

GENDER DYSPHORIA AS SEEN IN *NORMAL MOVIE*

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Abstract

This research discusses a movie directed by Jane Anderson entitled *Normal Movie*. This movie tells the story of Roy as the main character who suffer gender dysphoria in his life after 25 years of marriage with Irma. In the movie, the author described the portrayal of gender dysphoria in society. The main character Roy gives his struggle for being transgender. He needs to deal with his transition, family, office, parent, and surroundings who did not support his own decision for his transition. This thesis has one research question: how is the portrayal of gender dysphoria in *Normal Movie*. In this study, the writer uses descriptive qualitative methods to describe the phenomena inside the movie and supported by the movie's data as the primary source. The data are in the form of screen pictures in every scene in *Normal Movie*. This thesis applies a semiotic approach and movie representative to describe the portrayal of gender dysphoria in *Normal Movie*. This thesis use gender trouble theory by Butler in specific gender dysphoria. In gender dysphoria, there are three portrayals that classified the person as part of gender dysphoria, which are: crossing dress from the birth gender, choose the activities from the other gender, and the last is reject all the things related to their birth gender. This paper shows that the main character in *Normal Movie* by Jane Anderson is clearly identified as part of gender dysphoria. From the daily activities, the main character shows the physical characteristic of gender dysphoria: crossing dress from the birth gender, choosing the activities from the opposite gender, and reject things related to his birth gender and the main character get a lot of rejection from the society around him for being transgender.

Keywords: Gender, gender dysphoria, movie representation, *Normal* movie, semiotics.

INTRODUCTION

In life, gender is really close to human identity. When someone is born, they will get a certificate that matches their gender, and it becomes their identity until the end of their life (Nababan and Nurmaily, 2021). There are many examples related with the identities taken from the gender. One of the examples is dress. Dress is commonly worn only for women and shirt is for men. That stereotype are shaped by society because of the stigma of gender. The society commonly divide gender into two, Male and Female.

In the field of literature, especially in literary work, gender commonly exists in characters to support the literary work's characterization (Diantika and Amelia, 2017). It could help to identify the characterization supported by gender besides all the things in literary works. Gender is a term related to the biological system in someone's life, and gender also becomes the biggest thing that always makes a person's perspective towards something that must be followed by another perspective related to social and cultural things in society. The perspective here makes a stereotype of whether men or women have their own roles and regulation to make themselves can be accepted in society as a normal person based on their gender or not (Samanik and Lianasari, 2016). In society's perspective, in general, there are two kinds of gender sense: 1. *Masculin* and 2. *Feminine*, or usually called *male* and *female*. In society's perspective, sometimes thought if someone gets other sense in their gender could be wrong (Morelli, 2020).

Based on the journal article entitled *Sex and Gender: What is the difference?* humans' neurobiological condition supports gender. In biological terms, it is called genetic factors. The XY chromosome is more dominant for males than testosterone, whereas for women XX chromosome is more dominant with estrogen and progesterone. The conditions that reflect on our desire, behavior, and social reaction in society, can be called the social reaction with a gender stereotype. This is a perspective or preconception towards the character's role. Whether it is about men or women, society must be followed by society because that the straightforward rules that society agreed on since they were born. This stereotype will shape the circle that negatively impacts those who get the treatment. For example, people thought that men should wear men's attire and women should wear women's attire. So, when they face something weird in society, they will judge them for breaking the stereotype. It means women could be called women if they act like women, and men could be called men if they act like men (William, 2014).

Based on the journal article entitled *The neurobiological basis of gender dysphoria* in 2019, gender sense could change because of several things, and it becomes extreme distress in gender cases. It happens when someone feels their birth gender does not match their feelings and behavior. This condition can be called gender dysphoria. It is supported by internal and external and impacts the internal condition in someone's gender sense, which are culture and external feedback. Both could build a sense of distress and reaction in our body ownership & perception, and if those happen in our life, it could change our gender sense because of the condition in society (Gliske, 2019).

So from the explanation above, the writer believes that gender dysphoria is included as part of gender trouble, stated by Butler in her book in our body. Humans have unconsciousness that can support the orientation in real life. In general, humans have two kinds of gender that are legal in government and society, which are male and female. Those two genders are the representatives of masculine and feminine. From those two orientations as humans, sometimes we just put our desire to become a secret, and when we show our desire, people thought that those are not part of a heterosexual person. But in fact, there are many kinds of gender and orientation in the world, those we can call as queer people or in general we can call them as part of *Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, and Transgender*. The term Queer is based on its the meaning, which is "strange," and it becomes the umbrella of sexual or gender minorities that are not included as part of heterosexual and cisgender; however, they are part of gender. Yet, they are not accepted by society because they have a different orientation (Butler, 1990).

From their different orientation, there is a term queer in part of gender trouble. People who suffer from gender dysphoria usually face discrimination from society. It does not only happen in real life, because literature is a formula of real-life action. It happens in literature too. Thus, the problem faced by society also can be seen in the formula of art. In literary work, the case of what is really faced by people who suffered gender dysphoria can be seen in the movie entitled *Normal*. The movie was published in 2003 in the United Kingdom. This movie describes the social life reaction towards transgender and homosexual life. In this movie, the audience can get a sense when someone in their surroundings suddenly declared themselves to live in the wrong body and decided to be transgender sooner. This situation affected to the occurrence of pro and contra conditions in their life and their family. The main character of this movie showed the impact of being a transgender in social life, the discrimination here given by the main character surrounding include their friends in the office and also their closest person such as wife and also children (Anderson, 2003). Discrimination is reflected in the culture of our society (Kiranamita and Samanik, 2021). Gender discrimination could be the result of the assumption of human's life that could not accept the differences, and it happens because they have the power as a majority, so then they could take handle of someone's life because they have the power to handle the others (Efrilia and Setiawan, 2020).

About how the portrayal of gender dysphoria as seen in *Normal Movie* will be elaborated more in this journal. This journal will be focusing on the portrayal of gender dysphoria in the main character, Roy, the behavior of being gender dysphoria in daily activities, in the family as well as in the society.

METHOD

This research applied library research and qualitative descriptive method in the form of narration. The narration is reflected through language (Istiani and Puspita, 2020). From that, this could be a representative of someone thought and voice since this study is the representative of queer community through the text (Mahendra and Amelia, 2020). The result of this study in the form of narration that is supported by data collected by the writer. This method is to describe about the phenomena of gender dysphoria towards the main character inside *Normal Movie*. In qualitative descriptive methodology, the writer focused on the content of analysis, visual images, social action that become the representative of social life, because the data analyzed is not to accept or to reject the hypothesis (Farras and Nurmaily, 2020). This method is different from quantitative methodology, which is the result and the object of research focuses on number (Rido, 2015). However, the result of the analysis is the description from the observation of the daily activities of the main character in *Normal Movie*. In this case, the writer wants to make the readers get easier to understand this research by the descriptive methodology supported by the data through the words (Jackson, 2007). Since through the words, people can express their feelings and tells their biggest voice (Cenita and Nurmaily, 2020). Through the words, people can give others the understanding about their condition (Kardiansyah, 2016), furthermore, if they could not show it directly, because the words are the important tools to communicate (Amelia, 2016).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this journal, the researcher shows the analysis of gender dysphoria in *Normal Movie* by Jane Anderson. There are captures that taken from the movie and the analysis of detail of the story especially in form of actions, correlated with the theory used. To reveal the relationship between the theory, the main character, and the phenomena of gender dysphoria in movie, the journal will show the pictures of actions that show the condition of gender dysphoria that happen in the main character, so that the portrayal of gender dysphoria can be seen through the action and daily activities of the main character in *Normal Movie*, which then indicates about gender trouble.

This was supported by the representation theory by Hall to elaborate every part of scenes inside the *Normal Movie*. As stated by Hall, representation is the concept of retelling or representing something and describing something's meaning (Pranoto and Afrilita, 2018). Something that can represent can be part of an image, picture, sign, audio, and sentence (Kuswoyo and Siregar, 2019). This theory is to communicate about your imagination through language. How you share the meaning of things through words, the concept of this theory describes the moment that our senses catch. We need to recognize the common sense of things before explaining our thought related to the signs, sounds, and images in language and words (and Pranoto, 2020).

Since this theory explains what is coming from the mind, the concept of 5w+1h, which are *what, where, who, why, when, and how*, are need to be used, related to the visual of our sight and the sense of what we heard.

The writer combines the theory of semiotic and representation to explain the portrayal of Gender dysphoria in *Normal Movie*. Gender dysphoria or gender incongruence is the condition when someone feels distressed because their gender does not match their desire and feelings. For example, a person who was born a boy, but when they grow they identify as a girl, usually this happens with all people that called as queer people. Three internal causes support this phenomenon, which are: (1) Chronic distress, (2) Gender nonconformity, (3) Incongruence between the perception of gender and body ownership. From those three internal causes, several activities are usually given by people who are suffering gender dysphoria in society, such as (1) Crossdressing from birth gender, (2) Choose the activities from the opposite gender, (3) Reject all the things related to their birth gender.

In this journal the data that show the portrayal of gender dysphoria in *Normal Movie*:

The Portrayal of Gender Dysphoria

Based on the theory of Gender dysphoria gender dysphoria has several internal causes which are chronic distress, gender nonconformity and the last is incongruence between the perception of gender and body ownership, those things could have the output in the real life in society, the output could be from the behavior, physical appearance in real life of the person who suffering gender dysphoria. From this movie the director give the portrayal of gender dysphoria that happen to the main character of this movie, which is Roy. How Roy behave in society trough his struggle towards his gender dysphoria. In Roy's daily activities, the director of this movie shown the way Roy deal with himself and society trough his dysphoria. There are several portrayal of gender dysphoria as seen in normal movie because of the internal causes that happen to the main character in this movie, and make the output of Roy in society based on his gender desire:

Cross Dressing from the birth gender

Cross dressing than birth gender is one of the output or the action of person who identified as part of gender dysphoria. And this happen to the main character Roy in *Normal movie*, his action shown that he is trapped in gender dysphoria or gender confusion in his life. These are several pictures that describe the condition of Roy in his daily activities during his transition as a female.



Normal Movie 2003 by Jane Anderson

Based on the semiotic theory and supported by representation theory the visualization above, the writer see the case of opposite dressing than birth gender happen to the main character., the behavior of the main character show the portrayal of gender dysphoria. Because he wearing a dress, make up and wig to make strengthen his desire to be transgender and he is a female.



Normal Movie 2003 by Jane Anderson

This scene clearly seen he is totally change, not only from the clothes but also his identity. Roy did many effort to get what he wanted, to match his desire and his visualization in society. This scene shown that Roy try coming out to his family especially his father, and what he wears really support the action that he took.

Roy did not care about what society's judgement toward him. Roy wants to show that he does it since he enjoys being a female and gets happiness from what he has chosen. From the picture, the writer sees Roy has been growing and change as a beautiful woman with his appearance during the transition. The portrayal of gender dysphoria that happens to the main character of this movie, how the way Roy behave in society and his struggle towards his existence because of gender dysphoria, the way Roy convincing society about his condition, and the way Roy self-branding himself as the person who has something more special inside his body give the proof that Roy is strongly part of people who are suffering Gender dysphoria.

Choosing the activity from the other gender

people who suffering as part of gender dysphoria will choose the activities opposite than their own birth gender. They will act based on their own desire in their life, this condition is happen in the main character of *Normal movie* which is Roy



Normal Movie 2003 by Jane Anderson

This scene happened when Roy and Patty Ann spending more time together rather than with Irma. In their activities, they build the communication between father and daughter as mom and kid. This scene describes Roy's activities, based on the representation theory by Hall. In 1:09:44, from this scene, it's seen the activity of Roy and his daughter getting closer. He loves to put on nail polish with

his daughter and having a deep conversation together. In this scene also there is an explicit behavior of Roy when he has a seat. He closes his legs and sits like a graceful woman. He builds the woman's behavior in his life to get his happiness of being transgender. The portrayal of gender dysphoria that happens to the main character of this movie, how the way Roy behave in society and his struggle towards his existence because of gender dysphoria, the way Roy convincing society about his condition, and the way Roy self-branding himself as the person who has something more special inside his body give the proof that Roy is strongly part of people who are suffering Gender dysphoria.



Normal Movie 2003 by Jane Anderson

Dialogue:

Irma: "Frank came by today, he's concerned about your attitude at work. He says you've gotten bitch"

Roy: "he used that word?"

Irma: "yes, he did."

From the visualization and the dialogue, this scene happened when Roy and Irma prepare to rest and have a conversation before sleep. At that moment, Roy takes the skincare in their face, then suddenly Roy shows their couple of breast growth and be more sensitive after the change. Based on the semiotic theory from Barthes, the writer could see from the visualization above and represent the visualization of Roy use the representation theory by Hall in the form of narration. In 1:03:04. There is a picture of Roy's behavior that is changing. She loves to care for herself like a woman and does a simple thing to treat his body well. From the visualization, it seems Roy did skincare towards his body, this treatment in common usually only for women. However, Roy treats his body very well, like the other female, since he wants to get the best result as being a beautiful female. Not only that, but Roy's character in society also changing more sensitive like a woman., how the way Roy behave in society and his struggle towards his existence because of gender dysphoria, the way Roy influential culture about his condition, and the way Roy self-branding himself as the person who has something more special inside his body give the proof that Roy is strongly part of people who are suffering Gender dysphoria.

Reject all the things related to birth gender

Being part of gender dysphoria, means that he or she needs to choose what is best for their life, which means one needs to decide something for the long term and make sure those that they choose is the right decision. Including the decision to reject something related to their gender desire, the things they decided should be supporting their struggle for being the person who is suffering gender dysphoria. In this last part, there are several rejections from Roy in his life towards something that does not reflect his gender desire.



Normal Movie 2003 by Jane Anderson

Dialogue:

Roy: *"I'm a woman. I've known it all my life"*

Irma: *"Oh my gosh, Roy"*

Pastor: *"Roy, I don't know what to say."*

Irma: *Roy, are you having an affair?*

Roy: *"No, I don't."*

Pastor: *"You have been married to Irma for twenty-five years, you have two beautiful children and suddenly, out of nowhere, you make this strange declaration"*

Roy: *"I'd like to have the operation to change my sex."*

From the picture and the dialogue, this scene happened after the pastor asks the truth about Roy's condition, the pressure that happens to him. Finally, he decelerates himself as part of gender dysphoria and is born in the wrong body, and as the final decision, he wants to be a transgender person and change his birth sex. From the scene above, in minute 9:15, there is an action that shows Roy reject his birth gender and try to express his desire to decelerate to change his sex to be a female. These words showed that Roy does not want to be a male in his life. However, the condition of society and the demand of his father about his birth gender reduce his desire to say what he wants in his life even though Roy strongly wants to be a female in his life since he was a kid. The portrayal of gender dysphoria that happens to the main character of this movie, how the way Roy behave in society and his struggle towards his existence because of gender dysphoria, the way Roy convincing society about his condition, and the way Roy self-branding himself as the person who has something more special inside his body give the proof Roy is strongly part of people who are suffering Gender dysphoria.



Normal Movie 2003 by Jane Anderson

Dialogue:

Irma: *"You won't be able to claim Patty Ann as a dependent."*

Roy: *"I don't see why not if I'm paying support."*

Irma: "But you won't be her father."

Roy: "I'll be her parent who still loves her and cares for her."

Irma: "Alright, the poster just all there. Just drop it in the mailbox."

From the picture and the dialogue, this scene happened when Irma and Roy prepare their document to divorce because both Irma and Roy get tempered then reject their relationship as husband and wife because Roy decides to be transgender. Based on the semiotic theory by Barthes, in minute 22:03, it seems clear about the action both Irma and Roy prepare their documents for divorce. In this scene, Roy did not want to be a husband since he lost his desire to be a male and wants to be free to live as a woman. However, both Irma and Roy are still in love with each other. This becomes the most problematic condition of both of them to decide to end up their relationship as husband and wife. The portrayal of gender dysphoria that happens to the main character of this movie, how the way Roy behave in society and his struggle towards his existence because of gender dysphoria, the way Roy convincing society about his condition, and the way Roy self-branding himself as the person who has something more special inside his body give the proof Roy is strongly part of people who are suffering Gender dysphoria.

CONCLUSION

At the end, based on the findings and discussion of how is the portrayal of gender dysphoria reflected in *Normal Movie*. The writer concludes, there are three causes of gender dysphoria: 1. Chronic distress, 2. Gender nonconformity, 3. Incongruence perception between birth gender and from the point number 3 there are three activities of gender dysphoria as the result of incongruence perception between birth gender, and these three things are: Choose cross dress from birth gender, choose the activities from the other gender, and reject all the things related to the birth gender. Those three things above are clearly seen in *Normal Movie*, Those are happen to the main character in *Normal Movie*.

In conclusion, in order to analyze the portrayal of gender dysphoria in *Normal Movie*, it is important to analyze the picture of movie by semiotic and explained by movie representative, since we need to see their behavior in society, their action in society and the society's reaction towards themselves as part of gender dysphoria. Perhaps for the future researcher could more discuss about the case of gender dysphoria with the deeper issues, so we could improve our knowledge towards gender diversity in society.

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