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Gender representation portrayed through emotion characters in “Inside Out”

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Abstract

The term gender has become social and cultural construction in the society. However, this gender construction is still unrecognized by children because they are passive in sexual orientation. This study aims to prove that the Disney Pixar’s film, *Inside Out*, happens to construct gender representation in the five emotion character figures towards children as the main audience of this film. This study uses qualitative method, specifically on the textual research as the method of study. The conclusion from this research is that not only the film supports the traditional belief between gender roles, but also makes some challenge of gender role on specific characters.

Keywords: Animated film, Representation, Feminism, Masculinity, Emotion character.

Representación de género retratada a través de personajes de emoción en "Inside Out"

Resumen

El término género se ha convertido en una construcción social y cultural en la sociedad. Sin embargo, esta construcción de género todavía no es reconocida por los niños porque son pasivos en orientación sexual. Este estudio tiene como objetivo demostrar que la película de Disney Pixar, *Inside Out*, construye una representación de género en las cinco figuras de personajes de emoción hacia los niños como la audiencia principal de esta película. Este estudio utiliza un método cualitativo, específicamente en la investigación textual como método de estudio. La conclusión de esta investigación es que no solo la película apoya la creencia tradicional entre los roles de género, sino que también plantea un desafío al rol de género en personajes específicos.

Palabras clave: Película de animación, Representación, Feminismo, Masculinidad, Emoción.

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender has become the part of our socio-culture life. The term gender refers to the social process that divided people and social practice in the name of *social identities* (BEASLEY 2005, 11). Gender itself constructed in individual, interactional, and structural that creates an environment that usually tends to be on men side (BLACKSTONE 2003, 335-338). Gender has two separated focuses, which are feminist trait and masculine trait. The feminist trait is associated with women, in which it was a critical theory that questioning the relation in social arrangements within men (the center) and women (the periphery) in society. On the other hand, the masculine trait is associated with men, in which focuses on studies of masculinity politics (FITRIANI ET AL. 2019).

The global feminist movement actually happens because women all around the world face the similar problem. They lack of trust, and they are being bordered from their social activity. By doing this notion, women actually want to show that they are also capable to make a decision and to show their ability to the society. On the other hand, the traditional masculine is a term when the men appear to be aggressive, powerful, leadership and strong (GAUNTLET 2002, 43). With this description, men are expected to be the one who dominated

the society. In the United States, the domination of male can be seen from the presidential election (JAFARI ET AL, 2017).

The different role of feminism and masculinity in society also has its impact on children's perspective about the different role of each gender. Children are the human stage where they still have physical and mental immaturity, and need special guard and care, including legal protection until they reach the age of 18 years-old Children start to learn about everything that happened to them by observable stage of adapting to the environment. According to Martin, children usually learn about gender differentiation through school and media such as animated film.

One of the famous animated films that shows the representation of gender, especially feminism is *Inside Out*, produced by Disney Pixar. *Inside Out* is officially released on 19 June 2015. Its genre is animation, adventure, comedy, drama, family, and fantasy. The story of this film is about how the five main emotions (which are joy, sadness, anger, disgust, and fear) inside Riley, an 11-years-old girl, control her behavior from the 'panel control' in the brain (BAKER 2018). This film directed by Pete Docter and Ronnie Del Carmen, and both of them also the original scriptwriters of this film. *Inside Out* has already won 1 Oscar in 2016 as the winner of Animated Feature, also the other 91 wins and 95 nominations in many awards on 2015 until 2016. The gender role in this film not follows the usual pattern of traditional gender role exist in the other animated film. Furthermore,

Inside Out creates a question for the researcher about how does the gender roles are represented in the five emotion character figures (PROYER ET AL. 2009).

Based on the background above, the purpose of this study is to analyze the gender stereotype of the five emotion characters based on the gender representation on children and animated film. The researcher expects that this study will give the readers new understanding and knowledge about gender construction by animated film towards the children as the main audience. In reading this study, it is important to understand the term gender representation on society, especially on children. The understanding will help the readers to know how the cartoon film constructs gender differentiation in children.

The first article used for the reference of this study is conducted by Falter and Jones. It is analyzes social-emotional problems and competencies in childhood and adolescence, focusing on issues related to the inequality and stressed, and vulnerable context. The study covered about Jones (the author) doing the research about brain science. She also analyzed how this film prevails on emotions, feelings, and behavior. Besides, this film provided the viewer teachable moments for educators and parents. Jones focused on the psychological value in the film that can be implied as the new strategies for parents to acknowledge their children development. There were several steps that can help the parents and educators in

having conversation with the children. By knowing the answer from the children, the parents and educators can give them guidelines to be a good person. This study can help the researcher to understand how the dominant emotion can affect the behavior of someone. This is because this research was mainly focus on the emotion characters. However, the difference of Jones' study with this study lies in the focus. This study would focus more on the relation between the character's genders and their behavior (FALTER AND JONES 2018).

The second study was conducted on November 2016 by ZEMOJTEL ET. AL. This study focuses on how this film helps the children to deal with their own feeling. All of the main emotions (Joy, Sadness, Anger, Disgust and Fear) were real and we could not keep them aside. This film tried to make the viewer's think about the moment where Joy and Sadness are missing in their lives. It would make one's life turns chaotic. (MARCARIAN DAN WILKINSON 2016). The result of this study emphasized that it is better for children to express their feeling in order to be acknowledged and get help from people around them. It would be good for the children's mental. This study showed that every emotion is important for anyone. The researcher got some understanding about the role of emotion from the previous research. In the other hand, different with previous research, in this study the researcher tends to find out the role of every emotion characters in facing Riley's problem. The researcher wants to find out what kind of reactions every character will show in order to solve the problem.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative research as the method of the study. This research states the purpose and research question in general and broad, then collects the data based on words from a small number of individuals. This study uses textual research, specifically in critical approach.

The primary data source will be from the original DVD of film *Inside Out*. The secondary data will use several books and journal references that explain about gender and children. The main theory of gender is taken from Beasley's book of *Gender & Sexuality*, supported with the theory of gender in film from Gauntlet's book *Media, Gender and Identity*. Meanwhile, for children understanding of gender, the theory is taken from Martin's book entitled *Children at Play* and some of supporting journals about children, media and gender (VELOSO 2018).

The researcher only focuses on the film. For the first time, the researcher watched the whole film to search the scenes that represent gender role stereotype. After watching the film, the researcher collects thirty-six scenes that show the emotion characters' behavior (Joy, Sadness, Disgust, Anger, Fear) in the film. The researcher also collects the scenes that are possible to create gender stereotype towards the children as the main audiences. The last step of the data collection is classifying the characters' role in Riley's specific behaviors into

feminine traits and masculine traits in gender role theory. It will be analyzed further in the chapter of analysis.

The techniques of data analysis are using narrative and non-narrative analysis from film studies, and the theories of gender representation in children and film to interpret the film itself. The analysis conducted in order to examine how the emotion characters support the representation of gender role in this film. This study also uses narrative analysis to observe the elements of narrative film, such as plot, characters (functions, coherence, depth, grouping, types, development), diegetic and non-diegetic elements, narrative patterns of time, narrative space, and narrative perspectives (CORRIGAN AND WHITE 2012, 222-240).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



Figure 1: Joy is the first emotion character in Riley’s brain. (00:02:26)

Joy has an appearance like a teenager girl. She has pixie haircut with bangs, glowing skin color, tall, slim, dress in a sleeveless dress, and bare feet. The pixie haircut on Joy symbolizes the *androgyny*, where someone can be seen as either boyish or girlish or both, and it against the gender description (DRUSHEL AND PETERS 2017, 207). In other words, the character of Joy tries to against the gender differentiation; that every gender can do any activities without having a border because of their gender. Then, the glowing skin color, tall and slim body are Joy appearances. This kind of appearance symbolizes the *beauty myth*. According to Wolf, the understanding about a beautiful woman is young, has a good skin (e.g. bright and smooth), and has a good body proportion from the diet, everything that can fulfill the attractive woman definition from men's perspective (WOLF 2002, 11-13).

It means this film visualizes Joy as the ideal woman character. Her fashion, sleeveless dress, describes more about her personality. The design of the dress is feminine, youthful and ageless. In America, it called mini-dress. The mini-dress' cut makes the applier comfortable because it allows a lose fit and is all about mobility, exposure, casual ease and understated style (SUWITO 2014). All the descriptions of Joy's appearance indicate that she has a bright and free spirit. Not only has a bubbly personality, but this film also describes Joy as a smart and confident individual.

Joy is the first emotion that operates the *headquarters*.

Headquarters is the room in Riley's brain that used by the emotions to control Riley's behavior. On her appearance, Joy creates the very first memory of Riley in the headquarters. The memory of the first time Riley opens her eyes to see her parents. This first memory automatically activates the whole headquarters. Joy also controls Riley's reaction when she sees her parents, which is laughing in happiness. Her appearance as the first emotion in Riley's brain indicates that this film tries to construct the audience understanding of newborn baby's feeling. According to this film, a newborn baby should have a joyful feeling as the basic emotion.



Figure 2: Not long after Riley laughs, she suddenly cries, surprising everyone (00:02:40)

Not long after Riley's first laugh, she suddenly cries, surprising everyone including Joy. It turns out that the sudden mood-change of Riley is something done by the new emotion, Sadness.



Figure 3: Sadness takes over the panel control, the first interaction between Joy and Sadness (00:02:46)

Sadness : I'm Sadness Joy: Oh, hello. I. I'm Joy. So... Can I just... If you could... I just want to fix that.Thanks. (00:02:46 00:02:55)

From the conversation above, we can notice that Joy startles. She cannot talk properly because she is confused by the suddenly changed situation. We also can see the uncomfortable expression of Joy with the presence of Sadness. It is supported by widened eyes and insincere smiles that shown on Joy's face when she looks at Sadness. In Joy's perspective, what Sadness has done in controlling Riley is a mistake? That is why Joy feels like she is responsible to take over the control from Sadness. This scene shows that a crying baby is not a good sign; it can affect people around the baby to feel uncomfortable too. According to Vicki Reece, an author of books about children, babies are naturally bringing the joy. Their laugh and smile easily spread towards their surroundings (REECE 2017). That is why this film constructed Joy to back on her duty in controlling Riley. We can see from the scene that Joy gives a little force towards Sadness to

makes her move aside. It indicates that sad feeling is not appropriate to be shown. This film puts the happiness feeling as the best feeling to be seen by others.



Figure 4: Fear is standing behind Joy who is controlling Riley
(00:03:03)

Fear: Very nice. Okay, looks like you got this. Very good. (00:03:02-
00:03:05)

The thing that happens on the scene above is Joy controls Riley to run around the house by pulling her toy cart. We can see that Joy is handling the panel control in the middle, it shows that she is the lead of Riley’s action. However, if we look closely, the one that actually has the control is Fear. He is standing behind Joy, with his left hand on Joy’s shoulder. Men usually want to show their ability to dominate the situation, by putting a hand on another’s shoulder, it is their gesture to say that ‘I own you’ (MCDONALD 2017). This action points out that Fear attempts to control Joy’s excitement while she is playing with Riley. Joy is actually under Fear’s domination even though she is the one who operates the panel control.



Figure 4 & 5: Fear takes over the panel control from Joy to stopped Riley from trip over the lamp's cable. (00:03:08-00:03:10)

Fear : Whoa, sharp turn! No! Look out! No! (00:03:05)
 Joy : That's Fear. He's really good at keeping Riley safe.
 (00:03:07-00:03:10)

The way Joy introduces Fear is different with her reaction when she meets Sadness on the previous scene. Here, Joy praises Fear's ability to prevent Riley from any dangerous accident when she plays. He has a very good reflex. He abruptly takes over Joy's position in order to stop Riley running into lamp's cable. Fear is observant, tidy, and full of calculation. He always has solutions for a problem. With these characteristics of him, Fear is qualified to make him a leader in the *headquarters*. However, his uncontrollable panic whenever

something does not go as his expectation makes the other emotions cannot let him handle the lead of Riley longer.

When Fear panics, everything becomes a mess and he cannot control it. On the scene when Fear successfully stops Riley from trip over the cable, Joy and Sadness praise him for his fast response to a dangerous situation. Yet, not long after that, Joy takes over the lead again. It indicates that Fear's panic stance makes him unqualified as the leader.

Fear can be classified as a smart character because most of his idea is good, but he also clumsy enough to ruin his own idea. Fear has his panic nature that makes him nervous and unable to obtain his courage. On the other side, Fear's face does not shape like the normal face like Joy and Disgust. Fear appears in a silly face with big eyes and a few strands of hair. This appearance makes him far from the stereotypical of a masculine man. A masculine man usually associates with a muscular body, has leadership or power, brave, in control and never give up (JOWETT 2019). It means that this film wants to show a male character that is not ideal and uncommon. It tries to put a stereotype that nerd man cannot be trusted to have leader position. A nerd man is good in making strategies, but not in leading the team because he can possibly ruin it with his nervousness.



Figure 6: Disgust appears when Riley is about to eat broccoli for the first time.

Disgust: Okay, caution. There is a dangerous smell, people.

Disgust: Hold on. What is that? That is not brightly colored or shape like a dinosaur. Hold on guys, it is broccoli!

Joy : This is Disgust. She basically keeps Riley from being poisoned, physically and socially.

Disgust: Well, I just save your life. Yeah, you're welcome.
(00:03:28-00:02:46)

Disgust is a character who even though she is in a difficult situation, she will remain calm. She has similar bob haircut like Sadness, yet, Disgust's hair is more styled than Sadness. If Sadness has very straight bob hair, Disgust has a little wavy on the bottom part of her hair. It also indicates that Disgust puts a lot of attention on her appearance. On the other hand, Disgust has a matching color of her shoes, scarf, and the make-up (lipstick) color. All of it is in purple color. Different from Fear, which the purple color gives him a negative stereotype, the purple color in Disgust gives a positive stereotype. Purple is associated with women, in which symbolizes as rich and majestic (PADMANABHAN AND CHINJU 2018).

Disgust character here is similar to the visualization of someone who came from a rich family as can be seen from her fashion, her attitude, the way she sway her body, and all in manner. It shows that in the real life, Disgust will be someone who comes from aristocrat family. Furthermore, Disgust has a green skin color. According to Gross, the color of green, other than being the nature, represents of good finance and wealth. Green is the color of United States' money (PUTNAM 2000). This fact emphasizes that in this film, Disgust is pictured as someone who has high prestige. It correlates with her habits that easily belittle with anything that did not suit her taste. In addition, Disgust likes to judge something only from its' appearance without understanding it further (MacIntosh 2019). For a clear explanation, the writer can show it from the scene where Disgust takes the leads of Riley.



Figure 7: The last emotion to appear is Anger. He is reading a newspaper when Riley's dad makes her angry because she will not get the dessert if she does not eat the broccoli. (00:03:50)

The last emotion to appear on *headquarters* is Anger. The appearance of Anger explains that he is a male character. He dresses like a businessperson who just comes back from the office. He wears a white plain shirt with rolled sleeves under the elbow, a loose red and grey tribal pattern necktie, brown trousers and a pair of black shoes. His fashion is the basic appearance of a businessperson (AMRUTHA, PRIYAMVADA, AND BABU 2018). Anger has a short and fat body with red skin color. The white plaid shirt with rolled sleeves for men actually shows the needs of comfortable situation.

By rolling up the sleeve under the elbow, it gives the ventilation for the air to touch our skin under the fabric (WULAN 2013). It can be concluded that this film tends to destruct the traditional belief that men always the one who stays calm when facing the problem. Fear is the male character here, however, the one who can control herself is Disgust, the female character. Even though Disgust also feels contempt, yet, she remains calm while facing the situation. It emphasized that the calmness on the male character is not the typically masculine makes the male character becomes less powerful than the female character (NAGAIKE 2012).

In this film, there are three female characters, who are Joy, Sadness and Disgust. However, the one who pictured as the most positive character here is only Joy. She has her bubbly personality, good body proportion, and smart. Joy's characterization already fulfills the beauty myth criteria. Meanwhile, the other two are not qualified in

beauty myth. Sadness is smart, but she does not have a good body proportion, and she also did not have the opposite personality from Joy. In Disgust situation, she is pretty and stylish, however, she also did not have a good body proportion.

Unlike Sadness, Disgust's personality did not oppose Joy's very much, yet, her personality still not as happy as Joy. According to Martin, the girls, in their social activity, likely to befriend with someone who likes to share gestures and talk together. In addition, when the girls meet in a group, they tend to give correction about their appearance to each other, they really put attention to the appearance (BRATTON 2017).

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that this film successfully constructed the ideal figure of young girl towards the audience. This film puts Joy, the female character, to be the leader figure. It opposed the usual pattern of the animated film, in which most of them put the male character as the leader figure. This film creates the paradox of female domination, that female character also able to be the leader. The reason of why this paradox happened is this film shows the non-masculine characters instead of the masculine one on the emotion team. This condition supported the role of the female character as the leader of the group. All of the male characters are

inferior that the female because they are not fulfill the masculine criteria. In this situation, Joy, the only one ‘perfect’ character, remains powerful over the other. However, this only happened when the male character is in the imperfect situation. When the female character meets the masculine male character, then the male character will still become the hero of the story.

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

This study does not involve any participants in the survey, instead it is literary analysis study with theoretical point of view. The present study was carried out in accordance with the research principles. This study implemented the basic principle ethics of respect, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors believe that there is no conflict of interest

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