

AN ANALYSIS OF HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN DISNEY'S MULAN (1998)

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Abstract

The existence of the term of the dominance of man and the power within society or known as hegemonic masculinity becomes the topic for this research. This research aims to analyze the hegemonic masculinity within Disney's Mulan 1998 movie. This research uses qualitative study to collect the data and some theories that can support the writer to conduct the analysis. The findings show that there are sixteen scenes that show the hegemonic masculinity elements by looking the main character and the interaction with the other characters. Those findings show that the hegemonic masculinity exist in Disney's Mulan movie. Thus, the existence of hegemonic masculinity invades children movie as well.

Key words: disney, hegemonic masculinity, movie, power

INTRODUCTION

We live in a world where gender equality has been fought for centuries and changing has been established to pursue gender equality [1], yet it is stil a saddening matter when it comes to an “idea” power in the society especially in patriarchal society [2], [3]. Patriarchal society is a society in which it glorifies that men should be the dominant ones and women are the inferior of the men [4], [5]. Hegemonic masculinity still exists to this very day, and it is related to the patriarchal society [6], [7]. Hegemonic masculinity is the ideal manliness within a particular culture that is white middle-class heterosexual and in the constructions of hierarchy gender relation, men hold the responsibility in it [8], [9]. Gender actions can be related to power that can be permeating in conversation and institutions [10]. There is an ideal of characteristics that can emanate power and dominance over others and it is called masculinity [11], [12]. Often times, masculinity is perceived as the characteristics of men and also the behavior a man should have in order to be accepted in the society [13], but technically masculinity is a social construction that does not only belong to men, it can belong and oppress men and women [14], [15].

Hegemonic masculinity has been studied throughout the years by a large number of scholars around the world [16]. For instance, in a journal article entitled *Complicity to Hegemonic Masculinity in D.H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers* (Subrayan & Wan Yahya, 2016). This journal article examines the male character within Lawrence's novel *Sons and Lovers* in relation with patriarchy and masculinity with applying hegemonic theory [17], [18]. The research reveals that the male character within the particular literary work has a dominant role as a male with aggression and violence [19], [20]. Another journal article that conducted the same research within the hegemonic masculinity field also exists with title *Take it like a man!': Performing hegemonic masculinity through organizational humour* (Plester, 2015). The research investigates regarding the use of misogynistic humor in an organization [21], [22]. The result of the research reveals that no one, including the women and subjugated men, makes the humor as an issue for it is seen as merely a joke while it is not a merely joke for it is harmful and toxic [23], [24]. The women themselves within the organization also practiced or involved the hegemonic masculinity through the joke [25], [26]. The other journal article that has the same topic which is hegemony masculinity with the title *Deconstructing Hegemonic Masculinity: The roles of antifemininity, subordination to woman, and sexual dominance in men's perpetration of sexual aggression* [27], [28], [29]. This research analyzes the theoretical based on mechanism in which men's obedience to anti-feminine norms that associated with their misdeed of sexual aggression toward intimidate partners [30], [31]. The result shows that obedience to the anti- femininity norm and the tendency to experience stress when in subordinate positions to women are indirectly related to sexual aggression [32], [33] and the man who has a strongly obedience to these particular hegemony masculinity norms may feel compelled to be sexually aggressive and intimate partner to maintain their need to dominance the relationship [34], [35].

The deconstruction in the whole of construction of hegemony masculinity and masculine gender role allow for closer to the distinct emotional and situational factors that influence sexual aggression [36], [37]. Journal article entitled *Hegemonic Masculinity and Children's Picture Books* (Taylor, 2019) also conducts the same topic which is hegemonic masculinity. This research is focused on the hegemonic masculinity that appears in the children's picture books and it especially investigates the relationship with dominant and complicit masculinity [38], [39], [40] . The results is done under feminist reading of

patriarchy and shows that the personal transformation attends to the masculine subject but fails to derive the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and the operation of patriarchy [41], [42]. Another journal article entitled “*Hegemonic Masculinity: Combining Theory and Practice in Gender Intervention* (Jewkes, et al., 2015) illustrated how the concept of hegemonic masculinity is, can be, and used in interventions for building gender equality and reduce violence based on gender especially women [43], [44]. This journal also shows that gender based violence prevention highlighted the importance of using theoretical [45] based interventions and masculinity should not be presented as inherently problematic and oppressive [46], [47].

Hegemonic masculinity exists in a society in which human beings live, mingle and communicate with one another [48], [49]. Therefore, when the person creates a literary work, in the form of book or movie or anything else, it is more likely that the person will also include what he or she believes or what the person has learnt through her or his life into the person’s work. Thus, even though books or movies can be fiction, their relation to the real world or the real society is not fabricated because behind the works there are people who live in a particular society [50] and has been brought up in a certain way [51], [52]. The object analyzation of this research is a Disney movie called *Mulan* that tells a story of a girl who disguises herself as a man and infiltrates the army in order to help her sick father [53].

This paper aims to do a thorough analyzation of hegemonic masculinity within the Disney’s *Mulan* movie (1998), for the researcher believes that hegemonic masculinity exists in many forms of literary works, including children movies. This paper also be the media to reveal hegemonic masculinity in a children movie. Thus, the readers gained an insight of the hegemonic masculinity as seen through Disney’s *Mulan*. The previous researches in the hegemonic masculinity as written in this research paper are within an organization and a novel while the current research is analyzation of hegemonic masculinity in a children movie, *Mulan*, for hegemonic masculinity can also exist in literary works, even when they are intended for children. Thus, through the analyzation the researcher reveals the existence of hegemonic masculinity within the movie *Mulan*.

Hegemonic masculinity has been studied and analyzed by scholars around the world [54]. All of the researches of hegemonic masculinity have contribution to the field of hegemonic masculinity, despite having different object of research in every researches [55], [56]. In the term of hegemonic masculinity, there is a word “masculinity.” [57] stated that “‘masculinity’, to the extent that the term can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experiences, personality and culture.” Simply put, masculinity is social practices that exist in society and it has outcomes. Furthermore, hegemonic masculinity has its own definite theory [58]. [59] says that hegemonic masculinity is “The configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimation of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women [60].” Thus, hegemonic masculinity has relation with patriarchy or a patriarchal society because in a patriarchal society, men are the dominant ones and they are seen as superior than women and they are expected to act or behave in a masculine way to be seen as not feminine and hegemonic masculinity also includes power and domination [61], [62]. Power in hegemonic masculinity can be represented or symbolized by an action a person or a character does while domination is straightly connecting to the power itself [63], [64]. It is when a character or a person who has power [65], this person can also has a domination in the society or be dominating person and treat others as the inferior ones [66], [67].

This research used movie as the source to analyze the hegemonic masculinity. Movie is known as a kind of visual communication which used moving pictures and sound to tell story or give information to entertaining the audience. Movie is also known as film that shows the communication of ideas within stories, the perception, feelings, beauty, or atmosphere by the pictures or moving pictures that have been recorded [68]. Based on Lindrigin, it is stated film is better rather than drama by looking the dynamic of sound, sight, and colorization. Movie reveals the emotion to the audience from the moving picture, sound and other supporting elements within the movie [69]. The emotions within the movie can be an influence to the audience by some aspect which are expressions, ideas, characters, and the other aspect that can support the delivery of emotions to the audience [70]. According to Petrie that stated the concern of the movie which are the ideas, plot,

effect or mood and character or style or lecture and those elements can become the present and the primary focus of elements in any kind of movie or film.

There are several focuses to analyze movie or film which are focused on plot, emotional and effect or mood, character, style or texture, and ideas that will be explained more below.

Focus on plot

It focused to derive the audience to the stories or the story line of the movie which is the vent of the story itself, because the purpose of plot itself to help the audience from their boredom by attract the from the good plot of the story that can be supported by the characters, ideas and emotional effect.

Focus on emotional and effect or mood

The important part of the movie is the emotional. The way the movie can derive the audience to some emotion will become the thing that show the movie successful or not. The effect on a movie or film can support the emotion as well for example in horror movie or sad movie that the effect will be taking the important part that can support the revealing of emotion of the audience.

Focus on character

Character also becomes the important part of movie. The way the character brings out the audience feel the emotion by looking the way they do a dialogue and their action that can support those things inside of the movie.

Focus on style or texture

The style or texture is about the uniqueness of the movie that become something special inside of the audience mind or memory by looking for the rhythm, atmosphere that can become the style of a movie that can attract the audience and become memorable for the audience.

Focus on ideas

It focused on ideas when some movie want to tell some message inside it that has a correlation between the characters and the action. This section which is focus on ideas is divided into some parts which are moral statement, the truth of human nature, social problems, the complexity of human relationship, coming of age or loss of innocence or growing awareness.

Moral statement

Every movie or film will have a moral statement inside of the movie but as the viewer we also should be take a look or be careful for the moral implication inside of the movie.

There are some categories of ideas:

The truth of human nature

This focus is quite different to the uniqueness of the character; it is more focused for the character study into the real idea as a theme.

Social problems

Social problems often become the problem that happen inside of the movie that they relate to the society problem to define and emphasize of society problem.

The complexity of human relationship

This focus on the relationship that happen between human, it can be the problems, frustrations, pleasures, and joy of human relationship like example when they falling in love, getting married, family interaction and others.

Coming of age or loss of innocence or growing awareness

This focus means when some major of movie force the character become mature directly or gain awareness of themselves in relation to the world around them (Boggs, 1963).

METHOD

This research paper tells about the analysis of hegemonic masculinity in Disney's Mulan (1998). The researcher used qualitative study in the research that she conducts for the data are in the form of words that originally come from the movie itself. The research was conducted through an observation of the plot and the use of words by the characters in Disney's Mulan. The researchers chose this movie as the research because Mulan (1998) has received Golden Globe and Academy Award nominations and it also won Best Animated Featured award. Not only it is popular and highly praised, it is also related with culture and society within the setting of the movie. The data of this research were achieved from the spoken words that are uttered by the characters within Mulan for these words are related with the patriarchal society and also Connell's hegemonic masculinity. After the data are collected, the researchers proceed to analyze them by connecting them to patriarchal system of the society within the movie and also the theory of hegemonic masculinity based on Connel's theory. Therefore, the analyzed data became the result of thorough analyzation of the theory of hegemonic masculinity and the setting of the society from the movie itself which takes place in China during Han dynasty. The researchers also

provides explanation based on the thorough analyzation and the theory of hegemonic masculinity and how the uttered words by the characters within Mulan (1998) have connection with the theory of Connell's hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the writers state the findings and also analyze the data regarding the hegemony masculinity within Mulan movie (1998) and also correlate the findings or the data with the theory of Connell's Hegemony Masculinity. It can be seen within the movie that Mulan (1998) has the element of hegemony masculinity through the words that the characters uttered and also the actions of the characters. Hegemony Masculinity devaluates women and also limit men from being a fully human being with emotions and vulnerability. Below are the data found within the Mulan movie (1998) by the writers.

Example (1)

"Quiet and demure. Graceful. Polite. Delicate. Refined. Poised. Punctual."

(0:03:06 - 0:03:20)

In this scene, Mulan is having a preparation for meeting the matchmaker and also to pass the test. In here, Mulan makes a sneaky note on her forearm. Thus, she can cheat if she forgets the answer of tests. The words mentioned above are the note that Mulan writes on her forearm. Indirectly, the words imply the standards that women should achieve, namely *"Quiet and demure. Graceful. Polite. Delicate. Refined. Poised. Punctual."* However, these are not the standards of men. In this scene, women are being seen as inferior than men and they should always be silent. Compared to men who can be outspoken.

Example (2)

"Mulan, you should already be in town. We are counting on you to uphold the family honor."

"Don't worry, Father. I won't let you down."

(0:4:46 - 0:4:54)

In this scene, it is indirectly implied that there is only one way a girl can bring honor to her family. It is by passing the matchmaker's test and getting oneself a husband. Mulan's father also agrees with this notion because he thinks the honorable way a girl can achieve and give to family is through marriage.

Example (3)

"A girl can bring her family great honor in one way. By striking a good match"

(0:06:59 - 0:07:05)

Based on this scene, it strengthens the writer's analysis regarding the devaluation of women because it is explicitly stated that there is nothing a girl can do to bring honor to the family but by getting a husband that is viewed as good in the eyes of the society within the setting of the movie, which is in Han dynasty. This notion puts all women as inferior than men because through the quotation, it can be inferred that women are only raised to be married.

Example (4)

“Men want girls with good taste. Calm. Obedient. Who worked fast-paced. With good breeding and a tiny waist. You’ll bring honor to us all.”

(0:07:10 - 0:07:19)

In this scene, Mulan is being dressed up by the women and being told that she needs to be silent and compliant as a woman because that is how the men desire women within the movie. This scene also has correlation with hegemony masculinity because it puts men as the superior ones and women as the inferior ones. Men should be dominating, controlling and strong while women should be passive and silent. This scene also gives emphasis that women are for “breeding” as what one of the women says “With good breeding”. But it is never asked whether the woman is consented or agree with it or not.

Example (5)

“We all must serve our emperor. Who guards us from the Huns. The men by bearing arms. A girl by bearing sons.”

(0:07:23 - 0:07:33)

Based on the scene, there are gender roles that occur within the movie. It is that men need to go to war and fight while women are expected to give birth to sons. Giving birth to sons are being glorified by the society within the movie. It is seen that sons are more worthy than daughters while both sons and daughter should be equally worthy.

Example (6)

“Fa Mulan.”

“Present.”

“Speaking without permission.”

(0:09:07 - 0:09:11)

In this scene, the matchmaker is in front of the girls who have been dressed up and she calls up Mulan in which Mulan answers excitedly. However, according to the matchmaker a woman should never speak without permission. But, this does not happen toward the men

within the movie. Hegemony masculinity puts imbalance power in the society between men and women and both genders suffer because of hegemony masculinity in some ways. This scene is also one of the examples in which women are oppressed and should be dictated all the time.

Example (7)

You are a disgrace! You may look like a bride, but you will never bring your family honor!

(0:11:14 - 0:11:23)

In this scene, the matchmaker is enraged of Mulan's clumsiness and yell at her in front of her mother and grandmother. Based on the scene, the writers can draw a meaning. It is that for women, bringing honor to the family is only in conforming to the standards of the society of how women should behave and act. If a woman possesses other qualities other than the expected standards, the women will be deemed as dishonorable just like in the case of Mulan when she cannot pass the test of being a wife.

Example (8)

"The Fa family."

"No!"

"I am ready to serve the emperor."

"Father, you can't go."

"Mulan!"

"Please, sir, my father has already fought bravely..."

"Silence! You would do well to teach your daughter to hold her tongue in a man's presence."

"Mulan, you dishonor me."

(0:14:59 - 0:15:33)

Based on this scene, the advisor of the Emperor comes to Mulan's village to inform that one man in every family must take part in a war against the enemy, the Huns. But Mulan realizes that her father's health will make it impossible for him to survive in a war. Thus, she tries to protect her father by speaking out toward the Emperor's advisor regarding her father but she is immediately cut off and silence. According to the advisor of the Emperor, a woman should not be outspoken in front of a man, unless she is given a permission to do so. In the setting within the movie, women are taught to keep their thoughts to their selves and do what they are told.

Example (9)

“But if you...”

“I know my place! It is time you learned yours.”

(0:17:11 - 0:17:15)

In this scene, it is the time when Mulan’s family is having dinner together one last time before the father leaves for the war. Everyone in the family keeps their head down and zip their mouths except Mulan for she throws the cup on the table and confronts the father for going to the war with bad health. Thus, it enrages her father for being challenged and say to Mulan to “learn her place”. The writers interpret this scene as Mulan challenges the gender norm, but being told to “learn her place” in terms of never challenge, never confront and keep the thoughts to herself. This is the impact of Hegemony masculinity. It sets part what women and men should and should not do and cause unfairness. In this case, Mulan is treated unjustly.

Example (10)

“You must go after her. She could be killed.”

“If I reveal her, she will be.”

(0:20:02 - 0:20:08)

This is the scene where Mulan runs off and goes to the war by impersonating herself as a boy. Mulan’s mother wants the husband to bring Mulan home in fear she will die in the war. However, Mulan’s father responses with sad expression that he cannot bring her home because if he does, the army will know that Mulan is a girl instead of a boy and a girl is not allowed to go to war. Failing in following the rule will cost the girl’s life for disobeying. Thus, in this scene, it is also being implied that a girl’s contribution in war cannot be as worthy or important as the contribution of a man in a war because a woman’s place in the society within the movie is only to bear children. This notion of women being less than men is the aftermath of hegemony masculinity because masculinity is praised and exhibiting femininity is considered as a fragility or a fault. Thus, the hegemony masculinity makes women being underestimated in the society within the movie.

Example (11)

“It’s all attitude. Be tough, like this guy here.”

[spits on the ground]

“What are you lookin’ at?”

(0:29:47 - 0:29:52)

The scene above is the scene where Mulan has come to army and disguised herself as a boy. She also has help and some advices on becoming a man through Mushu, a dragon. In this scene, Mushu gives advice to Mulan in becoming a man through displaying aggression or violence because these traits are seen as “tough”. This trait can be seen in Yao characterization. Mulan merely sets her eyes on him and Yao immediately exhibiting violent manner by spiting on the ground and putting on malicious face. Aggression or violence can also have correlation with hegemony masculinity because in hegemony masculinity, asserting dominance through violent or aggression is being seen as manly and men who refuse or do not have violent and dominating traits are seen less. Thus, it makes hegemony masculinity benefits none, for all genders suffer within patriarchy and hegemony masculinity.

Example (12)

“But you know how it is when you get those manly urges and you just gotta kill something, fix things, cook outdoors...”

(0:33:22 - 0:33:29)

Based on the quotation above, it is the scene where Mulan causes disruption among her friends that ends up in a brawl. The fight ceased immediately after Shang, the General of the Army comes. This scene also involves Mulan explains how the brawl happens in the first place. Mulan explains it in a way that she thinks it is how men act in which she says “manly urges”, “kill something”, “fix things” and “cook outdoors”. It can inferred from the scene that the trait of worldly, tinkering and aggressive traits fall to the men traits and judging from Shang’s expression, it does not seem wrong for men to possess aggressiveness or harsh manner. This is in line with the hegemony masculinity, because hegemony masculinity accepts the characteristics of men being rough and aggressive. Those who do not possess the traits will be judge and seen not “manly” enough.

Example (13)

Lets get down to business to defeat the Huns.

Did they send me daughters when I asked for sons?

You’re the saddest bunch I’ve ever met, but you can bet before we’re through

Mister, I’ll make a man out of you.

[...]

Be a man. We must be swift as a coursing river.

Be a man. With all the force of a great typhoon.

Be a man. With all the strength of a raging fire.

Mysterious as the dark side of the moon.

(0:38:05 - 0:41:03)

Based on the quotations above, Shang sees his soldiers as less men for being incompetent and inexperience. He also regards the soldiers as not manly enough for failing to do what he instructs and it also belittles women at the same time. The men are also expected to be fast, strong, brave and mysterious to be acknowledged as men. These notions limit men to be themselves, for they are not allowed to be vulnerable. Thus, when they fail to conform to the traits, they will feel less or the society will judged them as in through how Shang judges and belittles the men for not being strong and talented enough.

Example (14)

“My girl will marvel at my strength”

(0:48:13)

“Adore my battle scars”

(0:48:14)

Based on the quotations above, strength and the experience of war as seen through scars are deemed as heroic and admiring while there is also a possibility that some men are not eligible for joining the war due to some circumstances. Based on the quotations above, masculinity is being glorified and it also puts constraining expectations toward men.

Example (15)

“How ‘bout a girl who’s got a brain”

“Who always speaks her mind?”

“Nah” [in unison]

(0:48:59 - 0:49:06)

The quotations above take place during the scene where the characters sing “A Girl Worth Fighting for” and Mulan says about a girl who is clever and speaks what she thinks, but the male friends do not accept it by saying “Nah” together. The writers correlate this to the hegemony masculinity and not only hegemony masculinity hurts men, it also hurts women because women are not allowed to be outspoken and smart, for these traits are deemed as the traits of men.

CONCLUSION

The findings show that there is existence of hegemonic masculinity the movie *Mulan* (1997). *Mulan* as the main character suffers the consequence of hegemony masculinity and also portray how she needs to be a man in disguise which is correlated to hegemony masculinity. The culture in *Mulan* movie shows the hegemonic masculinity by showing the important role of man in their culture, the differences of their status and also woman's duty in China during Han dynasty. For instance, the standard that woman should be meek and never challenge. On the other hand, men need to be stoic, unemotional, strong and non-vulnerable. This current research is also in line with a research under the title *Complicity to Hegemonic Masculinity in D.H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers* (Subrayan & Wan Yahya, 2016) in which the males are aggressive and resort to violence which is similar to the case of hegemony masculinity in *Mulan* (1997). This current research can also be beneficial for further research in the future under the field of hegemony masculinity

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