another study by Atmojo (2020) examined the linguistic traits of female characters in *A Star Is Born* (1976) and *A Star Is Born* (2018) using Coates's (2013) theory of women's linguistic features and Holmes's (2013) social factors theory. This study found that the features of female language remained relatively consistent across versions of the same character across two different eras, and social context played a key role in shaping how these features were used. Moreover, in a broader context, Rosida et al. (2022) used Manne's (2018) theoretical framework to analyze the social behaviors between women that were linked to the "Pick Me Girl" trend on multilingual TikTok videos and they found that internalized sexism was evident in the behavior of Pick Me Girls on TikTok, demonstrating how women could be both victims and upholders of patriarchal

values in digital spaces. Similarly, Wang and Elfira (2024) used the same methodology but to examine the “Pick Me Boy” trend and its potential role in spreading harmful sexist views in Indonesia. The study concluded that the “Pick Me Boy” trend on TikTok was not a rejection of masculinity but was merely a subtle misogyny perpetrated through emotional manipulation and gender performance. While the trend appeared to challenge toxic masculinity, “Pick Me Boy” reinforced patriarchal norms for personal gain.

Despite the insightfulness of the studies, previous research has not addressed the internalized sexism in *A Star Is Born* (2018), where, in fact, there is internalized sexism perpetuated unconsciously, which indicates its potent harm to other women. This study then utilizes Manne’s (2018) theoretical framework of misogyny and Bearman and Amrhein’s (2014) theory of six types of behaviors in women who experience internalized sexism to explore the internalized sexism that Ally experiences thoroughly. Ally’s experiences are packaged cinematically in the film. Therefore, this study also analyzes the cinematography portrayed in the film using the theory of Bordwell and Thompson (2008) to examine how the film’s style influences the way the story is developed and communicated in the film. According to Bordwell and Thompson (2008), a film’s style is essential to storytelling, as it can either enhance or alter how the audience interprets the plot. In a broader view, this study aims to enhance understanding and awareness of gender inequality in various forms depicted in popular culture, such as films. Thus, a research question for this study is:

1. How does Ally’s character embody internalized sexism in the movie *A Star Is Born* (2018)?

Literature Review

Sexism

Manne (2018) states that men are the source of misogyny, coming from those who believe that they are inherently deserving of attention. In other words, the attention, affection, praise, sex, and other beautiful things that women give are regarded by men as their natural rights. They are so horny that they get angry when women ignore them, plus there are many people (of both genders) who believe that women are naturally givers (Manne, 2018). To reinforce and perpetuate

this belief, society relies on a form of prejudice that systematically subordinates women to men, known as sexism (Barreto & Doyle, 2023). Although Brogaard (2020) argues that while Manne’s framework and definition apply to hateful misogyny, they do not adequately encompass loathing-based misogyny. Brogaard (2020) suggests that sexism and misogyny are not opposed but rather share similarities, with misogyny being a specific form of sexism characterized by hatred or loathing towards women.

According to Manne (2018), sexism is the branch of a patriarchal ideology that justifies and rationalizes a patriarchal social order. Sexism functions as a belief system that places women as inherently inferior to men. Sexism and misogyny are frequently used interchangeably. Manne (2018) states that misogyny can be seen as part of a patriarchal system that is tasked with enforcing and regulating prevailing norms and expectations. On the other hand, sexism can be seen as the theoretical foundation of patriarchy, which protects and validates social norms and relationships based on male domination (Manne, 2018). In other words, misogyny is the enforcement of the belief that women must be obedient, calm, and subordinate, even by women themselves. On the other hand, sexism justifies why women should not lead or speak assertively, and if they do, they are labeled as rude or aggressive. In short, sexism justifies why women must be the submissive ones. Internalized sexism occurs when women adopt these patriarchal beliefs, believing they are inferior or unworthy of equal rights. Sexism can also manifest itself in women’s behavior that polices or demeans other women or girls (Bearman & Amrhein, 2014).

Women who embody internalized sexism may display a variety of behaviors that reflect gender bias toward themselves or other women. Bearman and Amrhein (2014) explain six kinds of its behaviors: 1) Women believe themselves to be more limited and less capable than they are (Powerlessness); 2) Women think of themselves as objects seen from the outside (Objectification); 3) Women fail to recognize their own needs and desires (Loss of self); 4) Women neglect their feelings and thoughts, precisely when they do not match male standards (Invalidation); 5) Women use criticism as a form of gender role policing (Derogation); and 6) Women compete with other women which mean other women take the blame for the limited

resources and hardships imposed by sexism. Internalized sexism can lead to harmful effects such as body image issues, lack of self-confidence, negative competition among women, and a sense of powerlessness. It can also contribute to psychological distress, including symptoms like anxiety, depression, and physical issues, as well as adverse outcomes such as lowered academic goals and diminished job performance (Jha, 2024).

Cinematography

Bordwell and Thompson (2008) assert the importance of narrative and film elements as formal systems that simultaneously create a cohesive and captivating cinematic experience. A story is a series of sequential events that occur in a specific spatial and temporal context and are connected by cause and effect. The narrative is a crucial part of the cinematic form, as it organizes the material and directs the audience's interpretation and emotional response.

Furthermore, there are various other film elements, such as cinematography, editing, *mise-en-scène*, and their contributions to the narrative. For instance, *mise-en-scène* refers to the organization of visual components, such as background, lighting, costumes, and actor movement, within the frame. These components are essential for establishing the mood, emphasizing theme ideas, and expressing character dynamics (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). According to O'Brien (2015), *mise-en-scène* is more than just visual aesthetics; it is also about how these aspects convey deeper narrative and thematic meaning. Cinematography is another aspect of film elements that involves using the technical capabilities of camera manipulation to impact the viewer's perception. Techniques such as camera angles, movement, focus, and framing are crucial for guiding the audience's attention and enhancing the narrative (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). Editing affects the flow of time and place by arranging shots into a logical sequence and adjusting the pace and narrative flow. Techniques such as continuity editing and crosscutting ensure a smooth transition between scenes (Magliano & Zacks, 2011). Bordwell and Thompson (2008) argue that narrative and style must be integrated to develop meaning in a film because the viewer's experience is enhanced when visual and audio aspects harmonize with the plot.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method involving two main stages: data collection and data analysis. According to Creswell (2018), qualitative research can explore and understand social or human problems, whether individuals or groups. The data for this study are primary and secondary. Primary data is taken from the movie *A Star Is Born* (2018), directed by Bradley Cooper, specifically focusing on the character Ally (Lady Gaga). This data consists of key moments in the film, including Ally's actions, words, and interactions, which reflect internalized sexism. Secondary data includes journal articles, books, and other scholarly sources that support the analysis of internalized sexism and the film's narrative. The theoretical framework for this study includes the analysis of internalized sexist behavior by Manne (2018) and Bearman and Amrhein (2014), and the film's formal system by Bordwell and Thompson (2008).

The data collection method in this study was conducted in two parts. First, the researcher watched the film and paid attention closely to the pivotal scenes of the film based on the theories of Manne (2018), Bearman and Amrhein (2014), and Bordwell and Thompson (2008). Second, the researcher used the comprehension of the theories to select scenes that contribute to answering the objective of the study. This data was then analyzed to identify patterns highlighting the relationship between the film's visual and narrative structures and Ally's internalized sexism. Next, the researcher identified characters that were the focus of the study. This study focused on Ally's character, and it included Ally's behavior, interactions, and dialogues in the film. Then, the researcher found the three behaviors that indicated internalized sexism, such as objectification, invalidation, and derogation. The researcher also found three film styles, such as camera shots, lighting, and facial expressions, that contributed to the depiction of internalized sexism in Ally's character. By conducting a textual analysis that requires making assumptions about the possible meanings that a text may convey (McKee, 2003), this study explored the implications of the findings for understanding internalized sexism in films by providing insights into how this concept was represented and its impact on female characters in Hollywood narratives.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to Bearman and Amrhein (2014), there are six behaviors that indicate someone has internalized sexism. In *A Star Is Born* (2018), there are at least three prominent behaviors that indicate Ally has embodied internalized sexism, namely objectification, invalidation, and derogation.

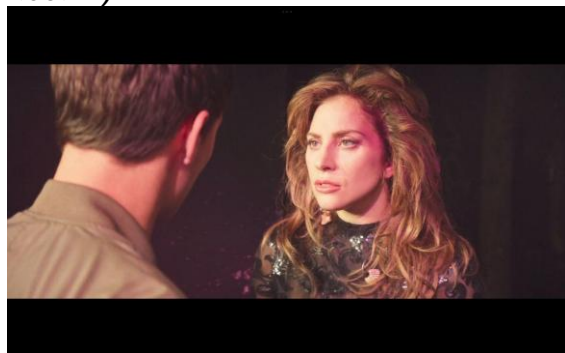
Findings

Objectification

The first behavior is objectification. Objectification refers to how women perceive themselves as objects (Bearman & Amrhein, 2014). Objectification theory can be defined as the idea that many women are sexually objectified and treated as objects to be valued for their use by others (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). In *A Star Is Born* (2018), Ally often experiences oppression as the men in the music industry objectify her. As a result, she often feels worthless, and her talents are not recognized. Bearman and Amrhein (2014) state that there are three ways that women are being objectified: validating objectification, derogating objectification, and social invisibility.

Figure 1

Ally disagrees with Rez about the idea of changing her appearance (Cooper, 2018, 1:09:27)

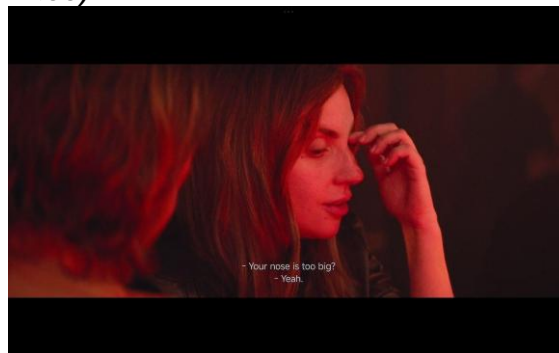


In Figure 1, Ally receives derogating objectification when her new manager, Rez Gravnor, criticizes her appearance, specifically her hair. Bearman and Amrhein (2014) state that derogating objectification is when women are criticized, insulted, or punished for their appearance. When Ally's image changes drastically once she begins her pop music career under her new management, she wears more revealing clothes and begins incorporating choreography into her performances. These changes are part of her new, marketable image, not her artistic choices. Rez confronts

Ally after performing in a particular scene because she does not want to perform with the dancers. Then, Rez continues to tell Ally what to do, and she needs to change her hair to blonde. In Figure 1, Ally is annoyed and disagrees with him, and she looks angry. Ally replies to Rez, "What's wrong with my hair?" then says, "I don't want to be fucking blonde. I am who I am". She firmly states her decision not to change her appearance based on other people's opinions. Figure 1 applies medium shots to convey the character's raw emotions and body language more clearly (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). The medium close-up allows viewers to see Ally's facial expression in detail; she looks angry, disappointed, and defiant. She is clearly upset by Rez's suggestion that she must change her appearance to make it more marketable. Also, the use of this shot technique helps the audience identify with Ally's frustration. It shows that she is beginning to assert herself, rejecting the pressure to conform to industry beauty standards. However, Ally's reaction that focuses only on her appearance (the color of her hair) may reveal her true feelings. She does not mention her singing ability at all and this implies that she internalizes the belief that her appearance matters more than her talent for succeeding. Even if a woman has extremely negative beliefs about her own body, in the absence of self-objectification, she may still have remarkably high self-esteem, because self-image and body image do not seem to be the same (Bearman & Amrhein, 2014). Ally's self-objectification already happens at the beginning of the film and shows another form of derogatory objectification.

Figure 2

Ally talks about her nose (Cooper, 2018, 17:33)



In Figure 2, earlier in the film, after watching Ally's performance in a cop bar, Ally and Jackson share stories with one another.

Ally receives praise from Jackson for her extraordinary performance. Initially, she admits to Jackson that she doesn't sing her own songs. This is because comments about her nose make her feel insecure and embarrassed. Ally begins to internalize objectification as a result of a long process of objectification in the social environment where she and other women are objectified (Bearman & Amrhein, 2014). As Ally says that "Almost everyone I meet in the music industry tells me my nose is too big, and I won't make it", this belief is ingrained in her that she must be beautiful to be a successful artist, which highlights that she internalizes societal beauty standards. Her body language and tone of voice while talking show that she is used to getting rejections and judgments, especially from professionals in the industry (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). Despite being recognized for her raw musical skill, she cannot separate her self-worth from her physical appeal. Her attention on her nose rather than her voice demonstrates that she defines herself through the lens of physical objectification, believing that her worth is determined by her looks rather than what she creates. This is what could be called derogating objectification, as evidenced by the comments about her body parts. Then, Ally is skeptical when Jackson compliments her nose and attempts to show her that he genuinely thinks she is attractive. She refers to him as "You're full of shit" which displays a natural defensiveness resulting from repeated past judgments and low self-esteem.

JACKSON

You're very lucky.

ALLY

Not really.

My nose hasn't made me lucky.

I could've had a hit song if it wasn't for my nose.

JACKSON

That's bullshit.

ALLY

No, it's not.

You go into these rooms, full of men, and they just stare at you—listening to your record, saying: "Oh, you sound great... but you don't look so great." (Cooper, 2018, 17:54)

The line "My nose hasn't made me lucky" reflects how Ally objectifies herself. Then, the line "I could've had a hit song if it wasn't for

my nose" shows that she blames her nose for the reason why she cannot obtain a successful career like she wanted. This situation is mainly caused by her negative thoughts about her body features, specifically her nose, which she thinks is a flaw. Her negative thoughts about her body can lead to psychological issues such as loss of self-esteem (Grogan, 2021). Loss of self-esteem can affect her effort to achieve her music career since high self-confidence is important for young women as it can help them accept their situations, develop self-awareness, think positively, increase independence, and achieve their goals (Ghufron & Risnawita, 2010).

Although Ally is a skilled singer and songwriter, she believes her appearance does not match beauty standards in the industry. This shows how unrealistic and strict beauty expectations can hurt women's confidence and overshadow their abilities, especially in male-dominated industries like music and film. This reflects internalized sexism where women adopt and repeat unrealistic and harmful beauty standards (Bearman & Amrhein, 2014).

Moreover, Figure 2 uses close-up shots to capture Ally's emotions. According to Bordwell and Thompson (2008), filmmakers use this close-up technique to emphasize facial expressions, movement details, and important objects. The low-key lighting technique creates a dramatic and intimate interaction between them (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008), with strong contrasts and deep shadows that evoke a dramatic atmosphere. This is the evidence that the relationship between Ally and Jackson is starting to escalate. The relationship is not merely between mentor and disciple, but a lover who falls in love with each other. This relationship will continue until Jackson abuses his power to control and diminish Ally. Ally continues to feel insecure about her appearance, specifically her nose, which appears in Figure 3, where Ally and Jackson converse while staring at Ally's Billboard.

Ally quickly becomes a successful star. Her manager promotes her heavily with a giant billboard with her picture. In Figure 3, Ally and Jackson look at the billboard while Jackson hugs her from behind. Medium-long shot technique is utilized to capture the characters (Jackson and Ally) from above the knees up. This technique is used to convey body language and the surrounding environment (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008).

Figure 3

Ally and Jack are staring at "Ally Billboard" and talking about Ally's nose (Cooper, 2018, 1:19:44)



The shot in Figure 3 captures their physical closeness and emotional intimacy, while also placing them within a broader setting. This demonstrates the growing emotional and physical bond between Jackson and Ally, especially after they become husband and wife. Until this moment, Ally still thinks her nose is big. This suggests that Ally has internalized negative views about her appearance, which shows how deeply industry criticism has affected her self-esteem. However, Jackson tries to make her laugh with a joke by saying, "I wish it was bigger up there." After he says that, both start laughing. This challenges the idea that Jackson, a man in a male-dominated field, might objectify women. However, Jackson does not devalue Ally's talent simply because of her appearance. Instead, Ally herself displays deep insecurities about her nose, demonstrating the extent to which Ally has internalized the objectifying norms of the industry. Jackson's reaction is surprisingly compassionate; rather than validating certain beauty standards, he dismisses them by complimenting Ally on her appearance for who she is. This shows that not all male characters act as agents of objectification; they can be important allies in the fight against sexism if they speak out when sexist behavior occurs (Cihangir et al., 2014).

To sum up, Ally is objectified by derogating objectification which focuses on Ally's physical appearance, such as her nose or hair. Ally's insecurities are rooted in herself, who has received a form of objectification that internalized in her. This makes Ally objectify herself, which is reflected in her insecurities about her nose. As a result, she feels that her talents are worthless if she does not meet society's beauty standards.

Invalidation

The second behavior is invalidation. When women neglect their feelings and thoughts, precisely when they do not match male standards, this is called invalidation (Bearman & Amrhein, 2014). In the film, the evidence of this invalidation is shown when Ally doubts herself and when Jackson wants to sing "Shallow" together with her.

Figure 4

Steve encourages Ally to sing on stage with Jackson (Cooper, 2018, 38:32)



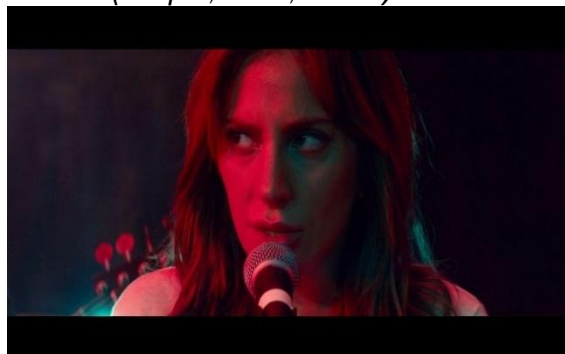
In Figure 4, Ally gets the chance to sing a duet with Jackson. Initially, she hesitates and declines his invitation. She is unsure whether she wants to sing on stage or not. This hesitation arises because she no longer prioritizes her needs and desires, weakening her ability to feel what she wants and needs and possibly even losing the opportunity to return (Bearman & Amrhein, 2014). Steve, her closest friend, is trying to encourage Ally to go on the stage. Steve's act aligns with Bearman and Amrhein's (2014) theory that says that encouraging women to trust their thoughts is important to addressing internalized sexism, such as invalidation. Other than Jackson, Steve is also one of the male characters who become Ally's allies.

The inner battle against Ally's own doubts is captured using the medium close-up technique in Figure 4. This technique allows audiences to frame Ally from the chest or shoulders up which captures her facial expressions and body movements that show confusion and vulnerability (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). The close-up shots of her face also allow the viewers to be compelled to empathize with her vulnerability. However, she finally convinces herself that she can do it and eventually she appears on stage with Jackson, singing "Shallow" together. Figure 4 implies that Ally wants to show her singing talent but is often hindered by insecurities about her talent and even her appearance.

These insecurities are caused by the men in the music industry around her who always underestimate her talent because they judge her solely based on her appearance.

Figure 5

Ally is nervous on stage while singing Shallow (Cooper, 2018, 39:57)



Additionally, Figure 5 uses a close-up shot, emphasizing Ally's facial expression, showing her hesitant to sing as she stood on stage (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). With close-up techniques, audiences can see Ally's hesitance in her face, full of anxiety and caution. This emotion can be seen when the music is played; she sings as if murmuring. There is a psychological tension, emphasizing her insecurity. Her reaction possibly happens because of the invalidation of her feelings and talent that she has been going through. Then, she always invalidates herself on any occasion due to the prior invalidation from society (Bearman & Amrhein, 2014).

Red lighting illuminates Ally's face to represent her emotional struggle between passion, danger, and pressure at the same time (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). However, in Figure 5, she is gradually reclaiming her voice and confidence by believing in herself and the talent that she has. She sings "Shallow" beautifully in front of the crowd and receives a big applause. This part signifies the moment Ally is finally recognized by other people for her amazing singing talent, so that she can be more confident in her talent and herself. This is another piece of evidence of encouraging women to encounter their internalized sexism.

In the researcher's view, this close-up is a crucial part of Figure 5 because it shows Ally's psychological battle, which is quiet and internal. This precise technique allows the audience to feel Ally's self-doubt. This suggests that the most powerful form of sexism in the narrative is not what is said to

Ally, but what she begins to believe about herself.

Invalidation occurs when women have their ideas, talents, or even their emotions dismissed by others or by themselves. When women are constantly told, directly or indirectly, that their voices are less valuable, they begin to internalize this belief (Bearman & Amrhein, 2014). When Ally overcomes her doubt and reclaims her voice are symbolic act of resistance. She sings on stage not for the audience, but for herself. Encouragement and validation play a vital role in challenging the belief that women must seek approval to find their own worth.

While it is good to see Ally has regained her confidence, unfortunately, she gets invalidated by her most loved one, Jackson. As someone close to Ally, Jackson always supports her unconditionally, but everything changes when he envies her success. This is shown before Ally and Jackson plan to go on stage at the Grammys. Jackson is drunk and in a fragile state when he approaches Ally and tells her that she does not deserve her success and implies that she is not being true to herself. When the situation escalates, Jackson diminishes Ally by comparing her talent with his father's. This comparison is not only inappropriate but also deeply demeaning, as it dismisses Ally's individuality and achievements.

JACKSON

Yeah, you couldn't be my dad if you fucking tried.

He had more talent in his fucking finger than you have in your whole fucking body. So, don't even fucking go there about that, all right?

(Cooper, 2018, 1:28:59)

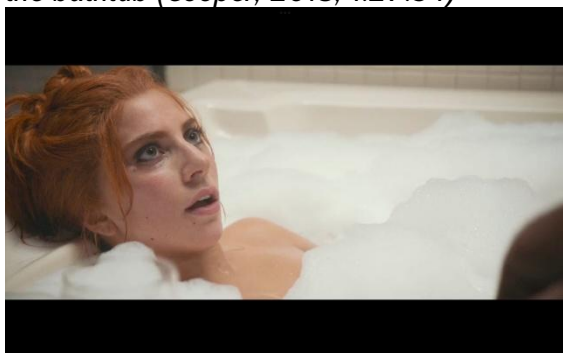
This judgment and talent comparison eventually invalidates the whole Ally's talent, making her feel as though her work is worthless unless Jackson approves it. Despite the harassment Jackson gives, Ally never expresses her resentment toward Jackson. Instead, she continues to trust him. This happens because of her emotional dependence on Jackson. In other words, she sees him as the only person who has truly known and supported her since the beginning of her career. This emotional contradiction reflects a pattern of internalized sexism, in which women often diminish their own needs and stay loyal to their partners

who hurt them emotionally and believe that love should involve sacrifice (Manne, 2018).

When Ally hears that Jackson compares her to his dad, she is silent and confused for a moment. She does not know how to react, and this moment is extremely painful for Ally. Instead of confronting him, she looks shaken and affected.

Figure 6

Ally is having a conversation with Jackson in the bathtub (Cooper, 2018, 1:27:34)



Ally is just staring at Jackson for a while. Self-silencing may refer to the tendency to withhold thoughts or feelings to avoid conflict in a relationship (Swim et al., 2010). Caring as a form of self-sacrifice refers to women's tendency to prioritize the needs and opinions of others over their own. This aligns with prescriptive gender roles that require women to care for others and relationships, as well as gender stereotypes of women being more communal or nurturing than men (Manne, 2018).

In Figure 6, to highlight and isolate Ally's overall expression, a close-up technique is used (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). Figure 6 captures Ally's emotional reaction in detail. With her eyes wide open and her mouth open, she shows how shocked she is by Jackson's hurtful insult. Based on her gestures and expressions, she shows that she is deeply hurt and takes his words personally, reflecting the invalidation of her success and identity that are belittled by someone close, causing her to doubt herself again. With this shooting technique, the audiences can also feel Ally's inner turmoil when she is belittled but helpless for a moment.

In summary, Jackson's invalidation of Ally's talent leads her to succumb to internalized sexism, causing her to rely more on his validation than on the positive response from her audience. Although Ally receives approval from the crowd, she struggles to overcome her internalized

sexism due to the deep-rooted impact of Jackson's consistent invalidation. This aligns with Salter's (2012) analysis, which argues that such acts of invalidation are a form of gender-based manipulation. Jackson's behavior toward Ally can be seen as a manifestation of gender relations that employ strategies of minimization, distrust, and denial.

Derogation

The last behavior is derogation. Derogation is an act of demeaning. It is usually used to belittle, denigrate, bad-mouth women or even other women (Uzoma Eburuaja et al., 2017). Moreover, derogation can be internalized and then used by women to criticize themselves and each other in an ongoing process of gender role conditioning (Gilbert et al., 2004, as cited in Bearman & Amrhein, 2014). Bearman and Amrhein (2014) also explain that there are two categories of derogatory terms that serve to regulate gender roles.

The first category is gender-specific insults, such as "bitch", a term used to refer to women who are vocal and outspoken. These characteristics challenge gender roles that require women to be silent or quiet, passive or submissive. Another category of derogatory terms used to condition women is insults related to mental health, for instance, they labeled them as "crazy", "irrational", or "obsessed". The portrayal of women as crazy and irrational often occurs because men's behavior is set as the standard for what is considered "normal" and "rational".

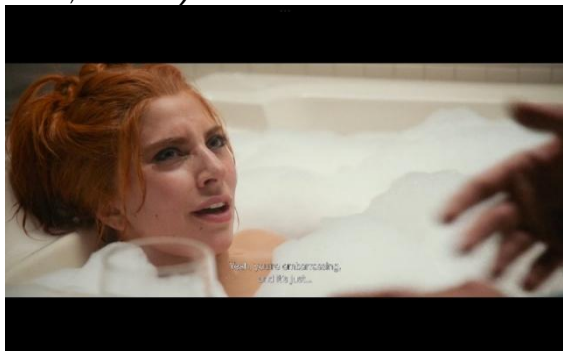
As a result, women who express their emotions are deemed "abnormal" or "irrational." This causes their experiences to be invalidated and even considered crazy, even though they are completely reasonable. The insult aims to push women back behind the borders, should they wander into territory outside the female role. Some scenes show that Ally received derogation from Jackson because he is envious of her success. Moreover, Ally's success has made Jackson furious and trying to diminish Ally by criticizing her work (Manne, 2018). One of the pieces of evidence of derogation is presented in Figure 7 when Jackson begins to criticize Ally's music, calling it "embarrassing" in a bathtub argument. This moment visually conveys the vulnerability and emotional confusion that Ally is facing.

In Figure 7, Jackson is still in a drunk condition and starts saying bad and rude words to Ally to demean her. He starts to call

Ally “embarrassing”. The director uses a close-up shot in Figure 7 that focuses on Ally's face while she is in the bathtub during a tense argument with Jackson (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008).

Figure 7

Jackson calls Ally embarrassing (Cooper, 2018, 1:27:59)



Audiences can see that her expression is confused, defensive, and hurt emphasized. Ally immediately denies the accusation that Jackson does by saying, "I'm not fucking embarrassing! You're embarrassing!". She does not remain silent and tries to interrupt the derogation. She even talks back to Jackson to defend herself. The key to stopping oppression is to say something or anything (Bearman & Amrhein, 2014). However, it does not stop there. In the next scene, when the situation escalates, Jackson starts saying inappropriate words to Ally to demean her.

In Figure 8, Jackson calls Ally “fucking ugly”. However, this time, she does not say something like “I am not ugly” to deny his claim, but rather, she is shocked and says, “I’m what?”. That is the evidence of the self-derogation of Ally; Jackson uses his criticism to derogate her. When she receives demeaning actions, it is possible that she justifies and accepts that she is ugly because, in the previous Figure 2, viewers can see Ally has always had difficulty accepting her appearance, especially her nose. This is caused by the objectifying actions that she has received from society. Therefore, when someone close to her starts saying negative words, this can be bad for her since she may try to regain her self-worth, and her confidence is still in a fragile state.

After feeling so disappointed and hurt by Jackson's words, Ally does not want to continue the fight. Instead, she tells Jackson to get out and leave her alone. She finds it difficult to accept the fact that the person she

has trusted the most is, in fact, derogating her. The medium close-up in Figure 8 focuses on Jackson's expression which emphasizes his psychological condition (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008), and from his expression, audiences can see a slightly frowned forehead, slightly raised eyebrows, and a downward gaze as if looking down on Ally, implying ongoing jealousy and anger.

Figure 8

Jackson diminishes Ally by calling her ugly (Cooper, 2018, 1:29:17)



The framing in Figure 8 also suggests a subtle power dynamic: although Jackson is sitting, he appears taller and more dominant, while Ally is positioned lower, visually implying submission. This visual arrangement aligns with the male gaze, which argues that classical cinema positions men as active subjects who look, and women as passive objects to be looked at (Mulvey, 2013). This suggests that the director intends to show that Jackson wants to reaffirm to Ally that she knows her "place" as her career is on the rise, showing Jackson's insecurity and basic need to dominate.

In summary, derogation is a significant aspect of Ally's internalized sexism. Derogation is instilled through the repetition of self-fulfilling derogatory words from Jackson. Ally feels that what Jackson has told her is true. Part of her still believes that her appearance doesn't meet society's beauty standards, and that belief is ingrained in her as a form of self-derogation.

Discussion

A Star Is Born (2018) illustrates that the issue of sexism is broader and more complex than superficially seen, encompassing not only obvious external manifestations but also internalized forms of sexism. Ally's personal struggle highlights this phenomenon; even as she begins to liberate herself from sexism, she eventually struggles to unlearn the

internalized patriarchal norms she has unconsciously adopted. The film's impact is to raise awareness of the overlooked internalized sexism, emphasizing that institutional oppression is not the only barrier to gender equality. Many women remain unaware of how deeply instilled patriarchal norms are disadvantaging them.

Furthermore, *A Star Is Born* (2018) is to refute the gender progressive narrative in Hollywood. The industry is known for being progressive for gender equality, but otherwise, there are widespread practices that perpetuate gender inequality across the industry (Milana, 2019). For instance, female characters are usually portrayed very differently from male characters in films. Male characters are usually portrayed broadly, while female characters are often portrayed narrowly and highly sexualized (O'Meara, 2017). It means that female characters in films are mostly seen through their sexual-related traits. Other traits, such as female's intelligence and instinct, are often overlooked. Using shots and *mise-en-scène*, this film shows that excellent cinematography can shape and alter viewers' perceptions. While this film is supposed to encourage young female artists to pursue their dreams in the music industry, the underlying gender issues may hinder the process. Instead of claiming Hollywood is a progressive one, people in the industry can try to provide a safer place for the younger generation, so that a star is born and feels safe to express oneself.

CONCLUSION

Sexism is often used as a tool by society to perpetuate the belief that women are inferior to men. When women are repeatedly exposed to sexist behavior, they may internalize these beliefs, which is known as internalized sexism. This study found that Ally has internalized sexism in *A Star Is Born* (2018) which manifested in three behaviors, namely objectification, invalidation, and derogation. By analyzing the film's cinematography, the researcher can gain a deeper understanding of the internalized sexism experienced by Ally by observing facial expressions, types of shots, lighting, and other film elements. This means the film, although it has seemingly supported the notion of equality, has actually perpetuated internalized sexism. Therefore, this study contributes to the field of gender studies by providing an understanding of

internalized sexism and its representation in popular media, especially through the character of Ally in *A Star Is Born* (2018). In a broader context, this research underlines the need for awareness and critical reflection on how internal oppression manifests in everyday life and media consumption.

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