

THE TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES STEREOTYPES AS SEEN IN *TROLLS* (2016) THE DREAMWORKS ANIMATION MOVIE

Sekar Yolanda Azza¹

Universitas Muhammadiyah Lampung¹
sekaryolandaazza@gmail.com

Abstract

In recent years, literature is not merely about poetry, prose, novel, short story but also the movie. One of the exciting animation movies is Trolls, produced by DreamWorks Animation in 2016. Undoubtedly, movies are not always about entertainment but can persuasively create an ideology in the kids' minds. Gender stereotypes are a negative impact of ideology that exists all over the world. Two research questions are formulated; what are the stereotypes towards women in Trolls movie and what ideology the movie seems to promote. This research aims to reveal the traditional stereotype towards women in Trolls movies and make the audience aware of the ideology of gender stereotypes towards women. This research applies library research with the descriptive qualitative method. Since this research analyzes gender stereotypes towards women in the movie, binary opposition theory can see the movie's structure. The writer concludes that women's traditional gender roles stereotypes still exist in this movie. The stereotypes over women through Poppy as the character can be seen as irrational, weak, and submissive. The researcher also can find the patriarchal ideology. The movie promotes the gender issue in this film that shows the man is superior to the woman

Keywords: Traditional Gender Roles; Gender Stereotypes; Patriarchal Ideology

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Correspondence author: Sekar Yolanda Azza, Universitas Muhammadiyah Lampung, Indonesia. E-Mail: sekaryolandaazza@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Literature has a significant way to portray the condition of society. In recent years, literature is not merely about poetry, prose, novel, short story but also the movie. As a media that combines texts and pictures, movies have various genres such as horror, comedy, animation, and so forth. One of the exciting animation movies is *Trolls*, produced by DreamWorks Animation in 2016. There are two central characters in this movie; they are Poppy and Branch. *Trolls* movie tells a brief introduction about the Trolls' and the Bergens' life. Their life is different from one another. The Trolls' life is full of happiness, whereas the Bergens' life is full of misery. Bergens believed they would be happy when they eat the Trolls in the annual community-wide event called Trollstice.

The story began when the Trollstice was cancelled because the Trolls escaped from Bergens' Kingdom to the forest. Since then, the Trolls lived in that forest without any disturbance and the Bergens lived in the darkness. Twenty years later, Princess of Trolls, namely Poppy, has grown up. She became an older sister to the younger Trolls. Poppy told them that Bergens would not find them. Hence, she decided to celebrate the Trolls' party at night. When the fireworks and songs began to play, one of Bergens came to the forest and kidnapped several Trolls. She brought them to The Bergens' kingdom to be served for the king of Bergens. Poppy tried to save her friends with another Trolls character, namely Branch. During their way to Bergens' Kingdom, they had a fantastic adventure to protect the other Trolls from The Trollstice event (Mitchell, 2016).

Trolls get the attention of the kids and parents. As an animation movie that is so colourful and cheerful, *Trolls* is chosen as a family movie. The whole family members, including the kids, can enjoy the simple plot and characters. Regarding the official website, *Trolls* movie has been popular before the Covid-19 pandemic. It can be seen when DreamWorks Animation used to have "Trolls Live" and "Trolls the Experience" events in 2020 (DreamWorks, 2021). Undoubtedly, movies are not always about entertainment but can persuasively create an ideology in the kids' minds. John Hess pointed out that the messages from movies unconsciously bring the ideology either optimistic or damaging to the audience (Hess, 1978).

Ideology is systematic ideas, attitudes, and values from a group of people. There are two kinds of ideology called explicit and implicit. An explicit ideology is a textual analysis that means the ideology can be seen through the text. In contrast, an implicit ideology is a contextual analysis or implies the act (Phillips, 2009). The effect of ideology leads the stereotypes to someone or some groups. Gender stereotypes are a negative impact of ideology that exists all over the world. In a narrower space, gender stereotypes mean a common preconception or society's beliefs about accessories or characteristics that should be carried and performed by men or women.

The ideology about gender stereotypes has begun since the Industrial Revolution 19th Century. It was because the European and American lifestyles had changed. For instance, men ought to work outside the home to earn money and leave the women at home to manage the household and children (Lewin, 1984). Since then, society has treated men and women differently, and it is considered a standard concept. "Traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; while at the same time they cast women as emotional or irrational, weak, nurturing, and submissive." (Tyson, 2006). The construction concept of gender roles practically leads to the social agreement of gender stereotypes. Hence, discrimination toward women can be denied.

The superior and inferior groups are categorized due to gender roles. The inferior groups of people become the target of stereotyping and being a negative object from society. Stereotypes are misleading conceptions about a group of people usually created by the superior group (Blum, 2004). In the 21st century, the spread out of stereotyping is more accessible through media. The internet connection helps society to perpetuate the stereotype through a single perspective. Women's gender stereotypes are also created and contributed by movies. The stereotypes cannot be counted as a normal phenomenon because the effect would be dangerous.

National Commission on Violence against Women of the Republic of Indonesia reported 299.911 cases towards Indonesian women in 2020 (Komnas Perempuan, 2021). Meanwhile, the number of cyber violence against women and girls increased 920% compared to 2019 (Komnas Perempuan, 2021). Both data mentioned that women in Indonesia are not free from discrimination in offline or online interaction. The phenomenon of Femicide was also found in Indonesia, with 97 case numbers. Rainy Hutabarat points out that Femicide is domestic violence, misogynistic torture or murder (women hate syndrome), and homophobia (Aprillia, 2021). The number of discrimination cases should not be buried. All people should have the responsibility to spread equality and raise social awareness about equality.

Considering the case number, this research is still relevant and vital to be discussed. Two research questions are formulated. First, what are stereotypes towards women in *Trolls* movie and what ideology the movie seems to promote? This research aims to reveal the traditional stereotype towards women in *Trolls* movies and make the audience aware of the ideology of gender stereotypes towards women. This research promotes gender equality for all people regardless of their sexuality, sexual orientation, and sexual expression as a counter-attack.

There are two related studies about *Trolls* movies from 2019 until 2020. The first study is entitled "Analysis Turn-Taking Used by Princess Poppy and Branch in the *Trolls* Movie". This study concluded that the total number of turn-taking by Poppy and Branch is 267 that consists of 209 overlaps and 58 interruptions (Karmila & Lisdawati, 2020). The following related study is "An Analysis of Subtitling Methods in the Movie of *Trolls*". This study revealed that subtitle translation is more widely used than language source or foreignization methods (Putra, 2019). Both of the related studies focus on the linguistic approach. At the same time, this research concentrates on the literature field with the binary opposition theory as the literary approach. Although the data is similar, this is the first study that observes *Trolls* movies 2016 based on gender perspective.

METHOD

This research applies library research with the descriptive qualitative method. Creswell mentions that "Qualitative Method is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or group ascribe to a social or the human problem" (Creswell, 2009). To systematically conduct this research, several steps are taken. First, the writer watches the movie entitled *Trolls* (2016) by DreamWorks. After that, the writer formulates the research questions to determine the stereotypes towards women in the movie. In the next step, the writer selects the theory and defines the variable based on the theory.

Since this research analyzes gender stereotypes towards women in the movie, binary opposition theory can see the movie's structure. Binary opposition is a theory from the structuralism paradigm. The structuralism paradigm believes that every language system consists of structural elements that are related to one another. They also assure that humans see the structural components because of a difference or opposition from each component, or called binary opposition. Ferdinand De Saussure introduced structuralism. He divided the system of language into *Langue* and *Parole*. *Langue* is a structure on people's minds, while *Parole* is what people speak.

Based on Ferdinand De Saussure's paradigm, Levi Strauss developed a theory called binary opposition. Strauss realized that people make a language based on the system of difference or opposed pairs. To simplify, people understand *women* by contrasting it with the *word* men and *black* with *white*. Binary opposition theory explains that words must be balanced with other words (Tyson, 2006). By this theory and paradigm, the structure words' component is not only an independent item. They create a working unit to exist and relate to each other by the focus on two poles. To conclude, binary opposition narrows the perspective that no alternatives outside the poles.

As the explanation above, it can be concluded that society creates binary opposition. Binary opposition helps society categorize the superior and inferior position on social construction (Abrams, 2009). By this theory, the structure inside the movie will be seen. The primary data for this research is Poppy's and Branch's dialogues and pictures representing gender stereotyping toward women. After collecting the data, several variables are ready to be classified into some categories by documentation technique. Moreover, explaining the correlation of each data variable is the next step to answer the research questions correctly. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with library research to find the stereotype and ideologies inside *Trolls* Movie.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Four data variables are mentioned to expose the detail of gender stereotypes towards women inside *Trolls* movie. These variables are not only based on the text but also on the pictures. As mentioned before, these data variables are gathered by binary opposition theory. The data variables served in this research are rational and irrational, strong and weak, decisive and submissive, also bright and dark.

Rational and Irrational

Once upon a time, Poppy wanted to have a party with the Trolls. Poppy is the daughter of King Peppy and the princess of Trolls. She invited the big party and asked all Trolls to celebrate the party. However, Branch rejected the party invitation because he was afraid the Bergens would come to their area. As mentioned earlier, Bergens is the enemy of Trolls. The Bergens try to arrest and eat the Trolls because they believe Troll will bring happiness.

"Branch	: Poppy, if I can hear you, so can the Bergen.
Poppy	: Come on! We have not seen a Bergen in 20 years. They are not going to find us.
Branch	: No, they are not going to find me because I will be in my highly camouflaged. Heavily fortified, Bergen-proof survival bunker. Big? Loud? Crazy party? You are just going to lead the Bergens right to us (Mitchell, 2016)".

By this dialogue, Branch mentioned that he had the secret bunker to save himself from Bergens. Branch's life was full of preparation and contradicted Poppy's life, who had no plan. This dialogue conveys Poppy as the irrational character. She only thinks about pseudo happiness while Branch thinks about the effect of the party.

When the party began, the chef of Bergens heard the music and saw the fireworks. She decided to come and arrested several of the Trolls. Poppy tried to save and rescue other Trolls, but the chef already went away. As the princess and the party owner, she had the initiative to bring them back. She initiated to help the other Trolls with a full of braveness. She also tried to ask her father, King Peppy, to help her.

“Poppy : We have to rescue them.
King Peppy : No, Poppy, we have to run. Now, let’s go, everyone.
Poppy : What about "no troll left behind"?
King Peppy : I'm sorry, Poppy. That was a long time ago. And I'm not the king I once was.
Poppy : Then I'll go. I'll go and save them. (Mitchell, 2016)”.

This data slightly indicates Poppy’s eagerness and confidence in herself. However, the willingness and confidence mean nothing because she has no plan. She only asked for help from her father because her father had experienced escaping from the Bergens. The plan is needed because Poppy would go to the Bergens’ kingdom that she has not known before. This dialogue also portrays that woman is irrational.

Long story short, she thought this would be better if she asked Branch to help her. She chose to knock on Branch’s house. After Poppy knocks the Branch’s house, Branch shows his food and drink preparation to save his life. His preparation was well prepared because he predicted someday Bergens would find them. This act is portrayed in Branch’s dialogues when he shows Poppy his preparation.

“Branch : I really only have enough supplies down here to last me ten years, 11 years if I’m willing to store and drink my own sweat. You said I was crazy, huh? Well, who's crazy now? Me. Crazy prepares (Mitchell, 2016)”.

The context of the data is that Branch teased Poppy with his preparation. The rational character is implicitly stated in Branch’s characterization. Branch has prepared the bad and emergency condition while Poppy has nothing. She also felt amazed with Branch’s preparation because she never thought the Bergens would come to them.

Branch asked Poppy about how to save their friends from the Bergens. Branch thought Poppy would have the plan because she asked him to help her.

“Branch : Wait, wait, and wait. What’s your plan?

Poppy: : I just told you. To rescue everyone and make it home safely
Branch: : Okay. That's not a plan. That's a wish list.
Poppy: : Oh! I suppose you have a plan (Mitchell, 2016)".

This dialogue happened when Poppy and Branch were on their way to Bergens' kingdom. Poppy is portrayed as a woman who had a purpose but no plan. Along the way, she made a scrapbook and sang, which are not a good plan to rescue her friends. Through this dialogue, Branch is portrayed as rational while Poppy becomes irrational.

As the princess of Trolls who makes the chef of Bergens kidnapped some Trolls, Poppy should have more responsibility to save The Trolls than Branch. However, Branch becomes the rational character because he is a man, and Poppy looks irrational. The binary opposition between Poppy as a woman and Branch as a man conveys the traditional gender roles. Tyson stated that the traditional gender role portrays women as irrational humans and men as rational humans (Tyson, 2006). Furthermore, the binary opposition unconsciously put the woman as the inferior in the *Trolls* movie.

Strong and Weak

Other women's stereotypes that portrayed in this movie are the weakness of women. Before Poppy went to Bergen City, she tried to ask Branch's help for rescuing her friends. It can be indicated that a woman needs help from a man.

"Poppy : Which is why I have to ask you; will you go to Bergen town with me and save everyone?
Branch : What? No!". (Mitchell, 2016)

Poppy is portrayed as a woman with a lack of confidence. After her father would not help her to rescue her friends, she asked Branch to help her. In the first place, Branch also rejected her request. This movie portrayed Poppy, who always asked for help from the men. Finally, Poppy walked alone to Bergens' kingdom with the rest of her confidence before the spider attacked her.

When Poppy got into trouble with the spider, Branch suddenly became a strong character who saved Poppy from the spider attack. The spider attack began when Poppy was singing and did not aware of the situation around her. As a strong character, Branch defeated the spider while Poppy was dying as the weak character.

“Poppy : Branch, my men! You are right on time!
Branch : Oh right. Like you knew I was coming
Poppy : Yes! I figure after the third hug time getting eaten
by a Bergen would not seem so bad
Branch : And I figured there was no way you could do this
by yourself”. (Mitchell, 2016)

This scene shows that Branch is a strong man who saved Poppy. Branch also thinks that Poppy is weak, so he follows her to the Bergens’ kingdom. Based on Tyson’s traditional gender roles theory, women always represent weak characters while men represent strong characters. These stereotypes are proved by the theory of binary opposition that shows Poppy is a weak woman and Branch is a strong man. Furthermore, this movie vividly promotes the man as more superior than women.

Decisive and Submissive

Trolls movie's decisive and submissive characters were seen when the party was over and some of Trolls arrested by the Bergens. Poppy could not decide her plan or strategy to rescue the other Trolls in Bergens’ kingdom.

“Trolls : What’s going to happen now, Princess Poppy?
Poppy : I don’t know,
but I know we’re not giving up”. (Mitchell, 2016)

By this dialogue, it can be seen that Poppy needs the decisive partner. Although she is the princess, Poppy is portrayed as the receiver or the submissive. As explained by the previous data, Branch is the ordinary man described as the decisive character. Further, Poppy could not choose the plan without Branch, who acts like a gentleman and show masculinity to lead the way.

Poppy and Branch had successfully entranced the Bergens' kingdom to find their friend. They spied the dark situation around Bergens' kingdom before met the arrested Trolls. Their friends were caged for the Trollstice event the next morning.

“Poppy	: Guys!
Arrested Trolls	: Poppy! Celebrate good times, come on
Poppy	: It's a celebration
Branch	: Sssh (make a quiet sound and open the
cage)	
Arrested Trolls	: There's a party going on right here
Branch	: No! there is not a party going on right
here”	

(Mitchell, 2016).

Poppy was singing when they met their friends and did not escape them from the cage. Meanwhile, Branch bravely opened the cage for them. The quick response from Branch shows that he is the strong character and Poppy is the submissive character in the movie.

The writer also found other proved that portrayed Poppy as a submissive character. When the Bergens' trapped all Trolls and arrested them, Poppy lost the colour of the body (Figure 1). They are placed in a dark cage within Poppy and Branch. Poppy's colour that turned into grey visually representing her loss of optimism and motivation. This act made the other Trolls lost their colour as well.



Figure 1



Figure 2

The context of this data is that Poppy suddenly give up to rescue her friends. As the princess, Poppy is the major source of hope and happiness for all the Trolls. When their princess is gloomy, the other Trolls are quick to follow. They all turn grey and sad. Poppy could not decide the next plan. She focused on her failure

without compromising the others. Then Branch comes to motivate and bring her colour back (Figure 2). All Trolls are safe from Bergen City because of Branch's decisive mind. This scene shows traditional gender roles about women are submissive and men are decisive. All Trolls could not be saved if Branch did not have the decisive mind. They are all would be in danger with Poppy's submissive mind.

Bright VS Dark

Colour is an essential feature for animation movies (Kennedy, 2014). By the brilliant colour, the audience will grasp the meaning or the context of the movie. Colour in animation movies also needed to catch the kids' attention; hence they could watch it enthusiastically. Unfortunately, society has shaped colour into gender colour stereotypes. Society believes that pink is for a female and blue is for a male. By this stereotype, children could construct false information about gender (Kim, 2016). To raise the awareness of the gender stereotype through colour, this research also analyzes the characters' colour in the movie.

Poppy has a pink colour, while Branch has a blue and grey colour from top to bottom. From the appearance, it can be seen that there are stereotypes of women in Poppy's characters. As a woman, Poppy is coded with femininity and the bright pink colour. Everything about her is pink, from her hair, skin and eyes (Figure 3).



Figure 3

Poppy is feminine. She loves singing, hugging, scrapbooking, and glittering. She is also portrayed as a talkative and loud woman. Since World War II, the pink

colour has been heavily associated with women's femininity, emotions, and softness. "From the 1940s onward, pink was pushed as a woman's colour. "Think Pink" was the marketing slogan to convince women to embrace their femininity". (Frassanito & Pettorini, 2008).

Meanwhile, Branch is portrayed in grey colour due to his sadness (Figure 4). He is less colourful and grumpier. The paranoia towards Bergens happens because Bergen killed his grandmother. Branch is the only Trolls who does not sing or dance. He was suffering from depression and grief caused by the death of his grandmother. Throughout the movie, when the sadness disappears, Branch's true colour comes out (Figure 5).



Figure 4



Figure 5

Branch is different from Poppy. He is so calm and quiet. Similar to the pink colour, society shaped the blue and grey colour into masculinity category. This happened because "After World War II, blue was used extensively for men's uniforms. Therefore, blue became associated as more of a masculine colour". (Frassanito & Pettorini, 2008). By this proved, *Trolls* movie designed to be watched for the kids unconsciously brings the gender stereotype. The colour contradiction among both characters strengthens the traditional gender roles.

Patriarchal Ideology

Patriarchal ideology is a belief that men are better than women. Men are naturally given as the superior, while women are the inferior. Suyadya mentioned that this ideology limits the women to express themselves and pushes the women to stay at domestic, production, and social works (Hakim & Asri, 2019). The

impact of patriarchal ideology is the stereotypes that lead to discrimination, both verbal and non-verbal. Regarding patriarchal ideology, men will get more privileged than women. It “has the potential for theorizing violence against women because it keeps the focus on dominance, gender, and power” (Tonsing & Tonsing, 2019).

Either unconsciously or consciously, the promotion of patriarchal ideology through media will shackle women to speak up. Then, society will normalize the inequality between men and women. *Trolls* (2016) animation movie is one of the mediums that promote inequality between women and men. Through binary opposition theory, the contrast between men and women can be seen clearly. The promotion of traditional gender roles towards women determines the position as inferior. Ironically, patriarchal ideology is found in the animation movie which the audiences mostly are kids.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing *Trolls* Movie directed by Mike Mitchell in 2016 using binary opposition theory to see the traditional gender roles from *Trolls* movie, the writer concludes that women’s traditional gender roles stereotypes still exist in this movie. This is interesting to be analyzed because there are implicit portrayals of traditional gender roles. The stereotypes over women through Poppy as the character can be seen as irrational, weak, and submissive. In contrast, the stereotypes of man through Branch character are portrayed as rational, strong, and decisive.

The stereotype also can be seen from Poppy and Branch’s appearance. They look bright and dark. The binary opposition as a tool shows that their skin colour also creates a stereotype for women and men. From this movie, the researcher also can find the patriarchal ideology. The movie promotes the gender issue in this film that shows the man is superior to the woman. The patriarchal ideology is seen with the conclusion woman can become a leader but still needs a man in her life.

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