

Women's Personal Autonomy in Richard Yates's *Revolutionary Road*

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Abstrak

Studi ini menganalisis tentang konsep personal autonomy pada wanita dalam novel Richard Yates yang berjudul *Revolutionary Road*. *Revolutionary Road* memiliki latar woman movement pada era 1950-1960 sebagai tema karakter seorang wanita yang memperjuangkan Personal Autonomy sebagai prioritasnya. Dalam penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan teori Feminism and Personal Autonomy. Sementara itu, dalam Kajian ini menemukan sebuah konsep Personal autonomy pada karakter April Wheeler sebagai wanita yang menetap di wilayah pinggiran Amerika. April adalah seorang wanita yang memiliki perbedaan sudut pandang dan pendapat dalam budaya kehidupan; kemudian dia melakukan sebuah tindakan pemberontakan perbedaan tersebut sebagai wanita minoritas. Study ini menguatkan teori Betty Freidan dan Dworkin dalam hal penggambaran personal autonomy dan kemampuan perempuan dalam mencapai kesejahteraan dan berperan dalam pengambilan keputusan rumah tangga.

Kata Kunci : Wanita, Personal Autonomy, *Revolutionary Road* , Pinggiran Amerika

Abstract

This study analyzes the concept of personal autonomy in women in Richard Yates's novel, *Revolutionary Road*. *Revolutionary Road* has a background for the woman movement in the 1950-1960 era as the theme of a woman's character who fights for Personal Autonomy as her priority. In this study, the theoretical approach of Feminism and Personal Autonomy is used. Meanwhile, this study found a personal autonomy concept in April Wheeler's character as a woman who lives in America's suburbs. April is a woman who has different points of view and opinion in the culture of life. She carried out an act of rebellion against these differences as a minority woman. This study strengthens Betty Freidan and Dworkin's theory in describing women's autonomy and women's ability to achieve prosperity and play a role in household decision making.

Keyword(s): Woman, Personal Autonomy, *Revolutionary Road*, American suburban

INTRODUCTION

Personal Autonomy refers to the human capacity to choose. Showing self-management, but it does not require adopting rational standards about self-right and wrong conduct. Elaborating the conception of embedded Autonomy is a concept that exists in different ways from the source of other Autonomy that has historically developed (Dworkin, 1988). In the 1950s to 1960s, women had to be able to meet their needs with their abilities. In the past, femininity was defined as something that would enable women to have new perceptions about themselves and what they can do (Friedan, 1963). (Friedan, 1963) Betti's research, described the transition of homemakers to be energetic according to Gail Davidson's study at *Revolution Road*. Previous research has raised thoughts about what it would mean for a woman to pursue her dreams while living during the 1950s.

According to Shoemaker, women's autonomy can be classified into some dimensions, which are outside mobility, access to economic resources, involvement in household decisions and their association with fertility. The essential aspect in women's life is their ability to make decisions. Because this decisions might or might not affect their own lives, since women are considered to have considerably lower social status and Autonomy than men (Nizamuddin Khan1 and Usha Ram, 2009). It can be seen by the autonomous role and the role of women in a relationship. Take the purpose of women as wives in the 1960s for example, women's autonomous social image is fertility. It is a common discussion of relating personal Autonomy in women and fertility. This impacts in their freedom of decision-making regarding household matters and freedom of choices. However, women's role as women, as mothers, or as wives is related to women's

personal Autonomy. There are a lot of the previous study discuss personal Autonomy with different way.

First, women's personal Autonomy and fertility, the writer take some previous study for deep understanding of this study. The description of the relationship between women and fertility can be explained in an article by Ritesh Mistry, Osman Galal, Michael Lu, This article discuss about women's autonomy in low-income countries. Women's autonomy was particularly important for having a postnatal checkup because all three aspects of autonomy played a determining role and less important for delivery by a trained person because only financial autonomy was predictive. This study adds to the literature on the role of women's autonomy on pregnancy care because of its exclusive focus on rural India, the use of conceptual and analytic approaches that address individual and village level factors associated with prenatal, delivery and postnatal care. (Mistry, Galal, & Lu, 2009).

In 2014 Md. Mosfequr Rahman, Md. Golam Mostofa, Md. Aminul Hoque, Women's autonomy is a potentially important but less studied indicator of using contraception among women as well as ability to control their fertility. This study explores women's decisionmaking autonomy as a potential indicator of the use of contraception in Bangladesh. Results of this study indicate that household decision-making autonomy is significantly associated with current use of modern contraception, future intention to use contraception and discuss contraception with husband. This study argues in favor of increasing women's autonomy to increase contraception using the rate in this population. (Rahman, Mostofa, & Hoque, 2014)

Meanwhile, Lisa Lau on 2010 write an article about the levels of autonomy and self-definition of the 'new Indian woman'. The article explores how contemporary literature portrays changes in this set-up and how aspiring new Indian women at the turn of the century perform cultural balancing acts to defend ever greater levels of personal autonomy, while maintaining their place within their families. (Lau, 2010)

The research gap occurs in this literary work when none of the academic studies and research has yet questioned feminism, woman, and personal Autonomy. It seems reasonable to analyze those topics when books like *Practice of Autonomy*, *Autonomy, Gender, Politics*, and *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy* exist. Feminists like Betty Freidan also discuss a bit about Autonomy in her book *The Feminist Mystic*. That is why it is an interesting topic to be used as an Article. This study aims to give understanding to the readers about how the women's personal Autonomy in American suburban and give a clear picture of the impact of personal autonomy struggles on women being reflected in *Revolutionary Road*.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Personal autonomy in feminism

Feminism comes from the word femme or woman, but in Feminist Theory, Feminism is a move with the aim to terminate the sexist domination. In other words, People had their doubt on feminism, especially on the topic of gender equality and using universal liberalism principle in order for women achieve equality with men. Society had always been having this belief, although it is by no means proven at all, that women has lower both intellectual and physical status than men right from the beginning. As a result, society often discriminates against women in public places. In the eye of liberal feminists, this treatment is unfair. Because they believe that women always has the same chance as men in public places career-wise (Tong, 2014). Wanted to build a convincing argument that, the rue aim for liberal feminism is creating "a just and compassionate society where freedom is developing." He also stated that, equality for women can only be achieved in that kind of society. In this study, the second wave will only be focused on how women can be equal to men. The goals of the second wave are to claim women's freedoms and equality right (Tong, 2014). On the contrary, femininity should be understood as a way of being independent and free from any external influence. However, some anti-androgynists, using their "nature theory" stated that even though the society has attached particular qualities or values, regardless of the validity, in women, some of them are not quite pleased with that. In fact, some of them build an original qualities or values on their own. Full personal freedom for a woman is depending on their own ability to leave the stereotype stigma build by the society and pursue their own true self (Tong, 2014).

The second wave began in the 1960s and continued onto the 1990s and developed in the context of the anti-war movement, civil rights and self-awareness developed from various minority groups throughout the world. New Karis was there, and the sound of the second wave was getting more radical. The main issues in the second waves offeminism are sexuality and reproductive rights. The energy of movement focused on the ratification amendment of Equal Rights to the Constitution. In second- wave o feminism there are a lot of women's movement brunch but, will focused on personal autonomy.

Personal Autonomy refers to the ability to choose among limited options, not necessarily the ability to rationally and abstractly measure alternative options and choose accordingly (Walsh, 2017). The term "autonomy" is mostly a philosophical art term, but it includes a series of ideas that are familiar to ordinary people, ideas such as; "right myself, "do it" my way, "defend" what I believe in, "think" of myself, "and, in egalitarian-gender reformulation, become" a person. "

(Friedman, 2003) The concept of Autonomy requires a ground or parameter that give the notion of self-directed choice and action plausibility, and coherent choices must flow from oneself to be considered as autonomous (John Christman and Joel Anderson, 2005). However, they may come from various considerations, including emotional, relational, or intuitive accounts. The greatest influence on autonomy development as a self-determination need have such predictors as goals in life, challenge, self-efficacy, self-acceptance, self-assurance, locus of control-life, locus of control-Self. Predictors that positively affect autonomy as a component of psychological well-being are: self-acceptance, acceptance of aggression, self-confidence, creativity, control, self-reflection (Serdiuk, Danyliuk, & Chaika, 2010).

Autonomous choices and actions, in this case, reflect themselves in two ways of the senses. First, part of it caused by one's reflection or attention, consideration, and desires that have become his trademark. This attention does not need to happen carefully before choices or actions occur. This might happen for a very long time. Autonomous actions are actions that reflect the person herself. "Whom a person" can consist of perspective, view, or point of view, that is, his deeper desires, concerns, values, and commitment. A person can be identified by who he is care or benefits. Second, "whom a person" can consist of and the characteristics found in various classes of people that can be identified type. Thus, a person's identity can include, for example, of a particular gender, race, or ethnicity. This type of humankind is not necessarily for the attitude or concern of someone identified in these ways. Based on the kind of personal category used to describe it or by the two together. The identity of a specific person can be formed by his point of view, more profound beliefs, desires, values, etc. (Friedman, 2003)

The characteristic of Woman's personal autonomy, provide some characters. First is good communication with her circle. This communication included family and society. She can express her means with communication. Second is Woman's control. In this case circle of woman's control not only body control, but there is emotional control. Not every woman has good emotion control. Because emotion control will affect his own emotions and disappointment. The hallmark of women's personal autonomy has a bearing on women's dreams. They have goals or objectives in achieving personal autonomy that they strive (Nizamuddin Khan I and Usha Ram, 2009).

The dreams of women's personal autonomy in American Suburban. In fact, the proportion of American women working outside the home increased very little, indeed, while the percentage of Americans women in the profession are declining. Of almost half the nation's professional strength in 1930, women had dropped to

only 35 percent in 1960. That phenomenon is a significant increase in the number of educated women choosing to become housewives only. (Friedan, 1963) The majority of women have a beautiful picture of being a perfect housewife in an American suburb. Such as serving a husband well by kissing when they are going to work, tidying up the house, changing the mattress cover every three days, changing the children's clothes after school, cooking the husband's favorite food, and greets him at the door when he gets home from work. Houses were well-kept, with a cleaning woman two days a week, but the wife did the cooking and the other housework. Their only dream was to be perfect wives and mothers, their highest ambition to have a child and a beautiful house, their single fight to get and keep their husbands. They do not think about the non-feminine problems of the world outside the home; they want men to provide opportunities for women to contribute to important decisions in the household. Meanwhile, they glorified their role as women and wrote proudly in the census column: "Work: housewives." (Friedan, 1963)

ANALYSIS

April's Personal Autonomy by expressing her means, initially April Wheeler is like other women who have to work at home without having the right to make decisions in the household. On the one hand she is silent beyond her gender place, on the other hand challenges the hierarchies that construct where that gender leads to repeated accusations of mental instability. Every possibility of negotiating his gender identity, even if Butler calls gender identity a "discursively defended illusion". But, she try to establishing excellent communication within the household is one of the keys to strengthening partners. Sitting side by side talking about the success of a child, acquaintances of children, politics, or even less useful conversations can strengthen relationships. No one argues whether women are inferior or higher than men (Friedan, 1963). April is good at starting plays and finding the right communication topic to achieve what she wants to get. April used Frank's birthday as an intermediary to deliver the plan she wanted to do with her family. Wear simple clothes with tangled aprons that are used all the time. A face that looks dull without makeup, different from the usual situation, that night was her husband's birthday. A surprising situation for Frank when April was preparing to greet her husband who came after working all day. Different appearance and behavior in April showed that night that could make Frank surprised to see her attitude. Can be proven by quoting April tried to create a romantic atmosphere to greet him the situation, the description in this story:

"I missed you all day and I'm sorry for everything, and I love you. The rest can wait. Now come on inside. (ricard yates, n.d., p. 109)

Using all means so that the achievement she wants is granted. Autonomous actions are actions that reflect who a person is. "Whom a person" can consist of perspective, view, or point of view, that is, her deeper desires, desires, concerns, values, and commitment.(Friedman, 2003). April is still seducing her husband. That night April looks so romantic that her husband feels the difference. April did a wonderful service to get the perfect moment to talk to her husband. A snippet of sentence "*he'd never seen before*" which shows evidence that April never did anything sweet during her marriage. A graceful appearance and good attitude to receive a husband back after work. April's strange behavior with the tenderness she gave through the lip kiss she gave to her husband and her apology made the atmosphere worse after the theater performance. The next surprise looked like a harmonious family with his two children in celebration of Frank's birthday.

"..... Come sit beside me and let's talk a minute first, all right? Look what I've got.""(Richard Yates, n.d., p. 112)

April has been at one point exhausted from giving her husband an explanation. This situation made April speak honestly about her feelings. In this position, April feels that she doesn't get a fair share of her life, at least the personal Autonomy that this family creates. April questions this environment's weirdness, which lives without any sense of rebellion with cultural ties passed down from generation to generation. The life of women in this era indirectly erases self-love in women. Women can only focus on husband and family. The condition of her house, which usually looks gloomy, is now experiencing happiness because Frank has granted his wife's request to move to Paris immediately. Their conversation can prove this statement after arguing for a long time.

"Darling? We are going to do it, aren't we? I mean, it hasn't just been a lot of talk or anything, has it?" April said,(Richard Yates, n.d., p. 122)

And Frank said "No"

A great communication achievement, April did it perfectly. The head approved his desire to move to Paris with his small family of the family. Everything went according to plans and expectations, April. It can be concluded that a husband's policy can support women's personal autonomy. A wish or opinion should not only be kept and carried out rebellion without good communication. This study concludes, there is a dispensation for every decision in the household; it's just how we convey this to the partner. But, everything that is covered up will not produce something good, including one's own household problems.

April's ability to emotional control,
Exchanging pleasantries with his wife, hoping that this topic could become an interesting topic for him to tell about his work development. Frank and April never thought that Frank would be offered chance to develop her husbands' careers.

".....suddenly I became his favorite man, intelligent young man, "

April was surprised by this information. He thought this job offer would be a plan destroyer. She did not provide much response to this information.

".....And it turns out he has this great idea; Pollock, that's him. He wants me to do a series of crazy things. Talk about inventory Control, Talk about Sales Analysis, Talk about Cost Accounting, and Talk about Salary - "Frank said,

April cut frank's story that morning and questioned her husband's attitude who could not be firm with his decision at the start.

"April said; why don't you tell him anyway? Why not tell the whole pack of them? What can they do?"

Frank said that it was hardly a question of their 'doing' anything; it would just be—you know, a little awkward, that was all.

It can be inferred that perhaps Frank missed the masculinity of Independence more than his wife. Frank did not dare to argue and made the stern decision of moving to Paris, which might leave him in a more trapped character than April. Rike (2012) said that many men and women who were supposed to 'revive' their American dream equally felt a great deal of dissatisfaction in 1950s (Rikke & Øisang, 2012, p. 15). The purpose of Rike's discussion is that both men and women have their own dreams that needs to realize. Truth is, April was hoping that her husband would tell the truth about their plans to move to Europe and her husband could refuse the offer from his office and follow her dream. However, what frank did was stalling time without giving her a definite answer. April followed the timeline without being able to object at all because all decisions were in the hands of her husband.

For the last April's ability emotional control, when April was disappointed with her husband. It's not the first time. Frank has made a lot of mistakes. Like being dishonest by April about his choice to take the job and will stay. and gave false hopes of moving to Paris. But, April's looks fine despite having a big fight yesterday with her husband. A gloomy morning can turn April with warmth. Improving the morning mood by

preparing the needs of your husband in the morning is the best way. In *Autonomy*, manipulation in categories is allowed (Dworkin & Dworkin, 2015). She looks elegant in the morning with her daily activities. April put on pregnancy clothes as if trying to win over Frank and shyly smiled while greeting her husband. Personal autonomy has been defined as the capacity to manipulate one's environment through control over resources and information for personal interests "Good morning," he said, this is what happens when there's nothing more to say, whether in error or forgiveness. Life must go on. Small talk can slowly lift an awkward atmosphere.

"This must be - a pleasant morning, isn't it?" she says.

Sweet Greeting from April, they sat together. Whispering manners over the passing of Buttered toast. The atmosphere of breakfast was full of love, Frank felt like the first time to dinner with a girl. When the idea of actually putting food in his mouth and chewing it, right there in front of him, seemed like a tough thing to do, and what saved him now was the same thing that had kept him then, the surprising discovery that he was hungry uncontrollably. Frank said this breakfast was really nice. And he felt cry, but he managed to hold it back.

"Thank you," April's respond "I'm glad; I enjoyed it too..." (Richard Yates, n.d., p. 314)

Without saying anything, Looking at her as they moved toward the door. He need to make sure this problem clear without any reason "You don't really hate me or anything?" Her eyes looked severe and sincere; April felt very relieved the moment her husband asked that question as if that is the question that she can answer confidently. She shook her head. "No, of course, I don't." April's face, as it came up close. Her betray face shown as an instant surprise, however she quickly controlled her facial expression. She half-closed her eyes and turn the mutually willing kiss into an awkward one.

April's ability to body control, the role of women after marriage not only becomes a wife but increases with the purpose of a mother. As a 'fertile' woman, a prospective as mother or wife.

"..... I'm pregnant, that's all....."
(Richard Yates, nd, p. 220)

This is the second bad news for April. However, the difference in April's behaviour began to be saw because she began to express how dissatisfied her feelings about pregnancy. She told the whole story to her husband. Frank's respond differently to April's needs. April's stupidity fell into the trap of Frank who wanted to buy time to get an excuse for cancelling his agreement

to move to Paris. Consideration of getting pregnant with departure to Paris is not possible because of the additional cost of staying there. And April wants to stop culture perception the idea that a woman's most important job was to bear and rear children was hardly a new one, but it took on a new significance in the postwar era. First, it placed the baby boomers squarely at the center of the suburban universe. The particular constraints that suburban women face are often discussed in tandem with a set of assumptions developed from the socioeconomic conditions of the suburbs. Suburban women are much more likely to be married than are central city women, and their class structure, relatively higher levels of education, and related homeownership characteristics are believed to enhance their employment stability and productivity, and to limit labor union activity. From this it is further extrapolated that suburban women regard their husbands as the "bread winner," choosing to prioritize their domestic roles and viewing themselves as secondary wage earners. The implication is that suburban women have minimal career aspirations and that they are willing to forego well-paid jobs in favor of locally available but less well paid positions that allow them to attend to their domestic obligations.

Second, it generated a great deal of dissatisfaction among women who yearned for a more fulfilling life. This lie causes April to feel threatened, and she wants to get even. This was the last of her action. Furthermore, abortion was her choice. April had the right to control her body. People cannot judge the decision she had chosen. This is the impact of her disappointment on her husband for not being able to live up to her expectations. April decided to choose abortion. The action chosen by April was the decision of personal Autonomy, she felt that she had the right to her body. The essence of women in personal Autonomy is to have freedom of choice, fate and body. Patterns of life management are also included in the autonomy section. (Friedman, 2003) This statement does not depend on moral Autonomy, because moral Autonomy assesses the good and bad decisions taken. April's decision to abort the unwanted third baby at home is doubtlessly a suicide attempt. Her letter to Frank, in which she asks him not to blame himself, is both a suicide note and her attempt to reclaim her sense of dignity. April realizes that their idea of themselves as special people (or their desire to be such) is unfounded and that she had voluntarily spent her whole life supporting the illusions of a man adamant in avoiding reality. She accepts the blame for having lied to herself all these years and decides to finally do something she believes in, even if the only thing left for her to do is take her own life. By committing suicide she actually constitutes her world and paradoxically takes charge of her own life by ending it of her own volition. Because death is the absolute Master for the fractured man, suicide is, according to Lacan, a form of self-punishing neurosis with hysterical symptoms in a

modern man who suffers in social hell because he never measures up to the fraternity (Ljubica Matek, 2011)

The impact of April's personal autonomy, a doubt from society. Doubt by society is one of the impacts of Wheelers. April's decision to persuade her husband was her first action. She needed the biggest support, which was from her husband to accept the idea. April realized what she was expressing was an unrealistic plan. These people follow traditional culture to be safe from society's judgments. Every action will have an impact. April and Frank agreed on the plan to move to Europe in September or October. The speed of decision making provides a social responsibility to their actions. They mainly commented on "what would Frank do while living in Paris?"

"I mean to say, assuming there is a true vocation lurking in wait for you, and don't you think you'd be just as apt to discover it here as there? I mean, isn't that possible?"(Richard Yates, n.d., p. 179)

However, the issues resulted in him doubting the choice he agreed on. He must stand proud to achieve manliness. Moreno stated that Frank right now is in confusion. He did not know whether to choose to back being an intellect, adventurous, and masculine man or continuing the not so clear role of male suburban father and husband. Frank's mindset that followed the cultural tradition, made him unable to open his mind that every individual has Autonomy in determining the choice one of which is personal Autonomy. Personal Autonomy will be attached to moral Autonomy, and this should be understood that the responsibilities that should be used as the use of the idea of Autonomy(Dworkin & Dworkin, 2015)

CONCLUSION

Based on analysis, the result will be concluded in this part, Personal Autonomy is the point in which played a crucial part in their movement. The era of 1950s-1960s is the beginning of second-wave to spread out. Yates gives an illustration of the condition of women in this era through his writing. In addition, the oppression of a woman that happened is not only physically but also mentally. A husband is a man who can suppress a woman's mental depth. Married women have to live with their option being limited. Women's activity is only to serve their husband, children, and house. Meanwhile, the fact stands that they also want to feel freedom. Freedom to voice their opinions in decision-making regarding their household. Freedom to

have careers and social needs as a way of entertaining themselves not to get bored of staying at home with monotonous activities.

Secondly, every action has impact. Personal Autonomy in a movement also has an impact. Resulting impact is social a doubt. Abortion is one of the acts of personal Autonomy, because April has a body and he has the right to manage her own body, although Regret can be seen after completing the action. Following cultural rules or following personal desires. To conclude, Yates's novel about life in American suburbia has a more universal meaning: it is most of all a story about the interior life, about the (failed) process of growing up and adapting to the adult world. The writer suggests that by the very fact of our being born into this world, which is the other, we become the Other ourselves. Any struggle to be different from the Other is in essence a futile one, the Wheelers' being a case in point.

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