

Gray Chicks: The Ethnographic Study on Self-Actualization Fulfillment of the Peer Group in Bandung, Central Java

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Abstract

This research investigates social phenomena of gray chicks in Bandung city and all of social and cultural aspects affecting them. Gray chick is a term for high school students who have double status. Besides studying at school actively, they also become young prostitutes providing service to their clients. Why do they fulfill their self-actualization needs within peer group by working as prostitutes? The phenomena of gray chicks are analyzed using qualitative method and *rapid ethnography*. Data were collected through participant observation, interview, and progressive contextual approach, and they were analyzed using causal-historical analytical method. The causal historical method was designed to find out a causal relationship between several variables. The results show that gray chick phenomena occurred because of the inadequate fulfillment of the self-actualization needs and decreased social control. The gray chicks were not always economic oriented, since they also engage in sexual activity with people they consider good and can fulfill their needs for love and attention they deem less from the environment.

Key words: prostitution, living needs, *rapid ethnography*, student, actualization

Prostitution has existed and developed in associated with human being development. Hull et al. (1977) says that prostitution has developed in Indonesia since the period of kingdoms in Java, Dutch colonialism, Japanese colonialism, and developed until post-independence era. At the time of kingdoms in Java, human trafficking in which women are incorporated into prostitution is related to feudal government system. This prostitution form is mainly caused by the king's absolute, noble and unlimited powers, allowing him to have many mistresses. It is also assumed that the more mistresses the king has are, the higher position he has among his people. Feudal system doesn't necessarily show a presence of the sexual industry commercialization as found in our modern society at present time, even though what they have done at the time can form a foundation for sexual industry development we see nowadays.

After the royal period, the prostitution emerges again with different form within Dutch colonialism era. In the Dutch colonialism era, the form of the prostitution is more organized and develops rapidly. Sexual commercialization continues to grow in Indonesia. In the course of the Japanese colonialism era (1941 – 1945), women who are made as hostess or slaves for sexual fulfillment of Japanese soldiers at the time are gathered and united in brothels. Not only women as prostitutes come to brothel, but also at Japanese colonialism era some women are cheated or forced harshly to have sexual intercourse with the Japanese soldiers (Hull et al., 1997: 13).

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Prostitution cannot be parted from somebody's lifestyle. Lifestyle can account for the people standpoint like social status and various old or new aspects in modern culture. Lifestyle represents an essential feature of the modern world. Lifestyle may develop from our own behavior or through objects or other people. Lifestyle is defined as action patterns or behavior that can distinguish one person from another. In daily life, people can show example of lifestyle without explaining meaning of lifestyle. Therefore, lifestyle can understand (explicate a thing but doesn't justify it) what people do, why they perform it, and what thing they do meaningful for his/her and other people (Chaney, 1996: 40).

Prostitution will consistently develop in line with the related era. Women who engage in prostitution are younger than before. In previous time, only women above 20 year involve in prostitution. In its current development, they may be under 16 year. A presence of prostitution is related to many factors, including economic condition, lifestyle, status, role, fulfillment of living needs, adverse effect of social interaction, family problems, and others.

This research investigates phenomena of gray chicks among high school students in associated with fulfillment of self-actualization needs in *peer group*. Besides studying at school actively, these female students also work as prostitutes or often known as gray chicks, a term coined from several studies (McCoy, McGuire, Curtis, and Spunt 2005:820), saying that term "gray chicks" refer to young women (schooling age), those who are identified as prostitutes, and those who are considered as naughty women with gaudy make-up or clothes or fleshly make-up. Gray chick is a term employed to identify women who work as prostitutes. Gray chicks show that prostitutes when offering service or negotiating with their clients wear high school uniform (white-gray). Some of these prostitutes wear gray uniform although they are not high school students but this is one of the ways they use to appeal their clients. Why do the high school students fulfill their self-actualization needs in peer group by working as prostitutes?

Economic Needs

Economic condition is often exploited as the primary reason of why a woman tries to earn money by working as prostitute. This reason may be *cliché*, but this reason is already used to earn money since along-along ago. To fulfill the living needs, a person will attempt to do anything, which can produce money. Results of Bachtiar study (2007) in Surabaya Dolly prostitute location show that economic factor becomes primary reason for women of becoming prostitute. Economic factor is positioned as primary reason since people attempt to fulfill staple needs first prior to another needs.

To those who live in large city such as Bandung, fulfillment of the economic needs in satisfactory manner may be difficult. This is caused by a presence of tight competition among many people in seeking livelihood. Many people want to live in metropolitan, since large city has pull and push factors.

As said by Schoorl in Alwi (1992), the pull factor in economic field includes larger opportunity of employment, better educational facilities, promising talent development, recreation, and wider opportunities for emancipation due to loose social control and customary control. The push factor may take the form of poverty experienced by rural people due to population growth rate much higher than agricultural land areas; young people find themselves so restricted in line with social control of their behavior; motivation for improving social status by taking advantage of the existing facilities in large cities like Bandung.

In addition, the city gives comfortableness result from recent advancement and development in communication technology and transportation. This is of high relevance since young people consistently want to cope with advancement in technology. Some

studies show that a city is much more interesting for young people and youth compared with for children and elders.

According to Altman in line with sexual commercialization, this is caused by great consequences of the economic development in the world. Women are exploited as potential and promising market commodity with respect to global economic growth rate. Regarding development of prostitution business, the needs for young women are much more numerous compared with older women. The difference is significant, namely young women commodity is much more larger (Altman, 2001: 109 -110).

Data from Spillane study demonstrate that based on the 2003 UNICEF data, 30% of the female prostitutes in Indonesia are under 18 year or show 12,000 children victims of the sexual commercial trading annually, thus totaling about 200,000 -300,000 children victims (bisnis Indonesia, 23 June 2004). Some of these children become informants in this research; their average age is 17 year and still schooling in senior high school.

As put forward by Spillane in Basis, one of the reasons propelling and driving the sexual industry is globalization. In several developing countries, tourism and international business travel result in prostitution growth in which prostitution is produced as commodity by exploiting sexual desires and libido exchanged for commodity (Piliang, 2004:116). Women are exploited exhaustively from hair to feet. Cosmetics, clothing, shoes, sandal, and bag become instrument of exploitation for women. Several analyses in studies of the prostitution indicate that prostitution will be consistently associated with money and sex in which both are closely related (Altman, 2001:112 -113).

Social Interaction and Lifestyle

Sarwono (2005: 192-194) in Lifestyle Ecstasy says that what the young people pursue is fulfillment of material and economic needs first through which they can reach status and respectability. There is a shift in orientation or values from seeking status to seeking money. In Sarwono's opinion, in previous time, people can obtain money due to status, but now they can acquire status due to money.

In associated with the gray chicks' life, for getting money, they accomplish their lifestyle by clubbing and fulfillment of the needs for luxurious goods and branded -items. At last, they can fulfill the self-actualization needs within which they are searching for status and respectability in social interaction. Although on overage the gray chicks are still young, but they have engaged in sexual intercourse. According to Santrock, the adolescents undergo very rapid cognitive development; they tend to know, feel and try something they regard "new" in their life. Adolescents are fond of facing and finding out challenges, and always want to get popular thing. For example, they use clothes worn by their idol artist (Santrock, 2002: 45 -46).

For example, a girl (A) comes from family with upper -middle class. She engages in gray chick not due to economic reasons, since her family is able to fulfill the economic needs. Engagement in gray chick is caused by her interaction with the friends in the peer group. She has become gray chick until now. She initially has negative opinion on a presence of the gray chicks, but now gray chick has become lifestyle for her. Negative opinion is coming from the informant when we ask her ideas on women working as prostitutes.

Lifestyle here is a habit, which they consider proper in certain community and certain period of time. We will be regarded as obsolete when we in a community and certain time don't follow the emerging lifestyle. According to Ibrahim, lifestyle becomes everything (before all else) and everything is lifestyle. Since lifestyle is everything for a

woman, then it is not problematic when she engages in gray chicks thereby she can fulfill certain lifestyle.

Misplacement of the lifestyle within the adolescents' minds makes them have opinion about the necessity of fulfilling and respecting the needs. Lifestyle is present in some aspects of life, including in fashion, clubbing habit, selection of hang out place, and selecting a partner she can date with and clients based on their vehicle. As the gray chicks belong to the adolescent group, they are greatly influenced by their friend in peer group. Santrock says that adolescents spend most of the times together with their friends in peer group. In this case, the strong effect comes from their friends in peer group (Santrock, 2002: 43-44).

There is a relation to meaning in fulfilling integrative need, namely in knowledge about a thing. Furnished with great curiosity, the adolescents are constantly searching for what they really need in the life. By becoming gray chicks, they seek information about how to get extra pocket money easily or how to actualize themselves in peer group. Having obtained adequate knowledge on gray chicks and influence from the peer group, they then try to engage in gray chicks.

In associated with their daily activities as prostitutes, they are of course highly familiar with porn magazines, blue films, porn sites and sexual intercourse with clients. They take an advantage of porn magazines, blue films, porn sites the as sources of knowledge for their job.

When faced with challenges or obstacles in the life of gray chicks, they make them as motivation to overcome these problems. As illustrated by W's experience, even though she has negative point of view on prostitutes, but because of the influence from friends in the peer group, she then tries to integrate herself into the gray chicks.

Individuals in community will undergo socialization process in order to live and behave properly. Becoming gray chick requires a process, which she passes through for certain time thereby she knows how to behave in social interaction. This process is known as socialization. Socialization corresponds to a cultural transmission process between generations, since without socialization, community cannot survive beyond one generation. One of important requirements to perform socialization is social interaction.

According to Zande (Soe'oad, 1999:30) in *Bunga Rampai Sosiologi Keluarga* (Medley of Family Sociology), term "socialization" is defined as a social interaction process through thinking, feeling and behaving thus through which individuals can take role actively in community. Similarly, according to Goslin (Soe'oad, 1999: 30) regarding socialization, he argues that socialization is a learning process, which somebody experiences to get knowledge, skills, values and norms with expectation that she/he can participate in community.

The C's socialization about her job as prostitutes makes her behavior appear similar to the mother's behavior. The interview transcripts show how she knew the habit of the mother who frequently went home in the late night or till morning, then her experience of seeing a man (not her father) go out from the mother's room and the mother job as servant in a bar. This is a set of socialization processes indirectly affecting C's behavior while involving in gray chicks. From C's development from childhood to adolescence periods (at present time), she has spent a great deal of times to recognize and learn behavior the mother did in daily life. Furthermore, C was educated and raised by her own mother; the father had left them since she was small.

Socialization process doesn't end this time. C gave socialization as the prostitute to her friends in the peer group. A friend to whom she socialized was M. They were close friends at high school in jalan kebon jati. C showed income resulting from her job as prostitute to W by demonstrating well-known branded-items where it was not logical to

buy them using money from the mother. Motivated by her desires to satisfy the economic needs, W successfully underwent socialization as the gray chick.

The socialization process grew broadly to all members of the peer group of W and A. They became gray chicks to achieve the same goal of self-actualization in peer group. Forms of socialization not only manifest as gray chick but also lifestyle.

Body Accessories; Medium of Class Communication

According to Suparlan, people must fulfill their social or secondary needs. These needs are satisfied by involving one or more persons. Examples of the secondary need are the need for communication with friends or other people; collective activities, and satisfaction of the material objects (Suparlan in *Dialog*, 1986:8). Shopping is one of the activities, which women most like to do, particularly the gray chicks. They engage in shopping activity in shopping centers such as Dago Plaza, Bandung Indah Plaza, Istana Padjajaran, Bandung Super Mall, Cihampelas Walk, King's (jalan Dalem Kaum), several distributor outlets, recycling product places in Tegalega.

Roach and Eicher (1979 in Barnard, 1996: 84-101) say that fashion as medium of communication has ten information, including individualistic expression, social values or social status, economic value, role, political symbol, magic-religious condition, social ritual, recreation and others.

Through fashion and clothing, a person delivers information about social value or social status (Barnard, 1996: 87). Community members frequently assess somebody's social status from the way in which he/she wears clothes; in fact the clothing doesn't necessarily reveal somebody's social status. Examples from the same book show that there is a difference in bridal apparels worn by the bride (girl or widow) in Western society. The girl bride wears bright and white clothes, symbolizing sacredness, while widow bride wears dark or black clothes symbolizing mourning (Barnard, 1996: 87). In Tokugawa (1600-1867) period, it is suggested that every people make their own sandals, representing their social class respectively (Roach and Eicher, 1979:13 in Barnard, 1996:88).

Status is sometimes equated with position. According to Soekanto (1970: 143 - 145), a position or status indicates position or place of somebody relative to other people (milieu, prestige, rights and obligations) in community. Position or status is divided into two categories, namely *Ascribed status*—the person's position in community regardless of the spiritual and competency differences. This status is obtained due to the birth without intentional efforts to achieve it; and *achieved status*—the person's position in community with intentional efforts to achieve it.

In line with the life of gray chicks, most of them want to have high position or status in community. Wearing branded clothes, bag, shoes, being fetched by luxury car, having much pocket money, other people will think that these gray chicks belong to high class in community. They can fulfill their living needs; show their existence to public thereby other community members will assess them as having high social status.

Through fashion, a person has a chance to mobilize to higher class or social status. Thus, these very young women choose gray chicks as medium to obtain *Achieved status*. By working as gray chicks, they can satisfy their living needs and upgrade their social status in peer group or community.

To the researcher, the gray chicks have double roles, as high school students and gray chicks. Role of the gray chicks in the school represents adolescents who experience life as student. As students, they should be furnished with proper education regarding discipline, behavior, and attitude with expectation that they become skilled and empowered people who can in the later days participate in national development. Their

roles as gray chicks is seeking clients and satisfy their sexual drives. However, both roles are different. The role as high school students represents open role. That is, other people know their role directly and overtly. Conversely, the role as gray chicks represents closed role. They intentionally conceal this role because the role as gray chicks is considered as having negative value in community.

To some people, fashion and clothing can demonstrate somebody's economic condition. Regarding a difference in economic and financial capabilities, then the fashion and apparels worn by people also vary accordingly. For example, a rubbish gatherer cannot buy a shirt of Rp. 500,000 using his money from working for one day, while a celebrity can purchase a shirt of the same price with more money by working for one day. However, it is of note that the fashion can also conceal information about people.

Two informants gave reasons why they engaged in gray chicks because of the family's economic condition. In this case, the fashion can show economic condition. Because of the desire of being regarded as member of the upper-middle class, they worked as gray chicks to get money. They can buy branded and expensive goods with money they receive from the clients.

Apparels worn by the gray chicks while seeking clients in jalan kebon jati are not so good. They merely wear schooling uniforms covered with jacket or sweater and behave normally. They look differently when seeking clients in entertainment places such as nightclub, karaoke, and shopping centers. Apparels they wear are more minimal and open, such as pant over the legs, short skirt over the legs, sleeveless shirt with gaudy and garish make up and appearance. When doing observation, the researcher observes clothing brands they wear. The price of these clothes is above Rp. 150,000. Shoes and some accessories worn on the head such as bandanna, hair tweezers, glasses, and hat are all branded items. We can interpret that the gray chicks try to express a desire of being respected in line with their higher status, class and role than before through fashion. A gray chick chooses expensive and trendy clothes.

Furthermore, the fashion is also used as media of recreation and esthetic. That is, when a person has sufficient times and money, he/she will use them for recreation, walking around the shopping center and purchasing some goods which may be unnecessary. In esthetic term, people can enjoy the beauty of the fashion and clothing. For example, since apparel is designed by famous designer and made of the branded and high-valued cloths, then this apparel can be enjoyed as a result of the brilliant idea. It is obviously observed that those very young women use gray chicks as instrument to mobilize to higher social status in community. By becoming gray chicks, they can satisfy their primary, secondary and integrative needs as well.

Relationship between group members represents a process of communicating with other members. Without communication, a group cannot survive. When each member doesn't know the needs of another member, the group will not survive. The communication may take the form of direct conversation or through mobile phone. Communication among gray chicks within a group will pave the way for their role as gray chicks. For example, before seeking clients, they will communicate each other due to difference in school places.

The gray chicks also establish communication with clients via mobile phone. This is beneficial to them, since through this communication they may not lose their clients. The communication will increase number of clients due to the opportunity of disseminating hand phone numbers to other clients.

Mass Media Massa; Guideline of Self-actualization

Mass media as guideline for the adolescents provide depiction on ideal adolescent figure representing contemporary adolescent category today. Members of peer group of the gray chicks competitively exhibit their fashion mode, style mode, facial make-up mode, and types of mobile phones with the purpose of winning the competition.

Producers of the consumer goods deliberately target the adolescents as potential market share for selling any products. This is because the adolescents (particularly female) are direct consumers or end users. They are great inducement for product selling, and potential consumers in the future. The adolescents are considered as essential agent in civilization process, since many new aspects can be incorporated easily into community through the youths. The youths play two main roles, namely as agent in building consumer culture, and as potential market for global product. Lifestyle and desires of the youths are closely related to socialization processes taking place since adolescence (Abdullah, 2006: 181-182).

Information will constantly develop in associated with the human being changes. For example, a development in clothing from one area will be disseminated quickly to other areas through information technology. When Paris becomes *trendsetter* in fashion, many people from entire areas in the world will follow and imitate any change in fashion mode and this is constantly transformed to other people. According to Piliang (2004: 125-126), this situation is called as *cultural cloning*. Cultural cloning has feature similar to biological cloning. Coca-cola, McDonalds, Levi's, film, quiz, television, fashion, music, and exclusive lifestyle are all produced globally with the same agent. They proliferate globally by bringing the same cultural genetic information. We may find some women with the same fashion mode, hairstyle, and skin color, at last leading to homoculture.

This applies to the gray chicks. They are consistently undergoing self-actualization in peer group and involving in competition among members of the peer group. This causes them to become potential consumers. They promptly get information about development in clothing from mass media, and this is supported by their role as gray chicks that can earn money easily. They are able to purchase goods and accessories which are necessary for self-actualization in peer group.

Conclusion

Becoming prostitute is one of the ways that anybody can pursue to fulfill the living needs. They can earn money easily and quickly by engaging in gray chicks. A woman may involve in activity of gray chicks due to several factors or reasons, including economic condition, adverse influence from milieu (as inducement), trafficking victim, and lifestyle.

The gray chicks provide a picture of the adolescent prostitutes (high school age) who give sexual service without reward or payment. Having sexual intercourse without reward is usually done with her boyfriend, friend or clients to whom gray chicks like to have sexual intercourse. Reward may take the form of money, clothing, mobile phone, jewelry, and accessories, depending on the desire of gray chicks.

The underlying factors of why a girl involves in activity of gray chick are including economic situation, negative effect from peer group, and lifestyle. Larger parts of the gray chicks come from young women of the low-income family. Indeed, some of the gray chicks are from upper-middle class. Lifestyle becomes the most dominant reason causing them to involve in gray chicks in this latter group.

After becoming and engaging in activity of gray chicks, they find it easily to satisfy their living needs, including the needs for lifestyle. The life comfortableness includes purchasing branded goods, higher social status, upgrading status in social

interaction, easy access to places they like to hang out by driving luxurious car, increased pocket money, always coping with any development, and the most important, fulfillment of self-actualization in their peer group.

In mind of a gray chick, the self-actualization is a situation in which people close to her say that she expediently becomes a member of a group (even though in fact she is already member of the group). Whether or not a young woman is qualifying for becoming a member of the group (peer group) will be determined by her environment. The criteria may vary in each group. For example, in the group of gray chicks, a young woman is considered to have qualified for becoming a member when she can adapt to situation of the group, for example, in associated with fashion and lifestyle (selection of hang out place, using four-wheel vehicle).

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