

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background of the study, the purpose of the study, the research question, the source of data, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, research methodology, and clarifications of related terms.

### 1.1. Background of the Study

Human beings tend to take actions based on common sense. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, common sense can be defined as a sound and prudent judgment based on a simple perception of the situation or facts (“Common sense,” n.d.), which most people take for granted. However, common sense actually is driven by a dominant group in a society, which in turn influences the mass to follow it. This phenomenon was addressed by Antonio Gramsci through the concept of hegemony (Laitin, 1985, as cited in Kendie, 2006). According to Gramsci, hegemony is also exercised by the dominant force through, not just coercion, but also through the consent of the dominated themselves (Cortes-Ramirez, 2015). A contemporary example of common sense that came from hegemony would be buying a gift for someone who just had a birthday. The idea of buying a gift for someone who just had a birthday has been instilled in many people to the point that the idea becomes a common sense to most people.

Hegemony also exists within the sphere of gender. Hegemony in gender was first addressed by R.W. Connel with the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which can

be described as the legitimation of men's dominant position over women's subordination (Connel, 2005). Later, the concept was adopted by Mimi Schippers who addressed it under the concept of gender hegemony, which is described as a gender hierarchy that situates hegemonic masculinities above a range of femininities (Schippers, 2007). According to Schippers (2007) hierarchy exists between masculinity and femininity, and that its legitimation can result in domination and inequality between genders.

The hierarchy between masculinity and femininity can be linked to the hegemony of society's expectations regarding gender roles. Based on the sex and each society's beliefs and values regarding gender, the interactions between the individuals and their environment signals the behaviors that are believed to be appropriate for certain sex (Blackstone, 2003). This gender-based-appropriateness was mainly naturalized based on numerous natural or unnatural differences between each sex. However, gender is not something that a person acquires all of a sudden. Gender is a symbol as well as a social construct that varies depending on the culture and their meaning along with the way of expressing them, depends greatly on societal values, beliefs, and "preferred ways of organizing collective life." (Wood, 2008, p. 24).

Furthermore, the belief of gender-based-appropriateness can lead to stereotypes. In most cases, men are perceived as more agentic, specifically more competent, assertive, independent, skillful, and achievement-oriented while women are often thought to be less agentic than men. On the contrary, women are usually perceived to have better qualities in communal aspects, such as being friendly, warm,

unselfish, interdependent, sociable, expressive, and relationship-oriented while men are typically seen as inferior to women in terms of these communal aspects (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989 as cited in Eisenchlas, 2013). These stereotypes assume that each gender has attributes that complement each other (Cameron, 2003; Jost & Kay, 2005 as cited in Eisenchlas, 2013). This assumption regarding complementing attributes naturalizes the belief of male dominance over female inferiority, thus it becomes acceptable to both men and women (Jost & Kay, 2005; Rudman & Glick, 2001 as cited in Eisenchlas, 2013). Consequently, masculinity and femininity are then assigned by what members of society thought about the meaning of being male or female (Stets & Burke, 2000). This means that the characteristics of masculinity and femininity are produced from stereotypes of males and females.

Thus, the hegemony of the hierarchy between masculinity and femininity, where masculinity usually balances the weakness of femininity, produces stereotypes where femininity is considered to be inferior and is expected to complement masculinity. Moreover, according to Glick, Wilkerson, and Cuffe (2015), with the complementarity of gender roles, women who present themselves as feminine offers highly identified men a chance to establish their masculinity, for instance, by offering protection to “damsel in distress.” This could mean that the performance of “damsel in distress” and the performance of offering protection to “damsel in distress” can be identified as an instance of gender hegemony.

Such a situation can be seen in numerous Hollywood films, For example, in the *Spider-Man* trilogy (2002-2007) directed by Sam Raimi, the damsel-in-distress

situation can be seen between the main character, Spider-Man, and his love interest, Mary Jane Watson. In the three movies, Mary Jane Watson, who is portrayed with stereotypically feminine traits, has been put into deadly situations about seven times and always ended up being rescued by Spider-Man in a heroic fashion (Bogarosh, 2013). Another example of a damsel-in-distress situation can be seen in *Kick-Ass* (2010) which was adapted from a Marvel comic book of the same name. In the film, the character Hit Girl defies traditional gender stereotypes, specifically being brash, fearless, and violent. However, while Hit Girl is portrayed as a capable girl, the movie eventually puts her in a damsel-in-distress situation when Dave, the main protagonist, heroically rescues Hit Girl near the end of the film (Kinnunen, 2016). Nevertheless, in recently made films, the damsel-in-distress situation is starting to diminish and the portrayal of female characters is often replaced with a portrayal of a heroine. Such portrayal can be seen in *The Hunger Games* trilogy (2012-2015) which are adapted from the same novel written by Suzanne Collins. The trilogy gives an alternative picture of a hero that mirrors the existence of women and their equality in society as can be seen in the portrayal of the main character, Katniss Everdeen who represents the ideal quality of today's women (Chusna & Suzanna, 2015).

Even though recent films tend to portray women equally to men, several films still portray stereotypical gender roles. Such stereotypes exist in *Blade Runner 2049* (2017), a film directed by Denis Villeneuve. The film reveals many scenes that seem to portray the female character, Joi, as a hologram female who exists mainly to help a *replicant* (a name for cyborgs in *Blade Runner* universe) male character, K. This

fulfillment of one's desire is in line with the hierarchy between masculinity and femininity. Although the film offers a unique circumstance by introducing the hologram 'species', it does not seem to present new possibilities of gender roles. In addition, this portrayal indicates how pervasive gender stereotype is.

Studies regarding gender representation and hegemony in literary works have been conducted in the past by several researchers. One of the studies is conducted by Shen (2017) who analyzes the representation and construction of femininity in a Chinese school story entitled *Tomboy Dai An* (2017). In the study, Shen utilizes contemporary gender theories and sexuality from many studies, including a theory of gender hegemony by Schippers (2007). The study revealed that the ideological gender stereotypes within the text are done through male and female dualism and conventional femininity which happens to be dependent on patriarchal interest. Another study which examines the representation of gender in literature was also conducted by Mulyani (2017). In the study, the researcher analyzes the construction of masculinity of children in a film entitled *The Little Rascals* (1994) by drawing from Connell's (2005) gender theory, which includes hegemonic masculinity. The researcher also applies Heintz and Stracey's (2006) film theory along with Boggs & Petrie's (2008) theory of characterization. The study revealed that the main characters show both hegemonic and complicit masculinity. Furthermore, the construction of the masculinity of the main characters is also revealed to be fluid depending on the context and situation. Meanwhile, a study regarding gender hegemony was conducted by Abedinifard (2016). By drawing from Connell's (2005) model of hegemonic masculinity along with Billig's

(2005) theory of ridicule as a form of social order reinforcement, the researcher revealed in the study that the targets of ridicule are corresponding with Connell's power dynamics model.

Meanwhile, previous studies addressing *Blade Runner 2049* (2017) are mostly concerned with futurology and the cinematic aspect of the film. For example, Taşkale (2020) analyzes the social and cultural critique projected through the film by looking at its aesthetics. Another example is a study conducted by King (2020) who analyzes cinematic elements of *Blade Runner 2049* (2017) to identify the quality status of Hollywood films.

From the examination of the studies mentioned above, the researcher found that the issues of gender for non-human characters are rarely discussed. Meanwhile, many works of fiction such as the *Star Wars* series, *Terminator* series, and *Blade Runner* series suggest that an investigation towards how this 'new species' is 'gendered' is necessary. For this reason, the researcher attempts to fill the gap by analyzing this issue in *Blade Runner 2049* by applying the framework of Schipper's (2007) gender hegemony to analyze the hierarchy of masculinity and femininity in the film. This study also considers not only the narrative aspect of the film but also the *mise-en-scène* and film techniques.

## **1.2. Purpose of the Study**

The study aims to uncover the construction of gender hegemony between two characters, a *replicant* cop named K and a holographic AI woman named Joi, by employing Schipper's (2007) gender hegemony to their portrayal of masculinity and

femininity respectively. Particularly, the researcher attempts to find out how hegemony is constructed in the dialogue and the visual aspect of the film. It is expected that the construction of hegemony reveals the current paradigm of gender ideals.

### **1.3. Research Question**

To conduct the study, the researcher formulates the following question:

- How is gender hegemony constructed in *Blade Runner 2049* (2017)?

### **1.4. Source of Data**

The subjects of the study are a male *replicant* cop named K and a female Hologram named Joi, both of which are the characters from a science fiction film entitled *Blade Runner 2049* (2017). These characters are chosen as the subjects of the study because they are romantically engaged and the portrayal of each gender role in the film seems to signify a hierarchy. This initial observation brought interest to the researcher in analyzing the film, particularly between the character K and Joi to see the construction of gender hegemony.

### **1.5. Scope of the Study**

This study is limited only to the analysis of the two characters of *Blade Runner 2049* (2017), namely K and Joi. Specifically, by analyzing their dialogue and the visual aspect of the film that are employed when they appear onscreen. The two characters are chosen and analyzed through these ways because the study attempts to find out how gender hegemony is constructed in the film between K and Joi.

## 1.6. Significance of the Study

This study is expected to raise awareness to the readers regarding gender hegemony in mainstream media as well as how gender hegemony itself could intersect with other systems such as race, class, and ethnicity. To the best of my knowledge, the issues of gender within *Blade Runner 2049* (2017) are yet to be analyzed deeply by considering not only the narrative aspect of the film but also the *mise-en-scène*, film techniques, and characterizations within the film.

## 1.7. Research Methodology

In conducting this study, the researcher applied a qualitative method as the data are collected from shots and dialogues. The researcher also employs multiple theories as a tool of analysis. The theories that are chosen as the tool of analysis are the theory of gender hegemony by Schippers (2007) along with Heintz and Stracey's (2006) film theory consisting of *mise-en-scène* and film techniques and Boggs and Petrie's theory of characterization (2008). These theories are used as a tool to identify the gender hegemony between K and Joi.

## 1.8. Clarification of Related Terms

**Social construction:** The concept of how knowledge is created by the interactions of the individuals within society (Schwandt, 2000)

**Hegemony:** Coercion and institutionalization of a pattern within a group that is idealized into a dominant knowledge reigning as common sense (Laitin, 1985, as cited in Kendie, 2006).

**Gender Hegemony:** A gender hierarchy that situates hegemonic masculinities above a range of femininities (Schippers, 2007).

**Film:** A medium to reflect or generate cultural values and ideas to viewers through the utilization of motion pictures (Corrigan & White, 2012).

### **1.9. Organization of the Paper**

The content of this paper will be divided into the following chapters.

1. CHAPTER I: This chapter contains the explanations regarding the background of the study, the purpose of the study, the research question, the source of data, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, research methodology, and clarifications of related terms.
2. CHAPTER II: This chapter explains the theoretical frameworks used in the study along with other researcher's ideas regarding the topic. It comprises of the theory of gender hegemony as well as film elements such as characterization and *mise-en-scène*.
3. CHAPTER III: This chapter provides explanations regarding the methods used to conduct the study, the source of data and its context, project design, and data presentation.
4. CHAPTER IV: This chapter explains the findings regarding the data that has been analyzed along with the discussions about the findings that may answer the question to the study.

5. CHAPTER V: This chapter contains the conclusion to the findings and discussions from the previous section. This chapter also presents a suggestion for future research with related topics.