

Exploring Gender Construction in The Disney Movie *Mulan* (2020) by Niki Caro

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ABSTRACT

Gender inequality occurs through many things, including being formed, socialized, strengthened, even socially or culturally constructed, through the teachings of religion and the state. This study attempts to investigate the kinds of gender constructions pursued in the *Mulan* movie, to find out gender construction's impacts on the character in the *Mulan* movie and to describe the Mulan efforts to fight for the inequalities in the *Mulan* movie by Niki Caro. This research uses Alice Eagly's theory and this research uses descriptive qualitative research. The object of this research is in the *Mulan* movie by Niki Caro. The data are collected by documentation technique. Then, the data were analyzed by applying Gender construction theory and qualitative research. The research finding show; first, there are two kinds of gender constructions pursued in the *Mulan* movie; society and gender roles and gender at home. Second, there are two Gender construction's impacts on the character in the *Mulan* movie by Niki Caro, they are dependency of decision making and psychological pressures. The last, there are two Mulan's efforts to fight for the inequalities in the *Mulan* movie by Niki Caro, they are having bravery to take men's duties and expressing rational opinions

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Introduction

Gender construction is very important because gender construction evolved as a way to organize the necessary tasks done in early human society. This is the way of

females should think, speak, dress, and interact within the context of society (Jarekvist, 1994: 3). According to Fahira (2020:5) gender roles describe what people have to do and what people do not have to do and this idea is socially constructed by the society itself. Instead of talking about body parts, it is more about how people are expected to act due to our sex. One of the movie tells about gender construction is Movie *Mulan* (2020). The reasons for choosing this movie because this movie gets many awards such People's Choice Award in 2020 and *Costume Designers Guild Awards in 2021*. This movie is based on true story a young Chinese woman who disguises herself as a man to become a warrior is thrilling from start to finish. This movie has correlation with the English Literature subject in Literature could reflect an expression of human life which can not be separated from the roots of society. Sociological approach is important role in literary works.

In this movie, social society shapes the values that women are people who should not expect to get a higher position and power than just being able to work at home. Women are only considered to have a role in raising offspring and caring for the house. Women should also be able to bring honor to their families. And to fulfill that role, she must find a rich husband so that her life is guaranteed and she can still live happily, to the disappointment of her parents, who hopes that one day she will be wed to a good husband.

The empire orders the male representatives of each family to become soldiers, to face the enemies who attacked the empire at that time. However, the Hua family had no sons, so Mulan's father had to advance into the army. Even though the father's leg was sore. Seeing that, Mulan could not bear to see her father fighting in a bad condition. Therefore, she decided to replace her father's position by disguising herself as a son. What a risky choice. Not only about the dangers that await on the battlefield but also about the negative views of the public if they find out that Mulan is determined to become a soldier

Based on background above, this research aims to find the kinds of gender constructions pursued in the *Mulan* movie by Niki Caro, to describe the gender construction's impacts on the character in the *Mulan* movie by Niki Caro, and to describe the efforts to fight for the inequalities in *the Mulan* movie by Niki Caro.

Literature Review

Approach is one of important things to analyze a literary work. In Oxford dictionary explain, approach is the way of dealing with something. It means, in analyzing a literary work have correlation with what will be analyzed by using approach. In this article, sociological approach analyzes a society by using the process of understanding each other. Through literary works, the authors express his problem and sometimes participate in it. Literary works is influenced by society and able to give effect to the public and society will

determine the value of literary works that live in an age, while the poet herself who is a member of the public who can not escape from the influence it received from the environment that raised him. According to Semi (2012: 4), "The sociological approach is also used to study the society described in literary works" it can be concluded that approach is a basic assumption hold in looking at an object with choice of approach in a study, criticism or research may help direct further investigation or research that is sharper and deeper. This article was written based on social view, so sociological approach is chosen by the writer. Sociological approach analyzes human in society.

Gender construction is a combination of nature and culture, biological traits as well as learned behaviors. Gender construction is a theory in sociology about the manifestation of cultural origins, mechanisms, and corollaries of gender perception and expression in the context of interpersonal and group social interaction (Jarekvist, 1994:5) Gender construction is process of socialization and reconstruction that takes place long and steady, it is ultimately difficult to distinguish what are the characteristics of gender. Female and male are little bit conventional and the expectation connected to each gender become important to fulfill. They need to follow some certain roles and standards to be socially accepted (Sisca,, 2014:8). It means that gender construction makes the difference between men and women. During this time, gender socialization is by spreading messages, discourse, values, norms, beliefs and models that represent certain gender representations.

Research Method

In this article, the writer used qualitative research method with sociological approach, because qualitative method is suitable with the aim of this research. Qualitative research may be in descriptive form. The data were collected in the form of word as a descriptive method explanation than a number. Descriptive is "The data collected is in the form of words, pictures and not numbers. This is caused by the application of qualitative methods" (Melong, 2005:11) In this theory Meleong explains that qualitative research is research procedures which produce descriptive data as spoken words of the person or behavior being researched.

The source of the data in this research are taken from *Mulan* movie by Niki Car that was released on November 2020, with the duration of *Mulan* movie 103 minutes and the researcher downloads the movie from Disney. The writer used English subtitle and excerpt of picture that taken from *Mulan* movi as source of data to analyses this research.

There were some steps of the technique of data collection in this research: There are some steps of the technique of data collecting in doing this research:

- 1 The writer downloaded *Mulan 2020* Movie that would be analyzed.
- 2 The writer watched the movie repeatedly to make the researcher understand to the movie that can be analyzed.
- 3 The writer collected all of data from the movie and other sources that have correlation to the case like journals, and articles from the internet.
- 4 The writer read the script, after collecting all the data to find the point in the movie, and read the script to make sure that is have correlation to this research.
- 5 The writer took notes, re-read and recheck the findings
- 6 The writer marked on the word or sentence and all the important statement and information in this research. Then marked some dialogues in *Mulan* Movie, and made some notes of the data.

The writer has several techniques from the data analysis in order to make this research more specific following are:

- 1 Identifying: The writer identifies the data and make the assumptions or finds Gender Construction of *Mulan* Movie of Disney.
- 2 Classifying the data: The writer classifies the data which has correlated with the topic of the research, the source is taken from *Mulan 2020* Movie.
- 3 Analysis: The writer analyzes the data based on the theory that is use to find the answer for the sociological that have been formulated.
- 4 Making Conclusions: After all the things above done well, then the writer makes conclusion from the finding of the analysis.

Findings and Discussion

Kinds of Gender Constructions Pursued in the *Mulan* Movie

There are three kinds of gender constructions based on Alice Eagly's theory in the *Mulan* movie such as society and gender roles, where *Mulan* can take the man responsibility to be the soldier and take care the *dynasty*, gender workplace, where the *Mulan* believe that as the army must be have the strong nationality and gender at home, where the *Mulan* must get married as the parents hope.

Society and Gender Roles

Gender roles grow fertile within social life even at home where mother and father represent men and women roles. Such as her race, ethnicity, sexual identity, gender identity, age, religion, level of education, occupation or profession, marital status, health condition, etc. The 2020 *Mulan* film is a remake of the 1998 animated film, the *Mulan* film clearly shows how the culture is in that era and society. Society and gender roles are strongly related to each other. Society culturally often constructs gender roles which is, unfortunately, do not always give any positive impact on women practically. The first gender construction is that where a woman must bring honor to her family through marriage. Calm, composed, graceful, elegant, prepared, and polite are the descriptions of the qualities of a good wife

Mulan is an adventurous and active girl but she is disappointing her mother due to her behavior. Her mother hopes that one day Mulan can marry a good husband. When her mother speaks to her father if Mulan is woman not man and woman will bring honor to the family with marriage. When Mulan grows up mature, she is forced to meet the matchmaker and bring honor to her family. One day, Mulan and her mother are going to meet a famous matchmaker to find a proper husband. The data above is one of society and gender roles by Alice Eagly's theory because Mulan should know her gender identity and Mulan will be going to meet a famous matchmaker to find a proper husband.

The way gender is constructed in this society is clearly shown by demonstrating women. This idea is shown in one of the *Mulan* scenes. Mulan ruins her ceremony because of her attitude and behavior. The moment when the spider falls from the ceiling and Mulan tries to cover it with a teapot, but the matchmaker insists on putting the teapot in the center of the table. Mulan can hold the cup and teapot until her hair is messy, causing her to fall and crush everything. As a matchmaker, Fa Li believes that every woman should have good manners to attract a good man, and Mulan with her careless and attractive manner ruins the ceremony. After what Mulan did to her, the matchmaker severely punishes the Hua family, saying that they fail to raise a good daughter, and instead raise a woman with a man's attitude and appearance.

Gender at Home

It can be seen how traditional gender roles suppose men to earn a living to support their families, they are to be aggressive and in charge. Meanwhile, Women belong at home cooking, cleaning, and caring for children. Women must accomplish these tasks as they find themselves living within a potentially different gender stratification system. Gender at home means the woman should not work outside the home, cooks meals for the family,

wash dishes after meals, buy Groceries (food, household supplies, etc), determines the household budget, cleans the house, do Laundry, disciplines children, takes children to school, helps children with homework, does household repairs and determines the extent of schooling for children.

Mulan is young woman. At this age, she is a free-spirited girl who wants to develop her potential and *chi* power, but her parents want her to get married. Mulan should realize that she is a girl who could not change the rules in her village and that a woman could only be happy for her family by finding a partner in her life to marry. Learned to fight to defend the country, his father loved Mulan, so Mulan is asked to realize himself to make his family happy. The data above is one of gender at home by Alice Eagly's theory because Mulan is an example of gender at home, where she has to be a woman who cares about herself and her family by taking care of herself, dressing up and also doing household activities.

Gender Construction's Impacts on the Female Character in the *Mulan* movie by Niki Caro

Dependency of Decision Making

The great dependency on females on male figure in decision-making. This situation someone would ask to people in making her/his decision. It used to show that she respects the people around her, someone only gives direction and advices and how young lady should do and become as what the values she adopted in the society. Furthermore, the dialogue that is represented dependency of decision-making of respect. The Emperor respects all of Mulan's efforts for saving the kingdom. After fighting for the Emperor and the kingdom against Bori Khan, Mulan wins the battle. The Emperor is grateful for all Mulan's efforts courage, and loyalty, so the Emperor gives Mulan the honor to join with Emperor's guard. Mulan's effort to be accepted in society is hard. We know that Mulan has a powerful *chi* and it caused society to dub Mulan as a witch. Mulan keeps loyal to the whole kingdom and uses her powerful *chi* against Bori Khan and she wins the battle.

The whole kingdom and society respect her as warrior. This scene could be considered as character-building of justice to the students because it reflected respect. As said by Sylvia Walby, this gender construction's impacts. As shown by the emperor, he thanks Mulan because she has saved the kingdom. Then it will build Justice character in the students and make them treat someone in accordance with human rights. Yet, Life in society is about taking and giving. The data above is one of dependency of decision

making by Sylvia Walby's theory because Mulan feels dependency of decision making to do something, she always remembers her family and she has told lies.

Psychological Pressures

Psychological Pressure is someone's condition in getting their needs, it seems they can be one of the important people in society if they can be the best person. Pressure is the psychological stress associated with expectations to perform well in a situation. For example, someone might feel pressure before they compete for the winner. Someone who can fulfill their needs could make their life being happiness. Someone is influenced by her stereotypical vision of the conventional role of a man. There are two dialogues or conversations that implied psychological pressures. The first dialogue contains psychological pressures performed when Mulan experienced a lot of pressure on her when she has to sleep with men and that has to be done so that her identity would not be exposed.

They have found a match for Mulan through a matchmaker. Mulan feels disappointed and wistful. Mulan gives in to her ego and complied with her parent's demand to get married because she wants her parents to be happy. The data above is one of psychological pressure by Sylvia Walby's theory because Mulan feels confused if she has to get marriage soon, even should know as women belong at home cooking, cleaning, and caring for children and it is because of the culture in which she lives that Mulan felt disappointed and wistful.

Mulan's Efforts to Fight for the Inequalities in *the Mulan Movie* by Niki Caro

Having Bravery to Take Men's Duties

Women are considered weak and timid. It affects the mindset of women that men are their protectors. With this mindset, women believe these assumptions. However, men are not always able to protect women and families. Thus, women should have the courage to take that role. Women will be very happy even if they have to show their courage to a man who has not been able to satisfy all her demands. Mulan believes that she can take over her father's duty to go to war, so she will bet her life to do her best.

Expressing Rational Opinions

Expressing a rational opinion is a way to eliminate the stereotype, the problem is that women are not given a chance to prove that they can think logically. For that reason, they must prove it. Women's distress affects they must prove to society that they could have the capability to express opinions rationally. As the above quote, women must express their opinions to protect themselves from the discrimination they experienced.

Mulan tried to explain that she is able to replace her father's position to go to war, but his father could not allow it because Mulan is a woman

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are two kinds of gender constructions pursued in the *Mulan* movie by Niki Caro first, society and gender roles, where Mulan can take the man responsibility to be the soldier and take care of the *dynasty* and Mulan believe that the army must have a strong nationality second, gender at home, where the Mulan must get married as the parents hope. There are two Gender construction impacts on the female character in the *Mulan* movie by Niki Caro first, dependency of decision making, where Mulan wanted to go back to her family and made amend the mistake she has made to her family second, psychological pressures Hua Jun (Mulan) felt that she violated the principle of the royal army which is they should be true and she must tell the truth. There are two Mulan's efforts to fight the inequalities in *the Mulan* movie by Niki Caro first, having bravery to take men's duties, where Mulan will fight for the kingdom and protect it from everyone who tried to destroy the kingdom and Mulan is a brave woman and the greatest warrior second, expressing rational opinions, where Mulan express her opinions to protect herself from the discrimination that she experienced.

It can be concluded that In traditional society, it has long been developed that the construction that has developed so far in traditional society is that dangerous work involving the safety of life is carried out by men, but in this film, the authors construct that dangerous work can be done by women, even with effort and many trials Mulan is fearless young woman risks everything out of love for her family and her country to become one of the greatest warriors China has ever known. Mulan's story gives a message about gender equality, how a woman tries to be recognized and respected as a man, and shows that women and men can do the same thing without discrimination.

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