

The Representation of Liberal Feminism through Carly Whitten's Characterization on *The Other Woman* (2014)

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ABSTRACT

The *Other Women's* Carly Whitten is a dynamic and round character. It could be argued that her characterizations, attitudes, and behavior represent the value of liberal feminism. It depicts some issues regarding gender issues, where women are seen and treated lowly by a man. Moreover, Liberal feminism is a branch of feminism that advocates eliminating gender inequality through having equal rights for both genders. It focuses on women's ability to show and maintain their equality and maintain their equality through their actions and choices. This film is about Carly as a successful career woman who is cheated by a man named Mark. After she meets with Kate, Mark's wife, and Amber, Mark's other mistress, they plan revenge for Mark. Furthermore, the characterization of Carly depicts liberal feminism's personal autonomy proposed by Emily Baehr (2007). This study will use a qualitative method to reveal the representation of liberal feminism of Carly Whitten. Moreover, the analysis of characterizations and find out that Carly has smart, hard-working, independent, supportive, and determined characteristics. Therefore, those characteristics will be used to analyze the idea of personal autonomy presented by Carly Whitten.

Keywords: Feminism, liberal feminism, personal autonomy, characterizations

ABSTRAK

Karakter Charlie Whitten di film berjudul *The Other Women* memiliki sifat dinamis dan kompleks. Dapat dikatakan bahwa penokohan, sikap, dan perilakunya mewakili nilai feminisme liberal. Ini menggambarkan beberapa isu mengenai isu gender, dimana perempuan dipandang dan diperlakukan rendah oleh laki-laki. Selain itu, feminisme Liberal adalah cabang feminisme yang menganjurkan penghapusan ketidaksetaraan gender melalui persamaan hak untuk kedua jenis kelamin. Ini berfokus pada kemampuan perempuan untuk menunjukkan dan mempertahankan kesetaraan mereka dan mempertahankan kesetaraan mereka melalui tindakan dan pilihan mereka. Film ini bercerita tentang Carly sebagai wanita karir sukses yang ditipu oleh seorang pria bernama Mark. Setelah dia bertemu dengan Kate, istri Mark, dan Amber, gundik Mark lainnya, mereka merencanakan balas dendam untuk Mark. Selanjutnya, penokohan Carly menggambarkan otonomi pribadi feminisme liberal yang dikemukakan oleh Emily Baehr (2007). Penelitian ini akan menggunakan metode kualitatif untuk mengungkap representasi feminisme liberal Carly Whitten. Selain itu, analisis penokohan dan menemukan bahwa Carly memiliki karakteristik yang cerdas, pekerja keras, mandiri, suportif, dan teguh.

Oleh karena itu, ciri-ciri tersebut akan digunakan untuk menganalisis gagasan otonomi pribadi yang dikemukakan oleh Carly Whitten.

Kata Kunci: Feminisme, feminisme liberal, otonomi pribadi, karakterisasi

INTRODUCTION

Feminism has already had a long history and development for decades. Therefore, it has already faced very real challenges in society. It is believed that feminism is old enough to have a set of labels, although it is incomplete and contestable. Rosemarie Tong (2009) stated that there are eight types of feminism, liberal feminism, marxism, and socialist feminism, radical feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, multicultural global and postcolonial feminism, ecofeminism, care-focused feminism, and third-wave feminism. Furthermore, in analyzing types of feminism, liberalism is a good start to begin a survey of feminist thought (Tong,2009). This idea challenges society's false belief that women naturally have less physical and intellectual capability than men. Liberal feminism sees it as unfair, proposing that women should have the same rights and chances as men do.

In this modern-day, liberal feminism pinpoints its focus to the equality of opportunities from both genders (Tulloch, 1989). Liberalism in the feminists perspective also refers to the value of freedom for individuals based on their gender (Baehr, 2007). Furthermore, Amy Baehr (2013) proposed five focuses in analyzing liberal feminism. They are personal autonomy, political autonomy, justification, historical, and criticism. However, based on those kinds of focuses, this paper will focus on individuals' personal autonomy. The point of personal autonomy figures centrally in much egalitarian-liberal feminist philosophy. Egalitarian-liberal feminism conceives of freedom as personal autonomy (living a life of one's choosing) and political autonomy (being co-author of the conditions under which one lives). Egalitarian-liberal feminists hold that the exercise of personal autonomy depends on certain enabling conditions that are insufficiently present in women's lives or that social and institutional arrangements often fail to respect women's personal autonomy and other elements of women's flourishing. It draws from the broad tradition of feminist theorizing for insight concerning the system of gender (Baehr, 2013).

Emily Baehr (2007) argued that personal autonomy that women have can be identified from four aspects, procedural accounts of personal autonomy, fairness in personal relationship, personal autonomy, and human flourishing and personal autonomy of the state. In this case, Procedural Accounts of Personal Autonomy means that women should live in their own choice. This idea suggests that women should enjoy their personal autonomy entitled to a broad range of autonomy-enabling conditions. The second one is fairness in personal relationships, which means that the social arrangements of personal life should be freely chosen and characterized by fairness or justice. Moreover, Personal Autonomy and Human Flourishing refer to the idea of a good human life, when women can enjoy all of the major human functions. The last one is personal autonomy and the State, it is where the liberal feminists agree that the state must protect them from violence, regardless of where that violence takes place.

There are many ways to create awareness about feminism in society, one of them is through movies. Nowadays, the film is not only a product of the media industry, it has also become the most influential way of social consequences because of its communicative powers (Balio, 1985). In some cases, the film also becomes a platform for filmmakers to express attitudes, values, and sentiments that challenge aspects of the existing social system (Janet,

1980). During these years, the film has often become a creative way to represent some problems in society. In this case, some movies have already presented the idea of feminism in their story. These films represent or are inspired by the figures and feminist moments, the fight is still ongoing, and the movement toward equality for all women under the law remains rife with blind spots. Since there are still gender inequality problems in this modern society, liberal feminism also becomes one of the common topics applied in the film. 'The Other Woman' (2014) is the real evidence of liberal feminism's representation.

'The Other Woman' (2014) is an American comedy movie directed by Nick Cassavetes. This movie tells a story about three women that were created by a man. The first woman is Kate, she thought that she is happily married to her husband, Mark. One day she found out that her husband was seeing another woman, Carly, who did not know that he was a married man. Later, Kate tracked Carly down and asked her about her relationship with Mark. Carly admitted it and made Kate have a breakdown of her own. This situation made Carly and Kate become closer, figuring the solution to their problems. When Carly already decided to left Mark, Kate overheard her husband flirting with someone on her phone. However, it was not Carly who talked to Mark. They found out that Mark had another mistress named Amber. In the end, three women supported and planned revenge on Mark. The revenge became the sign of justice for them. Furthermore, all of them help each other to become the best versions of themselves.

Carly Whitten is one of the main characters in the movie 'The Other Woman' (2014). She is described as a successful career woman. At first, she did not believe in the idea of monogamy, but a passionate and romantic relationship with a man named Mark King changed everything. Both of them became a romantic couple. However, there was something that Mark hides, the fact that he is a married man. After finding out the truth, she tried to leave everything about Mark behind. From a brief analysis of Carly, it can be argued that her characterization and situation reflect the value of liberal feminism. This study aims to analyze the character of Kate in the movie 'The Other Woman' (2014). Furthermore, it is believed that there are some actions and characterizations that reflect the values of liberal feminism.

METHOD

Several steps were fulfilled to achieve the final discussion and result of the study. The first step was collecting the data from the movie script and visualization. Then, the data was used to analyze the characterization and action of Carly Whitten in the film. In this stage, the analysis of characterization as an important part of intrinsic elements held the most significant part. To get an in-depth analysis related to characterization, this study investigated the personal description, how the character was perceived by the other characters, her speech, past life, conversation, and reactions (Murphy, 1972). Therefore, that information was analyzed using the theory of liberal feminism. In the last stage, this study analyzed how liberal feminism was reflected through Carly Whitten's characterization.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The representation of liberal feminism values is very clearly seen in the characterization of Carly Whitten. To support this argument, an in-depth analysis of the character of Carly Whitten is needed. Furthermore, the results from the previous discussion will be brought to the next discussion of the representation of liberal feminist values that Carly depicted through her characterization.

CARLY WHITTEN'S CHARACTERISTICS

Carly Whitten is a talented lawyer in New York City. When it comes to romantic life, she did not believe in monogamy. However, after having a passionate relationship with Mark King, she falls in love with him and breaks her belief before. What Carly does not know about Mark is the fact that he has already married a woman, called Kate. For Mark, Kate already forgoes all her dreams and happily supports Mark as a housewife. Nevertheless, one day both of them meet and discover the truth about Mark. At first, Carly refuses to be involved in Kate and Mark's relationship. However, after they find out that Mark has another affair, they unite and support each other. Furthermore, they also planned some interesting things to take Mark down.

SMART

It can be argued that Carly is a smart woman. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary smart refers to an adjective that means having or showing a high degree of mental ability. It also refers to the neat style of a person. Moreover, here are some dialogues that indicate the cleverness in Carly's characterization.

Kate : [muffled crying] I want to. Let me just... I'm sorry. I just am sad.

Carly : Then cry on the inside like a winner.

Kate : Okay ..

Carly : You cannot take care of yourself, unless you toughen up, and as far as talking to somebody who wants blab, I can give you the names of three different lawyers.

Kate : Lawyers cost money.

Carly : You have money. You have half of what Mark has.

These dialogues indicate that Carly can give Kate effective solutions. As a lawyer, she has more knowledge than Kate, especially about the legal system in the city. There are still several scenes that show Carly helping Kate in many situations. She is always able to give Kate right and effective solutions. In the movie, the intelligence of Carly is also reflected in her reaction after finding out that she was only a mistress.

Several scenes show Carly helping Kate in many situations. She is always able to give Kate right and effective solutions. Moreover, the way Carly dressed compared to the other women, she always wears neat and formal attire, reinforcing her intelligence.

HARD WORKING

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Hard-working indicates constantly, regularly, or habitually engaged in earnest and energetic work. In the movie, Carly is described as a woman who has a professional attorney with a good job in Hadley Cooper LLP. She is a hard-working and ambitious person, especially if it relates to her work.

Carly: I thought that Dave Cihen was handling this merger

Lydia : No, the client said he was too emotional.. They wanted a ruthless law robot, so

..

Carly: Micromax .. All right, get Dave on the phone. I am gonna need all materials, and I want to set up dates for deposition.

Lydia: I don't know why you work so hard. The best part of being pretty is that you don't have to.. I mean, you don't see me walking around here, worrying about my job, do you?

Carly: Unfortunately, no.

From the dialogues above, it is believed that Carly is a hard-working person. In the beginning of the film, Carly's company and job will be shown. Moreover, after she arrives at the company, she comes to her room and asks Lydia about some messages. She also gets a new client with a potential chance because it has a huge name. After that she asks Lydia to prepare everything.

INDEPENDENT

The other characteristic that Carly has is independency. Based on The Merriam-Webster dictionary, independent refers to an adjective that means not controlled by someone.

Lydia : I don't know why you work so hard. The best part of being pretty is that you don't have to.. I mean, you don't see me walking around here, worrying about my job, do you?

Carly : Unfortunately, no.

Lydia : That's because I have Stan. Okay? he works. I come here because it is like having a hobby that pays well.

Carly: hmm.. (disagreement response)

From the dialogue above, it could be argued that Carly proposed the idea of an independent woman. It is when Lydia and Carly had a conversation related to Carly's working life. She even lived in the society that pinpoints the idea that men are more than women. Moreover, it can be seen that Carly has different thoughts than the other about the gender roles between men and women.

SUPPORTIVE

It also can be argued that Carly is a supportive person through her friends, Kate and Amber. She always support them in every situation they should face. Quoting from the Oxford dictionary, supportive means giving help, sympathy, or encouragement to the other people. With her personality, Carly always succeeds to comfort and make Kate and Amber stronger.

Kate: You guys came! (squealing)

Carly: You think we could let a sister down?

This dialogue is when Carly and Amber decide to help Kate in the Bahamas. At first Carly did not want to go, but because Kate needs her help, she comes there. This dialogue has become the evidence of how supportive Carly is to her friends.

DETERMINED

In some crucial scenes, there is also one of Carly's characteristic is that she is determined.

Carly : He's married, OK. He has a wife.

Lydia : And you don't think you can take her? and

Carly Whitten : I can't talk to you until you stop crying

Kate King : [muffled crying] I want to. Let me just... I'm sorry. I just am sad.

Carly Whitten : Then cry on the inside like a winner.

These dialogues are the evidences about how determined Kate is. In the first dialogues with Lydia, she is determined to break up with Mark. She defend her perspectives about not getting in relationship with married man, although, Lydia always pushes her to do so. Moreover, she also determined to not speaking with Kate if she still cries.

LIBERAL FEMINISM VALUES SEEN FROM CARLY WHITTEN'S CHARACTERIZATION

The common definition of liberal feminism is when both men and women have equal rights and chances. In this movie, Carly Whitten has become a great example of the liberal feminists representation. She has strong characteristics, smart, hard-working, independent, supportive, and determined. However, it can be argued that the environment around her is not support those characteristics. On some scenes, many situations decrease the value of liberal feminism that Carly has. According on Carly Whitten's characteristics there were several enabling conditions of personal autonomy that were reflected through Carly's actions. It is written in paragraphs below.

LIVING ON HER OWN CHOICE

Carly Whitten is one of the crucial main characters in the film. She is a famous attorney in New York City. However, in several scenes of *The Other Woman* (2014), it appears that she still lives in an environment that still holds a traditional belief, where women still depend on a man. Those thoughts have been spoken in some ways by the other characters such as Lydia, Mark, and her father. The most compelling example is when Lydia asked her the reason for working hard. In this situation, Lydia represents a traditional thought that women should not work hard, because it is the obligation of the men. Nevertheless, Carly Whitten still lives her own life, even though she still hears a disagreement with her perspective. This supports the idea that Carly already enjoys her personal autonomy. Moreover, Carly also can assess the preferences of which someone makes choices about her or her life (Baehr, 2007).

QUITTING THE UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP AND MAKING NEW FRIENDS

Liberal Feminism proposes that the social arrangements of personal life should be freely chosen and characterized by justice and fairness (Baehr, 2007). In this context, Carly has a right to quit and create some relations. She chooses to quit her relationship with Mark because Carly knows that he is not a good man. Moreover, the relationship is not matched with Carly's tenet that she does not want to have an intimate relationship with a man who already has a wife. Her determined characters make this principle endure until the end of the story. On the other hand, Carly also has a right to create a new relationship. After her break-up with Mark, she becomes closer to Kate and Amber. Finally, they create a new and meaningful relationship, friendship.

Moreover, at the end of the story, they fairly stated that none of them should date her friends' boyfriends.

BEING SUPPORTIVE TO HER FRIENDS

Personal autonomy and Human Flourishing refers to major human functionings that define a good human life (Nussbaum, 1999). The value of liberal feminism through Carly can be seen from this aspect. Being supportive to her friends make them can enjoy all the human functionings major human functionings and flourish. The feeling that has been kept by Carly, she expresses it to help Kate with all of her problems in the Bahamas. The supportive characteristics of Carly makes her friends to become better. It could be seen in the end of the movie, the development of Kate who becomes more confident, strong, and independent.

EXPLAINING AND HELPING HER FRIENDS REGARDING LEGAL PROBLEMS

Liberal Feminism agrees that the state has to protect women from violence, regardless of where the accidents happen (Cudd, 2004). In several scenes, it could be seen that Carly uses her knowledge to help their friends regarding legal issues or documents. Moreover, where Carly helps Kate who knows nothing about the documents, it makes Kate have the same opportunities as Carly about the new lesson taught by Carly.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Carly is a round and dynamic character, indicating that she changes. The study has found five characterizations of Carly Whitten. Those characteristics are smart, hard-working, independent, supportive and determined. Murphy's theory about character analysis, especially through the speech acts is become the key of the first stage. It could be argued that her characteristics happen because of the environment and her mindset. Carly's characteristics become the significant thing in analyzing the representation of liberal feminism on her. Therefore, this study took the character analysis into the next stage in analyzing the depiction of liberal feminism.

Liberal feminism deals with individuals' freedoms and holds four personal autonomy aspects: procedural accounts of personal autonomy, fairness in personal relationship, personal autonomy and human flourishing, and personal autonomy and the state. Therefore, the analysis between liberal feminism's personal autonomy and Carly's characteristics would be conducted. Those five characteristics have influenced some of Charly's attitudes and behaviour in the movie. Moreover, the representation of liberal feminism can be seen in some of Carly's choices, living on her own choice, quitting unhealthy relationships and creating new ones, being supportive to her friends, and helping them with legal issues. It can be argued that those actions are the representation of personal autonomy of liberal feminism.

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