

ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF CHINESE MAJOR CHARACTERS IN *CRAZY RICH ASIANS*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	i	
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ii	
ABSTRACT	iii	
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION		
Background of the Study	1	
Statement of the Problem.....	4	
Purpose of the Study.....	4	
Method of Research.....	5	
Organization of the Thesis.....	5	
CHAPTER TWO: ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF CHINESE MAJOR CHARACTERS IN CRAZY RICH ASIANS.....		6
CHAPTER THREE: CONCLUSION.....		26
BIBLIOGRAPHY		29
APPENDICES:		
Synopsis of <i>Crazy Rich Asians</i>	33	
Biography of Jonathan Murray Chu	34	

ABSTRACT

Dalam tugas akhir ini saya akan membahas representasi dua karakter utama Tionghoa di film *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018). Dalam menganalisis representasi kedua karakter utama Tionghoa tersebut saya akan menggunakan konsep teori umum tentang representasi dari salah satu ahli teori kebudayaan yang terkenal yaitu Stuart Hall serta beberapa elemen dari kajian pembelajaran film.

Crazy Rich Asians menceritakan tentang kisah percintaan antara Rachel Chu dan Nicholas Young. Rachel merupakan seseorang profesor keturunan Tionghoa yang lahir dan dibesarkan di Amerika. Sedangkan Nicholas berasal dari keluarga konglomerat di Singapura. Kisah perjalanan cinta antara Rachel dan Nicholas diuji oleh tindak campur dari ibu Nicholas yang bernama Eleanor yang tidak merestui hubungan tersebut. Film ini merepresentasikan kedua tokoh utama tersebut secara unik dan berbeda. Saya menemukan bahwa film *Crazy Rich Asians* bukanlah sekedar film bernuansa kisah cinta pada umumnya. Namun, film ini berusaha untuk merepresentasikan orang-orang keturunan Tionghoa secara umum dan wanita secara khusus, serta mendukung mereka untuk berani melawan stereotip yang berlaku di masyarakat

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Every person represents a culture from which they originate. Race or ethnic can become one of the factors which affect one's culture. The research object of my thesis, a film entitled *Crazy Rich Asians*, shows Asians representation. As cited in Flare, "The film, which hits theatres on August 15, is based on the best-selling book of the same name and has been lauded as a major step forward for Asian representation on the big screen" (Chung). Besides, New York Film Academy states, "Beyond the actors in *Crazy Rich Asians* being diverse in more ways than one, they also portray a deep humanity of the characters through their individual hopes, dreams, relationship problems, and longing for love and acceptance, creating a more fleshed out and truer representation of Asians in the real world" (Nam).

In fact, *Crazy Rich Asians* is also the first movie that features all Asian major characters in the last 25 years. As cited, "It's the first modern story with an all-Asian cast and an Asian-American lead in 25 years; the

last, *The Joy Luck Club*, was in 1993” (Ho).

Crazy Rich Asians is a romance film which is adapted from Kevin Kwan’s 2003 novel. The film is directed by Jonathan Murray Chu. Besides directing this film, he is also the director of *Step Up 2*, *Step Up 3D*, *Justin Bieber: Never Say Never* and *G.I. Joe 2*, and *Now You See Me 2*. In Golden Globe Nomination cited in *Variety*, Chu expresses that he wants to tell a story through this film, “I feel like compared to all of you I’ve been a really bad Asian. Seriously, because I never felt like I was in any way was going to represent my community” (Nickolai). He also says “So I did all these things never wanting to express this little secret part of me until one day my father died, and I realized I had a story I wanted to tell” (Nickolai). The film follows a Chinese-American girl named Rachel Chu who has a relationship with one of the richest men in Singapore named Nick Young.

As being mentioned before, *Crazy Rich Asians* carries Asians representation. Specifically, this film represents some of Chinese stereotypes. Chinese in this context refers to an ethnic group. As cited in *Britannica*, ethnic group is defined as “a social group or category of the population that, in a larger society, is set apart and bound together by common ties of race, language, nationality, or culture” (“Ethnic Group”). Thus, even though the characters in *Crazy Rich Asians* do not live in the mainland China, they are still considered Chinese ethnic who are bound together by common ties of race and culture.

The Association for Consumer Research makes a survey for their Singaporean Chinese and Chinese American consumers to prove whether both of the group share the same values, attitudes, beliefs and behavior or not. The

consumers are given some ten typical Chinese value statements and they are asked to tick the list if they agree with it. As a result, The Association for Consumer Research finds that, “It is not surprising to find Americans who are as Chinese as the Singaporean. Both groups hold the same values, attitudes, and beliefs, and exhibit similar behaviors” (McCullough et al. 578).

There are so many stereotypes of Chinese people. One of the most well-known Chinese stereotype is they see family as an important aspect. As cited in GB Times, “Family relations and values are extremely important for Chinese ...” (“The Importance of Family in Chinese Culture”). This stereotype is shown in the film and is supported by Ink Stone News, which states that “... Crazy Rich Asians as a good introduction to elements of traditional Chinese culture, such as the importance of family” (Tsoi). Another stereotype of Chinese people are their intelligence and conservativeness. For Chinese parents, they are known for their authoritarian style in parenting. Meanwhile, for Chinese women, they are being stereotyped to appear less dominant. As cited in a journal article, “... women are expected to keep their head low, keep their mouth shut and keep their hands busy” (Jirong 2).

In representing Chinese stereotypes, the film shows them well through the characters. As cited in Washington Post, “In fact, all of these crazy rich Asians are genuine, relatable characters” (Kirby). Since the characters are said to be relatable in showing Chinese culture, I am going to analyze the major characters in this film. The major characters that I choose are Eleanor Young and Rachel Chu.

The reason why I choose to analyze Eleanor Young and Rachel Chu are

because they have the most dominant role in the film. Besides, the conflicts that happen in the film are involving among them. Thus, I am going to analyze Eleanor's and Rachel's representation in this film and compare it to Chinese stereotypes in order to see if Eleanor's and Rachel's representation challenges or conforms to the stereotypes and why.

In analyzing the representation of Chinese major characters, I am going to use Stuart Hall's theory of representation. Hall describes representation as "the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture through the use of language, signs and images which stand for or represent things" (Hall 2). In supporting my analysis on visual imagery, I will refer to some aspects of film study in completing my analysis. There are two aspects that I refer to, they are cinematography and mise-en-scène. Cinematography refers to the camera works. It deals with the operation, placement and movement of the camera. Meanwhile, mise-en-scène refers to all the things that are put in the frame, as well as the arrangement of visual weights and movement within the film frame.

Statement of the Problem

The problems I am going to discuss are:

1. How are the Chinese major characters represented in this film
2. Why are the Chinese major characters represented in such ways?

Purpose of the Study

Based on the statement of the problems, the purposes of the study are:

1. To show how the Chinese major characters are represented in this film.

2. To show why the Chinese major characters are represented in such ways.

Method of Research

For this thesis, I use library research as my method of research. First, I watched *Crazy Rich Asians* several times. Then I gathered all the data needed from the film such as screenshots and dialogue proofs. After that I analyzed the dialogues and the visualization in the film and finally I drew a conclusion.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter One is Introduction which consists of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the analysis of the representation of Chinese major characters in *Crazy Rich Asians*. Chapter Three is the conclusion from the analysis of the characters. The thesis ends with Appendices, which consist of Synopsis of *Crazy Rich Asians* and Biography of Jonathan Murray Chu.

CHAPTER TWO

ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF CHINESE MAJOR CHARACTERS IN *CRAZY RICH ASIANS*

In this chapter, I am going to analyze the representation of Chinese major characters. *Crazy Rich Asians* is a story of Rachel Chu, whose relationship with her boyfriend, Nick Young, is not blessed by Nick's mother, Eleanor. At first, Rachel thinks that she will not face problems in meeting Nick's family since they are also Chinese. Having met Nick's family, Rachel finds out that even though she is a Chinese, she is still seen differently especially by Eleanor.

Rachel is a Chinese but the fact that she was born and raised in America makes her become westernized. In this film, Rachel's westernized mind and manner are the main reason why Eleanor does not bless her relationship. Even though Rachel and Eleanor are Chinese, the film represents them in different ways. The way how the film represents them and the purpose in representing them in such ways will be my focus in this chapter.

In analyzing how they are being represented, I am going to use Stuart Hall's theory of representation. According to Hall, representation is "the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture through the use of language, signs and images which stand for or represent things" (2). In this context, the dialogues, action, and visualization that happen in the film are exchanged with meaning, which is the representation of Chinese traits, value, and tradition through the characters as well as the scene.

In analyzing Rachel's and Eleanor's representation, I will refer to their dialogues and visualization. In completing the visualization analysis, I am going to use some aspects of film studies. The aspects are cinematography and mise-en-scene. Cinematography is defined as "...a blend of science and art used to capture, manipulate and store moving images for the purpose of creating a motion picture" (Rouse). It usually refers to the cameraworks, deals with the operation, placement and movement of the camera. Meanwhile, mise-en-scene is defined as "a French term that means "placing on stage." The frame and camerawork are also considered part of the mise-en-scène of a movie" (Moura). It usually refers to all the things that are put in the frame, as well as the arrangement of visual weights and movements within the film frame. I am going to analyze Eleanor first then followed by Rachel.

Eleanor

The first characteristic of Eleanor is authoritative. Authoritative means "demonstrating authority" ("Authoritative"). According to Collins Dictionary, authority is defined as, "the power or right to control, judge, or prohibit the actions of others" ("Authority"). Eleanor's being authoritative can

be seen throughout the film from how she interacts with the other characters.

The first proof of her being authoritative is when Eleanor meets Rachel for the first time. In this scene, Eleanor asks Rachel about her job and also about her mother. When Rachel answers the questions, she also explains how her mother becomes a successful immigrant in America while having nothing. However, Eleanor replies to Rachel, “Pursuing one’s passion, How American. Well your mother is very open minded not like here where parents are so obsessed to shaping their children’s life” (00:40:33).

Based on how Eleanor replies to Rachel, she tries to demonstrate her authority. In this scene, Eleanor tries to show that she has an authority to control or prohibit any actions of her son. She shows it by referring to Singapore parents in general. By replying like that to Rachel, Eleanor tries to inform Rachel that she is also obsessed in shaping Nick’s life.

Eleanor’s being authoritative to her son can be proven when she intervenes in Nick’s relationship which happens in Collin’s, Nick’s best friend’s, wedding. In the scene, Eleanor tells Nick that she hires a private investigator to search information about Rachel’s family background and she finds out a difference. Before this scene happens, Rachel tells Eleanor that her father dies and her mother decides to immigrate to America and start a new life with Rachel. However, over this time Rachel does not know the real truth. Her mother does not tell her that actually her father is still alive, and the reason why she immigrates to America because she cheats on her husband and becomes pregnant with another man.

Knowing that there is a different information between what Rachel has said and what the private investigator has found, Eleanor cuts off Nick’s and

Rachel's relationship. In the scene, Eleanor tells Nick that "we cannot deal with this sort of family" (01:33:09). It can be seen from how Eleanor immediately cuts off Nick's and Rachel's relationship that she is an authoritative person. Instead of asking and letting Rachel to clarify the problem. Eleanor deliberately gives Nick a command. Eleanor's action shows that she demonstrates her power to control and also prohibit the actions of her son.. In this context, she tries to limit her son's choice in choosing future partner. Thus, it can be proven that Eleanor is an authoritative person.

Eleanor's being authoritative can be proven also through her action towards Rachel when making dumplings in the family gathering. In the scene, Eleanor declares that she does not bless her child's relationship with Rachel. The conversation between them starts when Rachel praises Eleanor's ring. Then Eleanor tells Rachel that Ah-ma, Eleanor's husband's mother, does not bless Eleanor's relationship with Nick's father.

Eleanor's being authoritative can be proven in this dialogue, "It took many years, and she had good reason to be concerned because I have no idea the work and the sacrifice it would take. There were many days when I wondered if I would ever measure up but having been through it all, I know this much. You will never be enough" (01:12:45). The way Eleanor states that Rachel is not enough for her son is an indirect hint that Rachel should give up on her relationship with Nick. In this scene, it can be seen clearly that Eleanor is an authoritative person by demonstrating her power as Nick's mother to control her son's life and also to determine who deserves to be Nick's future wife.

Eleanor is not only being authoritative to her son and Rachel, but she also likes being authoritative to other characters, for instance to her friends. The scene happens when Eleanor and her friends gather together to read the Bible. At first, Eleanor leads the worship by reading the Bible verse gradually. Then, her friends start to ask Eleanor several questions about the gossip that Nick is coming to Singapore with her girlfriend. Eleanor replies to her friends, "I think we should return to the word of God" (00:08:22). Then she orders Alix, one of her friends, to continue to read the Bible. However, her friends do not stop asking her about Nick. When Eleanor decides to call Nick, she orders her friends "Move on to the Corinthians, I will catch up" (00:09:24). In this scene, we can see Eleanor's authoritative side from how she orders her friends around to do what she tells them.

Eleanor's being authoritative can also be proven in some small events. For instance, Eleanor thinks that Alistair's, one of Nick's cousins, and his girlfriend's behavior is too wild in Collin's wedding. Then she orders Oliver, "Oliver, please take care of that" (01:30:10). From how Eleanor reacts, it clearly shows that she is an authoritative person. She likes to demonstrate her power to control, judge and prohibit the actions of other even when she is just a guest in that wedding. Thus, her action of ordering Oliver to separate Alistair and his girlfriend proves that she is an authoritative person.

Eleanor's being authoritative can be proven also through figure one.



Figure 1.
Rachel tells Eleanor about her mother's
life

The scene in figure 1 happens in Eleanor's and Rachel's first meeting. In this scene, Eleanor is shot in a medium close up. The medium close up helps the audience to focus on the characters in the frame. It can be seen in the frame that Eleanor is positioned in front of Nick and Rachel and she also being depicted larger. By framing Eleanor to occupy half of the frame, the film tries to emphasize Eleanor's presence. The emphasis on Eleanor suggests the dominant presence of Eleanor in Nick's and Rachel's relationship which points at her being authoritative. Meanwhile, Eleanor's being blurred suggests the upcoming scenes. Even though Eleanor is being dominant in their relationship, Nick and Rachel are success in managing Eleanor's domination.

Eleanor's being authoritative can also be seen visually through figure 2. Figure 2 is when Eleanor is at Nick's and Rachel's engagement party. This scene happens after she already blesses Nick's and Rachel's relationship.



Figure 2.
Eleanor is in Nick's and Rachel's
engagement party

The film frames Eleanor in the center. The way how Eleanor is positioned in the frame suggests her domination as she becomes the main focus for the audience to see. The director strengthens her domination by blurring the other characters in the frame. Since the scene happens after she finally gives in and blesses Nick's and Rachel's relationship, the way she is framed and positioned still shows that she maintains her authority and power.

Eleanor's being authoritative to her son is actually conforming one of the stereotypes about Chinese parents. As cited in *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese Psychology*, "Compared with Western parents, Chinese parents are more controlling and power assertive and less responsive to their children" (Bond 45). Besides, it is said also that "They are less likely to use reasoning and introduction and appear more authoritarian than Western parents ..." (Bond 45).

Eleanor is not only represented as an authoritative parent since Eleanor is not only being authoritative to her son. Throughout the film, she likes showing

authority to other characters. Thus, it can be said that Eleanor is an authoritative person.

Interestingly, Eleanor's authoritative characteristic at the same time confronts the Chinese women stereotype. An article journal says that "... women are expected to keep their head low, keep their mouth shut and keep their hands busy" (Jirong 2). The way Eleanor likes to control things, judge, and order other characters challenges the traditional stereotype of Chinese women. Thus, on the one hand, Eleanor's being authoritative conforms to the Chinese parent stereotype, but on the other hand, it also challenges the Chinese women stereotype.

The second characteristic of Eleanor is conservative. Conservative means "tending to emphasize the importance of preserving traditional cultural and religious values, and to oppose change, esp. sudden change" ("Conservative").

The first proof of her being conservative is when Eleanor and her big family gather to make dumplings. In this scene, Eleanor tells Rachel, "I was dropped out from the university when we got married. I chose to help my husband run his business and to raise a family" (01:10:10). Then, she continues, "For me, it is a privilege but for you, you may think it is old-fashioned" (01:10:18).

Eleanor's being conservative can be seen through her dialogue. Her willingness to sacrifice her study in order to arrange her future with her husband shows that she still holds one of Chinese women stereotypes. It is known that a Chinese woman is expected to become a virtuous wife and good mother. "The aim of traditional women's education was limited to the teaching of social ethics and family traditions with an emphasis on how to become a virtuous wife and good

mother” (Lee 345). Eleanor’s dialogue shows the stereotype of Chinese woman who focuses on becoming a virtuous wife and a good mother, since she says that she has to quit her study to help her husband to run a business as well as raising a family.

Eleanor’s being conservative also shows in the same scene in different dialogues. She says, “It is nice that you appreciate this house and us being here together wrapping dumpling, but all this was not just happen. It is because we know to put family first instead of chasing one’s passion” (01:10:23). She also says, “Ah-ma says if we don’t pass the tradition like this, they will disappear” (01:08:50).

Her dialogue above shows how conservative Eleanor is when she emphasizes the importance of preserving the Chinese traditions, that is putting one’s family as a priority. As cited in GB Times, “Family relations and values are extremely important for Chinese ...” (“The importance of family in Chinese culture”). Thus, Eleanor’s statement about putting family first is a clear proof of her conservative trait.

Eleanor’s conservative trait can also be proven through her dislike towards Rachel. When Eleanor and Rachel play Mahjong, Eleanor reveals that she does not like Rachel. “You are a foreign, an American and all American is think about their own happiness” (01:43:54). As being mentioned before, Eleanor puts family as the priority instead of pursuing one’s passion and she does not see that trait in Rachel. Therefore, she is afraid that Rachel’s ambition will ruin her son’s life. This scene clearly shows how Eleanor tends to preserve Chinese traditions and oppose something that is different from the value she believes in.

Eleanor's being conservative can also be proven visually when Eleanor and Rachel meet for the first time. Figure 3 shows the scene when Rachel hugs her in their first meeting.



Figure 3.

Rachel hugs Eleanor on their first meeting

In the frame, Eleanor is shot in close up with a static camera movement. The close up shot and its static movement help the audience to focus on Eleanor's facial expression when Rachel hugs her. Eleanor's facial expression suggests a sense of discomfort since it is uncommon in Chinese tradition to hug someone you just meet, let alone your future in law. "Don't go straight for a hug. Especially when meeting someone for the first time. Any body contact, apart from a simple handshake, may make your new Chinese friends feel uncomfortable" ("Chinese etiquette – Do's and Don'ts in China"). Therefore, Eleanor feels uncomfortable when Rachel hugs her in the first meeting. Eleanor's uncomfortable expression suggests that she is a conservative person in the context of Chinese tradition of meeting someone new.

Eleanor's being conservative represents Chinese people in general. It is known that even though Chinese people live in a modern world, they do not allow their basic Chinese norms being threatened or interfered by another the social

customs which reflect the complexities of heterogeneous societies. However, as long as it does not threatened the basic Chinese norms, they will accept the social custom. For instance, religious conversion, educational standards and career patterns outside the Chinese community. As Wang, et al. states, “In many case, Many Chinese would in fact regard these modern norms as more or less Chinese because they are acceptable to Chinese almost everywhere and can be seen to strengthen modern Chinese culture without threatening or interfering with basic Chinese norms” (14). It can be seen from the quotation that Chinese people is still conservative since they tend to avoid change and they prefer to perpetuate their traditional norms. Thus, Eleanor’s conservative trait conforms to the stereotype of Chinese people in general.

Rachel

The second character that I am going to discuss is Rachel. She is represented as an open-minded person. Open-minded means “willing to consider ideas and opinions that are new or different to your own” (“Open minded”).

Rachel’s open-minded trait can be proven when Rachel is picking a dress with her mother for Collin’s wedding. In the scene, Rachel wants to pick a white and blue striped dress. Knowing that white color is usually worn for funeral in Chinese belief, Rachel’s mother advises her to wear a red dress since it symbolizes good fortune in Chinese culture. At first, Rachel subtly rejects the idea by replying “Great! I was really going for that lucky baby maker vibe”. (00:10:14). After Rachel says that to her mother, she still searches for another

dress. Then Rachel and her mother have a conversation about Nick's family, until her mother explains that even though Rachel's face is really Chinese and she speaks Chinese language too but she is different with Nick's family. Then her mother tells Rachel, "You are different, but wearing a lucky color will make a good first impression." After her mother tells her like that, she changes her mind and she accepts the idea to wear the red dress. The way how Rachel accepts her mother advice shows that she is an open-minded person since she is willing to consider ideas and opinions that are new for her

Rachel's being open-minded can also be proven visually in figure 4 below.



Figure 4.
Rachel wraps dumpling together with
Nick's big family

In figure 4, Rachel and Nick are shown in a close-up shot. This scene happens when Rachel is learning to make dumplings at Nick's grandmother's house. The medium close-up shot emphasizes Rachel's facial expression that looks enthusiastic in learning to make dumplings. Rachel also says to Nick's grandmother that she really wants to learn how to make dumpling. Besides, in this scene, Rachel's being open minded can also be proven when she expresses

her gratitude to experience the tradition that she has never done before. She tells Nick's family, "It is great seeing all you guys like this. When I was growing up, it is just me and my mom which I love but we did not have a family like this. It is really nice." (01:09:31). This action shows that she really enjoys and loves to learn the Chinese tradition. Besides, this dialogue also implies that her enthusiasm in wrapping the dumpling is not because of she is forced to look enthusiastic in front of her future in-law's family.

Rachel is also represented as a self-reliant person. Self-reliant means "reliant upon one's self: trusting to one's own powers or judgement" ("Self-reliant"). Rachel's being self-reliant can be seen mostly through her actions. The most significant scene that shows her being a self-reliant figure is when she is at Araminta's, Collin's fiancé, bachelorette party. In this scene, Rachel is mocked as being a gold digger through gory writings using a dead fish which is sent to her room. When Astrid wants to call the security, Rachel replies, "No, I do not want to make a scene" (01:02:43). Instead of calling Nick and telling him what happens to her, she remains strong by cleaning the room by herself and also burying the dead fish. Rachel's action shows that she is a self-reliant girl who likes to rely on herself.

Rachel's being self-reliant also can be proven through the following framings.



Figure 5.
Rachel meets Eddie and his wife in Tan's flower party



Figure 6.
Rachel attends Collin's wedding

Rachel's self-reliant is also strengthened by how the film often singles out Rachel. Single out means that the film intentionally separates a character from others so as to make her different from the rest, either for special recognition or treatment ("Single Out").

Cinematographically, Rachel's being self-reliant can be seen in figures 5, and 6. Since in figure 5 and 6, Rachel is going through an intimidation, thus those framings help to strengthen the visual of Rachel's being self-reliant. In figure 5, Rachel is going through intimidation by Eddie, Nick's cousin, who keeps asking

about Rachel's background. Eddie asks, "So, you're not from a Taiwan Chu family? Hong Kong Telecom Chu? Malaysian packing peanut Chu? (00:42:07). From figure 5, it can be seen that Rachel's position is opposing Eddy and his wife. This framing in figure 5 helps to strengthen Rachel's being self-reliant visually.

In figure 6, Rachel's position is singled out when she is surrounded and observed by Eleanor and her friends.. Meanwhile in figure 6, Rachel is going through intimidation from Eleanor. In the scene, Eleanor rejects Rachel to sit together with her by saying "I am sorry, our row is full." (01:23:23). The framing in figure 6 helps to strengthen the visual of Rachel's being self-reliant.

Rachel's being self-reliant also can be seen in figure 7.



Figure 7.
When Rachel invites Eleanor to play
Mahjong

This scene happens after Eleanor declares that she does not bless Nick's relationship with Rachel and after that she decides to ask Eleanor out to play Mahjong game. In figure 7, it can be seen that Rachel invites two stranger ladies to play Mahjong game with Eleanor. Rachel says, to Eleanor, " Do not worry about them. They half deaf and only speak Hokkien" (01:42:25). In the scene, Rachel does not invite Nick, her mother or even Peik Lin, her friend, to support

her. Instead, she invites two other ladies who do not understand English language. The fact that she faces her own problem without getting any supports from other characters show her being self-reliant. The way Rachel shows how she does not depend on Nick or her friend strengthens her being self-reliant.

Rachel's being self-reliant confront the stereotypical of Chinese women who are usually depend on man. As Attane in China perspectives states, " ..., women often remain dependent on men, both at economic level and as regards decision-making" (Attane 15). Based on how Rachel performs to rely on herself both on economic and decision-making, it shows that she confronts the stereotypical of Chinese women in general.

Rachel is also represented as a clever person. Clever is defined as " quick in thinking or learning; intelligent" ("Clever"). Rachel's being represented as a clever person who shows the ability to think quickly and intelligently can be seen throughout the film. Nick tells Eleanor that, " She is brilliant, NYU's youngest faculty member" (00:39:41). This dialogue proves that Rachel is a clever person since she is the youngest professor in New York University in the field of game theory which shows her intelligence.

Rachel's cleverness can also be seen in the mahjong scene. After having some questions and answers session with Eleanor, Rachel uses a brilliant strategy in order to win Eleanor's heart. She deliberately lets Eleanor win the mahjong by discarding the eight bamboo tiles, even though she also has a chance to win the game. She uses a strategy that she uses in her class before when she plays cards with Curtis. She knows that human's brain hates the idea of losing something. Therefore, she tells Eleanor that no one is winning in the context of her

relationship with Nick. Rachel tells Eleanor, “If Nick chooses me, he will lose his family, and if he chooses his family, he might spend the rest of his life resenting you” (01:44:50). This strategy turns out to be successful in making Eleanor rethink about her decision on her son’s relationship with Rachel and even approve the relationship in the end.

The way how Rachel cleverly turns the mahjong game into a strategy to soften Eleanor’s heart shows her cleverness. It can be seen from how she demonstrates her intelligence and ability to think and learn about the situation quickly. In the end, her cleverness is paid off when Eleanor gives her blessing to her relationship with Nick.

Rachel’s being clever can be proven in figure 8.



Figure 8.
Rachel’s first appearance in the movie

Rachel’s ability to think and learn quickly can be proven since her first appearance in the film. The scene happens when she is playing cards with Curtis, one of her students. In the card game, Rachel knows that Curtis is not playing with his psychological side but with his logic. Therefore, she bets all her money and it makes Curtis lose his confidence. However, it turns out that her cards are even worse than Curtis’. The way how she demonstrates her intelligence and

ability in quick thinking proves that she is a clever person.

Figure 8 can also prove Rachel's being clever visually. In figure 8, Rachel is depicted in a medium close up shot. This shot helps the audience to focus on her facial expression. The way how the director chooses to omit the rest of the students in the class by darkening the background also helps the audience to focus on Rachel. It can be inferred that her facial expression demonstrates intimidation.

In the film, when Rachel declares that she bets all the chips, she tilts her face slightly downwards. As Latson states, "Tilting in either direction ... correlate with higher testosterone levels—and greater aggression... Participants in the study also spontaneously tilted their faces when they were told to try to look intimidating." Besides, the way how Rachel stares at Curtis emphasizes her intimidating action. As Latson states, "Staring is another powerful intimidator." Thus, it can be proven that in this frame Rachel tries to intimidate Curtis which turns out to be successful.

Her intimidation strategy indicates a sign of cleverness or intelligence. As Darder states, "...if your intelligence is real good, you cannot be easily intimidated. If you have a high intellect and your confidence at its best, then intimidation and smarts would run in your hand." Besides that, since this scene is Rachel's first appearance in the film, the scene acts as an establishing shot, which in this case establishing what kind of character Rachel is.

Other characters in the film also admit that Rachel is clever, which can be seen through several small scenes. At the first scene when Rachel is at Peik Lin's house, Peik Lin's father says to his son that he should date a girl like Rachel.

“This is kind of a girl you should date: smart beautiful not like those...”

(00:30:10). In another scene when Rachel and Peik Lin meet in a restaurant, Peik

Lin says, “While in reality you are a super smart professor game theory”

(01:16:10).

The representation of Rachel as a clever character conforms to the stereotype about Chinese in general. It is known worldwide that Chinese people are often associated as someone who is intelligent. “Almost every movie/TV show ever made has had a nerd played by an Asian kid, everyone just kind of assumes that every Chinese kid is good at math and science” (“Stereotypes / Myths of Chinesepeople-Busted”). By representing Rachel in this way, the film still preserves the clever Chinese stereotypes through Rachel.

After analyzing Eleanor and Rachel, I find out some Chinese stereotypes that are being conformed. In Eleanor, I find out that the film conforms the conservativeness of Chinese people. It can be seen from how Eleanor emphasizes the importance of preserving traditional cultural and religious values, and to oppose change. Meanwhile in Rachel, I find out that the film conforms the stereotypical of Chinese people that is being clever that performs intelligent and quick in thinking or learning.

However, I also find out that some characteristics of the two characters actually challenge some stereotypes. In Rachel, I find out that her being open minded challenge the stereotypical of Chinese people that is conservative. Besides, Rachel’s being self-reliant also challenges the stereotypical of Chinese women that usually depend on men both one economic and decision-making,

Eleanor’s authoritative characteristic conforms and challenges the

common stereotype of Chinese. By representing Eleanor as an authoritative person, the film conforms the stereotypical of Chinese parent in general who appears to be more authoritarian than Western parents. However, Eleanor's authoritative side also challenges the stereotypical of Chinese women who are usually expected to keep their head low, keep their mouth shut and keep their hands busy.

By conforming to some stereotypes, I argue that this film wants to show that Chinese people still maintain their traditions. Besides that, this film also shows that although some Chinese traditions seem to be too troublesome in the fast-moving contemporary world, they still carry important purposes. For instance, the tradition of dumpling wrapping helps to maintain closeness in a family and also to preserve the culinary tradition.

By challenging the stereotype of Chinese people in general and Chinese women in particular, the film shows that some stereotypes have shifted or turned into hybrid. It means that the conventional stereotypes of Chinese alone cannot be a standard of determining Chinese identity. Especially with the dispersion of Chinese people all around the globe, it becomes even much harder to define Chinese identity through their conventional stereotypes. In other words, the film wants to say that Chinese identity is fluid and sometimes hybridized.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCLUSION

Having watched and analyzed the Chinese major characters in the film, I would like to draw a conclusion in this chapter. In analyzing Eleanor and Rachel, I find several findings. First of all, I find some characteristics that are well represented them.

The first character, Eleanor, is represented as an authoritative character who likes to demonstrate authority. She likes to demonstrate her power to control people around her. It can be seen from how she likes to control other characters in the film, including her son, Rachel, her friends, and her relatives. Besides, Eleanor is also represented as a conservative character who tends to preserve the traditional value and oppose sudden changes. Her conservative sides can be proven when she tries to emphasize the Chinese norms and values. For instance, the importance of putting family as a priority instead of one's passion.

Eleanor's being represented as a conservative person conforms the stereotype of Chinese people. It is known that Chinese people tend to emphasize the importance of preserving traditional culture. However, Chinese people in

general do allow some modern cultural norms such as religious conversion as long as it does not threaten the basic cultural norms. Meanwhile, Eleanor's being authoritative conforms which at the same time challenges the stereotypical of Chinese people. Her authoritative side conforms the stereotypical of Chinese parents in general. As being known that Chinese parents tend to appear more authoritarian than western parents. Her being authoritative also challenges the stereotype of Chinese women who are expected to be less showing power.

The second character, Rachel, is represented as an open-minded character who is willing to consider new opinions that are new for her. Her being open-minded can be seen when she is trying to adapt and accept to Chinese traditions or norms that are new for her. For example, the belief of color's meaning and the wrapping dumpling tradition. Secondly, she is also represented as a clever character. The most significant scene is when Rachel is playing mahjong game with Eleanor. It can be seen from how she performs her intelligence and ability to learn and think quickly. Lastly, she is also represented as a self-reliant character who depends much on herself. It can be proven when she solves most of her problems without help from the others.

After analyzing the characters of Eleanor and Rachel, I find that their characteristics both challenge and conform to the traditional stereotypes of Chinese people. I argue that the film tries to show the reality about contemporary Chinese identity, that it is a fluid and hybrid identity. It can be proven in the film when the two major Chinese characters have both conforming and challenging Chinese stereotypical characteristics. I argue that the film intentionally does that to show that there is no static identity because as time goes by, identity also shifts

and adapts. In addition, the film clearly depicts overseas Chinese that no longer live in China. Thus, it is safe to say that there is no accurate determinant in describing Chinese identity. Besides, this idea is also conveyed by the director when he clearly says that he is not going to represent his community in this film which indicates that he is aware of the difficult challenge to portray a contemporary Chinese identity.



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