

Analysis of Social-Cultural Forces through Appreciation of Female Image in Films and Television Works Produced in 2018-2020

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Research Background

In today's society, the internet brings much more heated topics about females and feminism. Between 2018 and 2019, more movies and TV series revealed how people regard female characters. From the internet, we observed that a good female nowadays are mostly who is tough in life, independent from husband, and successful in businesses. Debatably, not everyone believes in these characteristics, since the cognition of a good female character differs in countries with different social and cultural backgrounds. Even inside a country, China, for example, people have a different thought on whether female doctor should cut their hair. In February 5th, Wuhan China, many women doctors cut their hair off in order to increase work efficiency. Some people felt that they are women hero, while others believe that cutting all the hair off is disrespectful to women doctors and too formalized. Indeed, stereotypes about the appearance, behavior, and responsibility of females still exist. By using representative movies or TV series that are produced in 2018-2019, we want to discover the social and cultural forces that drive to stereotypes on different female characters.

Research Purpose

During the research, we analyze the social and cultural forces that formed the female characters in movies. We aimed to explain how stereotypes of female characters exist and educate people to increase their tolerance on different perspectives about females and other social controversies.

Definition of Terms:

Social Media

Social Media is any digital tool, app, website, or computer program that allow people to share content and to comment on other information. In our research, we will be focusing on especially the entertainment branch of Social Media, we deem Social Media as a grand vehicle in which myriads of marketing, propagandas, and modeling are simultaneously at work. Of all these works, we pick the entertainment branch and will be studying the incarnation of socio-cultural evolutions in this field particularly.

Socio-Cultural Factors

Socio-Cultural factor is the combination or interaction of social and cultural elements, and it's related to the different groups of people in society and their habits, traditions, and beliefs. Additionally, Social aspect focuses on the forces within the society. Family, friends, colleagues, neighbors and the media are social factors. These factors can affect our attitudes, opinions and interests. The social factors shape who we are as people. It affects how we behave. (i.e. education level, lifestyles, religion and beliefs..) In our research, we will focus

on how the women figure is portrayed in the film, especially about their status and role as a family member (which is included in socio-cultural factor Family size and structure); their social class and identity (which is included in socio-cultural factor Social classes); and their education level (which itself is a socio-cultural factor).

Typical Female Figure

We perceive our feature-based analysis of film products and other media works could yield to a long list of features of the portrayal of female characters in films. Among those features, we will pick the ones that has the most frequency of appearance and aggregate them into one generalization of types——Typical Female Figure.

Evolution of Female Figure

The evolution of female figures is that women in movies have more possibilities, such as the possibility of becoming a company leader, the possibility of becoming a politician, or the possibility of saving the world. The evolution of female figures is that women in movies have more power, such as the right to make political decisions, the right to decide on family economic issues, and the right to choose marriage. We believe that these evolutions would be strong indicators of the social-cultural forces that we had enumerated above.

Cultural Area

Culture area, also called cultural area, culture province, or ethno-geographic area, in anthropology, geography, and other social sciences, a contiguous geographic area within which most societies share many traits in common. Well-known examples of culture areas and their traditional residents are found on every continent except Antarctica and include Scandinavia, homeland of the Vikings; the North American Plains, home of the Plains Indians; and Africa's Al-Sudd, the seasonal wetland that is home to the Nuer, Dinka, and other cattle pastoralists.

Features

When completing a character analysis, we need to look at the motivation, actions, dialogue, descriptions, and names of each character, all of which we use the term “feature” to describe.

1. Motivation: The underlying reasons for why the character acts and makes the choices in a certain way.
2. Actions: Character's action and it's the effect on other characters. (eg. Are they the type to thwart wrongdoings? Or are they devious and mischievous? Do they act impulsively? Do they act ethically?)
3. Dialogue: Tone and content of word a character uses.
4. Descriptions: The way people (or animal) who interact with the character describe them; the way the character describe themselves. Descriptions can be physical, judgmental, or emotional.
5. Names: Many authors or moviemakers convey information or personalities in the character's names.

After observing characters from five angles written above, we write the character analyzation based on different features: family backgrounds, appearance, relationships with friends, races, attitude towards difficulties, etc 这里大家再讨论！

Research Content

Our research aims to identify the representative female figure/image by geographical, simultaneously cultural, locations. For this goal, we came up with following research chain.

The first part of our research would be to hypothesize the core underlying social-cultural forces that would contribute to establishment and evolution of female figure. We will be presenting a general list of social-cultural driving forces and showing the elimination process during which we highlight the core forces. *专门提出

The second part would be to definite the research points for our film appreciation and image identification. We will establish our angle on the cornerstone of the core forces that we have identified in the first part. Thus, we will have a clear sense about what we are looking for in the films.

The third part would be film appreciation, we will categorize the published films in 2018-2020 into different groups depending on their geographical and cultural origin. Then, we will scan films in the same group with the precept of researching points and note down features, especially women figures', either metaphorically or evidently, features, that hint and support our points.

We will analyze the features and find the common ground of the features showcased by films within the group, thus establishing one "typical" female figure of the cultural group. At the same time, we will note features that either showcase different research points (those that we had eliminated from list) or oppose our original hypothesis. We will reevaluate our hypothesis according to these features and make adjustments. If the identified feature is so representative and is found in other films of the cultural group, we will take into account the research point indicated by this feature to our female figure. We will utilize the same procedure above to analyze films from all target cultural groups, and the last part of the research would be a comparison of the typical figures of different groups. We believe that the differences between the typical figures would on an extent manifest the differences of social-cultural evolution. Eventually, we seek to give a proper rationale of the differences between typical figures using knowledge we had learned during POSS course.

Research Method

In the same time dimension, study the female images in different regions.

【时间维度】 Determine the time dimension: film and television works in the 21st century. The main reason is that the 21st century is a pluralistic era, and there are more and more different female images for us to study. There are many excellent films in the last century, but the diversity is not as good as this century, and there is often less interpretation on women's roles. (理论支持)

【比较研究】 Emphasize different regions: ensure that each cultural area is covered, so that the paper is more convincing. The division of cultural areas is shown in the figure below. There are seven cultural areas. We want to get an average female image, so we probably need to see multiple works in a cultural area. However, the specific quantity should be adjusted according to the influence and cultural output of the cultural area. Note: cultural area should refer to "origin", i.e. works produced in a cultural area.

【研究对象】 Direction of film and television works: the first step of our thinking is to find out the social cultural forces, and then find these forces in the film and television works. According to the chart given by Selina, these forces can be social change, cultural change and natural environment change. Countless changes add up to history, so I would say that the film and television works we want to see should have historical traits. And we need a more

objective, high acceptance of the classification criteria. Anyone familiar with the film knows that a film must come on the market with a classification label (example: Comedy / love). It's very intuitive and fair: it's what the producers define their work. The next step is to confirm the label with "historical traits" (in fact, this step is to re evaluate the validity of the label from an academic point of view). I found a detailed classification and explanation of historical movies on the website provided to students by the New York Film Academy, as shown in the figure below. It is worth noting that there are overlaps between genes, which makes our research more difficult. We have to pick the most distinctive labels, such as history, epic, war.

This needs to be discussed at the next meeting.

Research Value

Recall our research background discussing the controversial status quo of discussion of women's rights and gender roles. Our research aim to achieve two goals: 1. Identify the underlying forces that create disparage between perception of women figures across different cultural groups; 2. To manifest our research findings so that people may be able to understand how the female figure in their group's collective unconscious is illustrated in social media. As assumed, social media is one of the most influential way of cultural intercourse and thus the women figures depicted in films represent the “name cards” of female figure of cultural groups. We hope that after the two goals are reached, people will have the chance also to perceive the causes of major differences between the groups and thus alleviate their prejudices against external manifestation of female figures.

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