



**GENDER ROLES AND STEREOTYPES REFLECTED
IN RAINBOW ROWELL'S *ELEANOR & PARK***

A THESIS

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
S-1 Degree Majoring in American Studies in English Department
Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University**

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PRONOUNCEMENT

I truthfully state that this thesis is written by myself without taking any works from other researchers in any university, in diploma degree, S-1, S-2, and S-3 degree. I also ascertain that I do not take any material from other works except from the references mentioned.

Semarang, 8 December 2022

Rania Tazkia Syahira

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

For indeed, with every hardship there is relief.

- Quran 94 : 5

Show forgiveness, enjoin kindness, avoid ignorance.

- Quran 7 : 199

This thesis is dedicated to

myself, my beloved parents,

and those who have been by my side in the darkest of hours.

APPROVAL

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Semarang, 8 December 2022

Rania Tazkia Syahira

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ABSTRACT

This research thesis focuses on the issues of gender roles and stereotypes that are experienced by the characters in Rainbow Rowell's novel *Eleanor & Park*. The aims of this study are to examine how the gender roles and stereotypes issues are presented in the novel, how the issues impact the characters, and how the characters overcome the issues. The writer uses sociology of literature approach with gender roles and stereotypes theories to conduct the analysis as well as library research to collect the data needed for the research. The result of the study implies that there are three categories that portray the gender roles and stereotypes issues in the novel, including domestic role behaviors, traits, and appearance. It is found that gender roles and stereotypes have both negative and positive impacts on the characters. The writer concludes that the characters deal with the gender roles and stereotypes issues in different ways.

Keywords: Gender, Gender Roles, Gender Stereotypes, Domestic Roles

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The issues of gender roles and stereotypes have existed for a long time. The current gender role stereotyping that are commonly found among the society can actually be traced back to the 19th century (Brannon, 2017: 47).

According to Brannon, the Industrial Revolution transformed the lives of most people in Europe and North America. Men and women who used to live and work together on farms before the 19th century were forced to readjust to different roles, where men had to go outside of the house and earn money, whereas women would have to stay at home to handle households and children. These transformations result in the establishment of two beliefs: the Doctrine of Two Spheres and the Cult of True Womanhood. The Doctrine of Two Spheres promotes the idea that men and women have two different scopes of responsibilities, home and children for women, and work and the outside world for men (Brannon, 2017: 47).

The Cult of True Womanhood came into existence in the United States between 1820 and 1860, developing four elements of stereotyping of women. Those elements are piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (Welter in Brannon, 2017: 47). It was believed that without these four virtues, a woman's life would not have real meaning. *Piety* means true women are naturally religious; *purity* means true women are sexually uninterested; *submissiveness* means true women are weak, dependent, and timid; *domesticity* means true women's domain

was the home. These characteristics are believed to have influenced people's views of femininity in the present day.

The idealization of women in the 19th century was also associated with men. Aside from the Cult of True Womanhood that was focused on the criteria for women, there was also the Male Sex Role Identity that was referred to by Pleck (1984) as the conceptualization of masculinity (Brannon, 2017: 48). There are also four elements in the Male Sex Role Identity. *No Sissy Stuff*, the first element, means that men are prohibited to be a sissy. The term *sissy* is used as a stigma that is associated with feminine qualities. The second element is *The Big Wheel*, meaning that men need success and status. *The Sturdy Oak*, the third element, means that men must be tough, confident, and self-reliant. The last element is *Give 'Em Hell*, meaning that the aura of aggression, daring, and violence is acceptable in men's behavior (Brannon in Brannon, 2017: 48). Men who conformed to these qualities would be seen as a "real man."

Gender role stereotyping in America could also be found in the education field. Sadker and Zittleman state that the education for females in colonial America was so finite, resulting in less than one-third of them could even sign their names. Female children were prohibited to go to school because they were generally seen as being mentally and morally inferior to men, limited to learning only domestic skills (Sadker & Zittleman, 2010: 138). It is also stated that during the colonial period, very young children in America would get education in dame schools. Young girls who had the chance to attend dame schools would be taught domestic skills and reading. Reading was taught so that when the young girls

grew up and had children, they could read the Bible to them. While the girls would focus on their futures as wives and mothers after they graduated, the boys were taught how to write to prepare them for more formal education. This denotes the fact that for centuries, there has always been a stereotype of gender roles in the society where men are cast to have a better and higher education than women so that they can provide their families financially, while women are expected to be in charge of domestic works as wives and mothers.

The issues of gender roles and stereotypes continue to assert themselves not only in the society, but also in literary works. The portrayal of these issues can be found in a teenage novel entitled *Eleanor & Park* written by Rainbow Rowell. The novel has a main storyline of a teenage first love that is set in Nebraska, in the year of 1986. However, behind all the sunshine and rainbows of their innocent relationship, the novel displays many significant social and emotional issues experienced by the characters.

The study attempts to analyze the issues of gender roles and stereotypes reflected in the novel entitled *Eleanor & Park*. The writer will also examine the forms as well as the impacts that gender roles and stereotypes have on the characters, and how they overcome those issues.

1.2. Research Problems

1. How are gender roles and stereotypes portrayed in Rainbow Rowell's *Eleanor & Park*?
2. What impacts do the gender roles and stereotypes have on the characters presented in Rainbow Rowell's *Eleanor & Park*?

3. How do the characters in Rainbow Rowell's *Eleanor & Park* overcome the issues caused by gender roles and stereotypes?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The aims of this study can be elaborated as:

1. To examine how gender roles and stereotypes are presented in Rainbow Rowell's *Eleanor & Park*.
2. To identify the impacts of gender roles and stereotypes presented in Rainbow Rowell's *Eleanor & Park*.
3. To analyze how the characters in Rainbow Rowell's *Eleanor & Park* overcome the issues caused by gender roles and stereotypes.

1.4. Previous Studies

Several studies have been conducted previously regarding similar topics. The first study uses the same novel, *Eleanor & Park* by Rainbow Rowell. It is written by Dwiki Prenandita from Sanata Dharma University as an undergraduate thesis entitled "Park's Motivation to Help Eleanor in Her Teenage Life Struggle as Seen in Rowell's *Eleanor & Park*" (2016). Despite using the same novel as the primary source, this study focuses more on the main characters' personalities using psychological approach. It revolves around the motivation that Park has to help Eleanor with the struggle she faces during their teenage life and how Park's personality affects the way he behaves towards Eleanor.

The second study covering the same literary work, *Eleanor & Park*, is written by Arum Sri Utami from Sanata Dharma University as an undergraduate thesis, entitled "Women's Struggle against Domestic Violence Caused By Patriarchy as

Seen Through Eleanor and Sabrina in Rainbow Rowell's *Eleanor & Park*" (2017). Supported by the theory of patriarchy, theory of women oppression, and theory of domestic violence, this study uses feminist approach. It is centered on the patriarchal practices performed by Richie's character as an oppression towards the characters of Sabrina and Eleanor. This study also focuses on the forms of violence that occur in the household.

The last study examines a similar topic as this paper with a different literary work, written by Esther Deborah Kalauserang from Sanata Dharma University as an undergraduate thesis entitled "The Portrayal of Elastigirl in Challenging Gender Stereotypes in Disney's *Incredibles 2*" (2020). The study aims to identify the portrayal of the character of Elastigirl in *Incredibles 2* film and how the character breaks Disney's gender stereotypes through her portrayal. The study finds that Elastigirl fights against Disney's gender stereotype of female characters by being a nurturer while still having the opportunity to do external activities.

1.5. Scope of the Study

The study concentrates on the gender roles and stereotypes encountered by the characters in the novel *Eleanor & Park*. The study is done through the analysis of intrinsic aspects including character, conflict, and setting, along with the analysis of extrinsic aspects to examine the issues of gender roles and stereotypes presented in the novel as well as the impacts they have on the characters and how they overcome those issues.

1.6. Writing Organization

The paper consists of the following chapters:

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of introduction covering the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, previous studies, scope of the study, and writing organization.

Chapter 2: THEORY AND METHOD

This chapter contains the methods of study that are used as a foundation and a guideline to conduct the study.

Chapter 3: RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter contains the result of the study based on the data analysis using the theory mentioned in chapter 2.

Chapter 4: CONCLUSION

This chapter contains the summary of the study result based on the data analysis.

REFERENCES

CHAPTER 2

THEORY AND METHOD

2.1 Methods of Study

2.1.1 Method of Research

The writer uses library research to conduct the study. George states that library research involves recognizing and finding sources with credible information or personal/expert opinion on a research question (George, 2008:6). Library research is used to obtain the data from primary and secondary sources, which help conduct the research revolving around gender roles and stereotypes issues.

According to George, primary source is the data that is produced as close as possible in time or place to an occurrence or phenomenon, while secondary source is the analysis by anyone of evidence related to the issue under study such as books or articles (George, 2008: 189 & 193). The primary data is provided by the work of literature, which is the novel entitled *Eleanor & Park* by Rainbow Rowell. The secondary data is collected from books, journals, theses, and articles related to the topic.

2.1.2 Research Approach

In this section, the intrinsic aspects of the novel that will be analyzed are character, conflict, and plot. The extrinsic aspects will be examined using sociology of literature approach by Alan Swingewood supported by gender roles and stereotypes theories. Swingewood explains that literature shares similar concerns with sociology regarding man's social world, and novel, as a major literary genre, can be considered to be recreating a man's relation with his family

and the society, his roles within the family and the society, as well as the conflicts between groups and social classes (Swingewood, 1972: 12). This study uses the sociology of literature approach to be able to determine the social conflicts within the novel *Eleanor & Park*.

2.1.2.1 Intrinsic Aspects

2.1.2.1.1 Character

Abrams (1999: 32) introduces characters as the individuals in a narrative work with specific moral, intellectual, and emotion which can be shown by the dialogue and the action. DiYanni (2004: 54) classifies characters in fiction as major and minor. A major character is a prominent figure dominating a story. Occasionally, the major character is the protagonist with a conflict against the antagonist. A minor character, on the other hand, is the supporting figure of the story who often remains static from the beginning to the end (Diyanni, 2004: 54).

2.1.2.1.2 Conflict

Holman (1985: 336) concluded the definition of plot as a formulation of the connections among the occurrences in a drama or a narrative. Since plot displays the actions performed by the characters in incidents that interrelate to form a “single, whole, and complete” action, conflict must be involved in the interrelationship.

Holman defines conflict as the struggle that results from the interaction of two opposing forces in a plot which gives elements of interest and suspense in a narrative work. Usually, conflict involves the protagonist and four different forms of opponent: (1) the forces of nature; (2) another person, usually the antagonist;

(3) society as a force; (4) mastery by two elements within the person (Holman, 1985: 98).

2.1.2.1.3 Setting

Abrams (1999: 284) wrote that the setting of a narrative or dramatic work is the physical location, historical time, and social circumstances and condition where the action of a narrative, whether it is novel, drama, short story, or poem, takes place. Holman (1985: 413) elaborates the elements that make up a setting are the geographical location, the behavioral activities of the characters, the time or period of time in which the action occurs, and the environment of the characters.

2.1.2.2 Extrinsic Aspects

2.1.2.2.1 Gender Roles and Stereotypes

Gender role is defined as the “socially significant activities that men and women engage in with different frequencies.” Those activities become roles that are expected to be followed by men and women as a way to fulfill their appropriate masculine or feminine parts (Brannon, 2017: 109).

Best (2003: 11) explains that gender roles are frequently justified by the use of gender stereotypes. As our gender is considered to be constructed by society, it has a significant function in establishing our respective individuality, the way we view ourselves and how we pertain to others. Our gender also has a strong influence on forming the way we are treated by society as a whole (Tyson, 2006: 108). Thus, the social categories of sex shaped by the society establish roles that are expected to be performed by certain categories of gender. These imposed roles

of gender have existed in human society for a long time, developing stereotypes among the society we live in.

According to Brannon, gender stereotype is made out of beliefs about the traits, characteristics, and the appropriate activities of men or women (Brannon, 2017: 46). It can be concluded that gender stereotyping leads to the beliefs about how men and women should behave accordingly to the roles that have been assigned to each gender. Therefore, the issues of gender stereotype and gender role are related to one another.

Aside from giving descriptions about how people think about men and women, gender stereotypes also regulate about what men and women should be. It gives limits on what traits and behaviors are supposed to be possessed by men and women (Prentice & Carranza in Brannon, 2017: 53). Best explains that gender role leads to stereotypical traits that tend to overlook individual differences and variability of both genders (Best, 2003: 11). When men are considered to be more aggressive than women, stereotypes that are perceived uncritically will justify the act of considering all men as more aggressive than all women, disregarding the variation in aggression of both genders.

Tyson states that it is not acceptable for men to fail at anything they try as it is considered to indicate failure in one's manhood, especially when a man fails to provide economic support for his family. It is seen as the most demeaning failure of a man as he is deemed to have failed at performing what is considered his biological role as provider (Tyson, 2006: 87). It indicates that in our society, men

are expected to be the economic provider of his family and achieve a certain degree of success to show his manhood.

On the contrary, women are rather expected to do caretaking roles at home and not be focused on achieving a successful career because it is seen as not showing femininity. As explained by Tyson, the patriarchal concept of femininity is correlated to frailty, modesty, and timidity, thus succeeding in business and earn money is not considered feminine (Tyson, 2006: 88).

These stereotypical ideas about gender roles are assumed to promote the limitation of men's and women's individual behaviors, desires, thoughts, and feelings, for they must conform to the traditional roles constructed by society. Brannon states that gender stereotypes affect conceptualizations of women and men as they form social categories that depict what people think (Brannon, 2017: 46). Gender stereotypes form the beliefs that are used as judgments towards men and women by establishing the classifications that may not resemble men and women in reality.

2.1.2.2.1.1 Forms of Gender Roles and Stereotypes

Deaux and Lewis identified variety of components that are central in gender role stereotyping, "The content of gender stereotypes may be analyzed into four separate components that people use to differentiate male from female— traits, behaviors, physical characteristics, and occupations" (Deaux and Lewis in Brannon, 2017: 54).

The stereotypes presented through domestic role behaviors cast men to be responsible for "external" activities, whereas women have a more significant role

in “domestic” activities. Amato and Booth state, “Traditional attitudes stress the dichotomy between the husband-breadwinner and wife-homemaker mother, and the differential power relations implied in these specialized roles” (Amato and Booth, 1995: 58). Traditional gender norms expect women to stay at home and do the house chores while men are expected to provide adequate economic support for his family as the leader of the household. These roles on domestic behaviors construct stereotypes which determine how both genders are expected to perform in the household.

Tyson states that gender roles define men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; whereas women are defined as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive (2006: 85). Gender roles impose men to be strong, physically and emotionally, and it would not be appropriate for men to cry as crying indicates weakness (Tyson, 2006: 87). Tyson also elaborates about how anger and other violent emotions are the only emotions typically allowed in men because those violent emotions are seen to be blocking out fear and pain, which are some of the behaviors that men are expected to not have (Tyson, 2006: 88). Even one feminine or unmanly act performed by a man could lower his status as a man and this emerges the avoidance of feminine behaviors (Koenig, 2018: 2).

In terms of physical appearance, society also expects men and women to conform to masculine and feminine qualities. For instance, men are expected to wear pants. Women, on the other hand, are associated with feminine clothing like skirts and dresses. Another example is how society sees cosmetics as an

exclusively feminine property that reinforces the idea that cosmetics are something that should be avoided by men in order to show manliness.

CHAPTER 3

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Intrinsic Aspects

3.1.1 Character

Following the explanation in Chapter 2, the characters that will be discussed in the study will be divided into two categories, major characters and minor characters.

The major characters of the story are Eleanor and Park, whereas the minor characters will be Richie, Sabrina, Mindy, and Jamie.

3.1.1.1 Major Character

3.1.1.1.1 Eleanor

Eleanor is pictured as a new girl that has just moved into Park's neighborhood with weird choice of clothing and bright red hair.

Not just new—but big and awkward. With crazy hair, bright red on top of curly. And she was dressed like... like she *wanted* people to look at her... She had on a plaid shirt, a man's shirt, with half a dozen weird necklaces hanging around her neck and scarves wrapped around her wrists (Rowell, 2013: 8).

From the description above, it can be pictured that Eleanor stands out in a bad way. The clothes and accessories that she wears also make her look peculiar and different from the others. She dresses "like she *wanted* people to look at her" means that the way she dresses is so distinctive to the point that it draws people's attention because of how weird her appearance is.

After her parents' divorce, Eleanor lives with her mother and her little siblings until her mother marries her now stepfather, Richie. "So, yeah, I have a terrible stepdad, and I don't have a phone, and sometimes when we're out of dish soap, I

wash my hair with flea and tick shampoo” (Rowell, 2013: 89). It can be concluded that Eleanor lives in an impoverished family. She mentions that she uses dish soap to wash her hair, or even flea and tick shampoo. Dish soap, which is made to wash the dishes and flea and tick shampoo, which is used for pets, are clearly not made to be regularly used by humans as a shampoo. It shows the possibility that her family cannot afford a normal shampoo.

Eleanor has to endure the pain of living with her stepfather and domestic abuse. She cannot even go to her own mother as a safe place because her mother is afraid of Richie’s control and domination and always puts him as her first priority. “Eleanor hid her face in her mother’s shoulder. It wasn’t a protection. It was like hiding behind the thing in the room he was most likely to hit” (Rowell, 2013: 148). The previous statement implies that depending on her mother will not make any difference because Richie is still going to abuse them, especially her mother. The term “thing” refers to Eleanor’s mother, and the term “most likely” emphasizes that Eleanor’s mother has the highest possibility out of everything else in the room to be hit by Richie. It can be concluded that not even her own mother can protect her from Richie’s abusive behaviors because her mother is his main target.

3.1.1.1.2 Park

Park is a Korean-American sixteen-year-old boy who grows up with harmonious parents in a stable economic condition. “His dad barreled into the kitchen and scooped his mom into his arms. They did this every night” (Rowell, 2013: 25). The statement “scooped his mom into his arms” shows that Park’s parents are not

refraining from showing physical affection and “They did this every night” means that they show it very often. Both statements display their harmonious relationship which is shown by their interaction. “Every Sunday, they got dressed up, in nice pants and sweaters, and had dinner with their grandparents” (Rowell, 2013: 116), implies that his family actually makes time to spend time together in a weekly dinner, showing their relationship as a family. The fact that they dress up nicely depicts their family’s economic condition. It can be concluded that they come from a family with a decent economic condition by how they can afford nice clothes.

Despite living with sufficient facilities and loving parents as mentioned above, Park has to face a personal issue. He often has his father pointing out his lack of masculinity. He is often compared to his younger brother, whom his father think is more of a man than Park is. He cannot drive a manual transmission unlike his brother, which his father sees as a weakness. At one point, he shows a side of him that finds makeup interesting, which is not what his father considers masculine. This matter will be discussed further in this chapter.

3.1.1.2 Minor Character

3.1.1.2.1 Richie

Richie is Eleanor’s stepfather. He is described as an abusive, violent man. He has a horrible temper, causing him to constantly abuse Eleanor, her siblings, and her mother physically and emotionally. He gets enraged even over the smallest mistake his wife or one of the children does. He once kicks Eleanor out of her own house for a year due to his terrible temper, separating Eleanor from her own

family, “The last time he got really mad at me, he kicked me out and didn’t let me come home for a year” (Rowell, 2013: 112). The previous statement says a lot about Richie’s behavior, he can go as far as kicking a teenage girl out of the house. It shows how extremely controlling Richie is, knowing the fact that Eleanor is not even his own child. Eleanor is also still a minor, which means she needs to be under the watch of an adult. By kicking Eleanor out of her house, he forces a teenage girl to survive on her own without any adult supervision. He separates her from her own mother, depicting his cruelty.

His bad demeanor and aggressiveness are shown when he tries to send home the kids that are playing basketball at night in the park. “There was more slamming in the kitchen... and then gunshots” (Rowell, 2013: 146), “There were kids playing basketball in the park, being loud... He was just trying to scare them” (Rowell, 2013: 149). Those statements show that Richie uses a gun to scare kids solely for playing basketball at night. Instead of trying to approach the kids and talk it out calmly, he chooses to go with a gun to scare them. It shows that he is unable to control his anger as he uses violence for something that could have been settled gently. His inability to control his anger results in harm to other people.

Richie is described to constantly be in a bad mood. “But you couldn’t enjoy the fact that he was in a good mood, because it was the kind of good mood that was just on the edge of a bad one. They were all waiting for him to cross over” (Rowell, 2013: 198), implying that his good mood does not last long. It means at

any given moment his temper might take over and he will be back being in a bad mood.

3.1.1.2.2 Sabrina

Sabrina is Eleanor's mother, who is described to be submissive and timid. Eleanor herself acknowledges that her mother is "relentlessly submissive", is openly nervous over Richie, and she turns pale and looks anxious whenever Richie is openly in a bad mood (Rowell, 2013: 152). Her fear of Richie takes over most of the time, causing her to put her children's needs after Richie's. She has to live under the constant abuse committed by her husband (see page 35). She has to put Richie first and foremost, above anything or anyone else.

It is shown when Richie kicks Eleanor out of their old house and the situation does not even bug Sabrina, "...and she never *ever* thought her mom would go along with it" (Rowell, 2013: 151). The statement "go a long with it" refers to how Sabrina lets Richie kick out her own daughter. It indicates that Eleanor does not expect her mother to do nothing when she is kicked out of the house. It can be concluded that Eleanor sees that Sabrina, as a mother, is supposed to be the one protecting her from Richie. Instead, she lets her husband take control over Eleanor. It is conveyed that she lets her own daughter survive on her own, not caring how she has nowhere and no one to go to. It means that now that she is married to Richie, he has become her priority. She is willing to let him do whatever he desires, even if it hurts her own daughter.

3.1.1.2.3 Mindy

Mindy, Park's mother, is a Korean woman who becomes an immigrant to marry her husband, Jamie Sheridan. She is portrayed as a gentle and nurturing mother. She owns a hair salon located at the back of the Sheridans' residence. She is described to have a doll-like appearance, "His mom looked exactly like a doll" (Rowell, 2013: 126). As a beautician, she considers a woman should be neat and pretty. "Park's mom liked nice. She loved nice ... When Patti Smith was on *Saturday Night Live*, his mom had gotten upset, "Why she want to look like man? It's so sad"" (Rowell, 2013: 122). The fact that she gets upset over a woman who appears like a man shows her distaste towards woman who does not put feminine qualities on her appearance.

3.1.1.2.4 Jamie

Jamie is Park's father and Mindy's husband, who is an army veteran. He often confronts Park for not being what he wants, such as when Park fails to drive a stick shift. "Call your brother stupid all you want ... He can drive a manual transmission" (Rowell, 2013: 78), "Learning how to drive an automatic is like learning how to do a girl push-up" (Rowell, 2013: 142). It can be seen that his father is siding with Park's brother. It is implied from the conversation that it does not matter for him if Park calls his brother stupid, he is still not better than his brother because he cannot drive a manual transmission unlike his brother. It can be concluded that Park's father considers being stupid is better than not being able to drive a manual, because driving an automatic is considered easy like a "girl

push-up.” He is completely against Park’s decision to wear makeup to school, showing his distaste by saying that Park looks like a girl.

3.1.2 Conflict

Based on the explanation in the previous chapter, the conflict found in the novel occurs between the protagonists and another person, in this case, the antagonists. The protagonists of the novel are the major characters, Eleanor and Park, while the antagonists are some of the minor characters.

3.1.2.1 Eleanor and Richie

Eleanor goes through emotional abuse shown by Richie’s controlling behavior. It can be seen when he interferes in her relationship with Park. One night, after Park visits her at her house, Richie asks Eleanor if he is her boyfriend and proceeds to say, “I know what you’re up to,” “Nothing but a bitch in heat” (Rowell, 2013: 67). The way he calls her a “bitch” after seeing her with Park shows his dislike towards their relationship. Eleanor and Park are forced to continue their relationship in secret.

The climax of the story starts when Richie somehow finds out about their relationship. Eleanor comes home one night after hanging out downtown with Park only to find out that her parents are fighting. Richie has destroyed a box that has her personal possessions, including the mix tapes handed by Park and makeup from Park’s mother. Richie also writes a threatening note for Eleanor, which says “do you think you can make a fool of me? ... I know what you are and it’s over”. Scared of what her stepfather might do to her, Eleanor runs away from home.

Eleanor supposes that the only way she can be safe is to move out of town and live with her uncle in Minnesota, parting ways with Park.

3.1.2.2 Eleanor and Mindy

At the beginning of Eleanor's relationship with Park, she pays a visit to Park's house. His mother does not seem to be very fond of her, "Park's mom *did* hate her; you could tell" (Rowell, 2013: 164). Park's mother blatantly says that she does not like Eleanor and calls her "trouble girl" after knowing that Park gets into a fight because of Eleanor, "You're grounded until you stop thinking about that trouble girl. ... I don't like her ... She comes to my house and cries, very weird girl, and then next thing I know, you're kicking friends and school is calling..." (Rowell, 2013: 142). It is reflected that Park's mother does not like the fact that Park gets into trouble standing up for Eleanor, which is why she calls her "trouble" girl. It is also revealed that Mindy does not like how Eleanor does not embrace her femininity through her appearance. That matter will be discussed later in this chapter.

3.1.2.3 Park and Jamie

Jamie, Park's father, finds Park not embracing his concept of masculinity. He becomes extremely furious when he finds out that Park is wearing eyeliner to school because he sees makeup to be only for girls. Park also has to learn to drive stick shift as a way to fulfill his masculine part, because his father considers driving an automatic car is as easy as doing a girl's push up.

3.1.3 Setting

The novel is set in Nebraska, in 1986. Eleanor's household and Park's household are the places in which most of the story takes place. Those places also mark the existence of gender roles and stereotypes issues in the story.

Eleanor is described to be living in a small house with only two bedrooms and a bathroom that is connected to the kitchen, as in the bathroom does not have a door. Eleanor and her four siblings have to share a tiny bedroom that can only fit a dresser and some bunk beds. Some of them have to spend every night sleeping on the floor, making it impossible to walk without stepping on someone (Rowell, 2013: 17). The limited space on her home indicates the economic condition of her family.

Park's house, on the other hand, is relatively nicer and more comfortable. Park and his younger brother get their own bedrooms, and his mother runs a hair salon at the back of their house. "Eleanor hadn't known there were houses like that in this crappy neighborhood—houses with wall-to-wall carpeting and little baskets of potpourri everywhere" (Rowell, 2013: 126), reflecting that Park's house is nicer than most of the houses in the neighborhood, as most of them are considered "crappy."

3.2 Extrinsic Aspects

3.2.1 Gender Roles and Stereotypes

The stereotypical belief of how men and women should act based on the categories set by society results in behavior traits and social roles that are linked to masculinity and femininity. These categories shape stereotypical roles that

correlate to several aspects, including domestic role behaviors, traits, and appearance. *Eleanor & Park* presents the socially defined gender norms through the portrayal of the characters.

3.2.1.1 Domestic Role Behaviors

In *Eleanor & Park*, the portrayal of Richie and Sabrina represents the contrasting activities of men and women in a household. In this case, they correlate to the socially constructed gender roles in terms of domestic behaviors.

Richie shows his role in the family as the head of the household by providing money for the family and taking control of everything in the house. He controls everything that runs in the house including what his family can and cannot do. For example, when Eleanor wants to make a visit to her biological father's house, Eleanor begs for Sabrina not to tell Richie or he is most likely to keep her from going. Eleanor thinks, "Besides, Richie would say no just for the pleasure of saying it" (Rowell, 2013: 87), indicating that Richie is the one in charge of making decisions in the household according to his own will. The statement "just for the pleasure of saying it" implies Richie's controlling behavior. It shows that he will prohibit Eleanor from going with no reason, he just does it because he wants to. As Sabrina says, "Richie is the head of this household ... Richie is the one who puts food on the table" (Rowell, 2013: 87), it can be concluded that Richie is the one making money for the family because it is said that he is the one who provides them food.

Richie also seems to control how the money he provides should be spent.

Whenever her mom found money, she tried to spend it on things Richie would never notice. Clothes for Eleanor. New underwear for Ben. Cans of tuna fish

and bags of flour. Things that could be hidden in drawers and cupboards (Rowell, 2013: 138).

It is indicated that Sabrina has to secretly use the money she finds in Richie's pants to get things that he will not notice. If she has to buy clothes for her own kids and even cooking materials behind his back, it can be assumed that Richie does not let her spend the money he provides freely.

Just like Richie whose behaviors conform to the socially constructed roles, Sabrina is portrayed as how a good housewife is supposed to be according to those roles. She cooks for him, she does everything her husband says. She always makes sure that everybody behaves when Richie is around. Though still remains as a devoted wife, Richie's abusive demeanor makes her try to stay out of his way as much as she can, and she drives her children to do the same. She says to Eleanor, "I like to have everything settled before Richie comes home" (Rowell, 2013: 19), "My mom doesn't want to do anything that could possibly irritate my stepfather" (Rowell, 2013: 112). Those quotations reflect that Sabrina always tries to lessen the possibility of Richie being uncomfortable at home and getting pissed off.

Unfortunately, due to Richie's dominance and control as well as her submissiveness, Sabrina cannot help but to put Richie's needs ahead of everything, sacrificing her children's comfort. She even prepares completely different menus for the kids and for Richie. Richie always gets the better menu, "She even made a totally different dinner. The kids would get grilled cheese, and Richie would get steak" (Rowell, 2013: 26). It is indicated that the children only get to eat simple meals while Richie gets proper meals, as steak is obviously more

expensive than grilled cheese. This shows Sabrina's role as a submissive wife who always puts her husband's comfort above anything else.

3.2.1.2 Traits

The representative case that depicts the stereotypical traits of men and women is Richie's household, involving himself and Sabrina as the characters performing the stereotypical traits. Meanwhile, Park is a representative case of a character who is considered not to be showing traits of masculinity.

Richie is described to be dominant and insensitive, as well as aggressive. He is the one who gets to decide on everything about his household, deliberately becoming dominant and extremely controlling. Everything has to go the way he wants it to be or else he will lash out on anybody. He can also be considered insensitive because he does not think about whether his decisions bring a hard time to the family. He barely shows any concern of his family's well-being.

Richie's dominance and aggressiveness can be seen on Christmas night when they are having a family dinner. When Richie realizes that the food that he wants to eat is not present on the dining table, he begins to enrage and makes a scene at the peaceful Christmas dinner. Sabrina does not serve the pumpkin pie that Richie wants because she forgets to buy pumpkin beforehand. She serves a rice pudding instead. Richie, not having the dessert that he desires, throws a tantrum which ruins the dinner for everyone.

“Where's the pumpkin pie, Sabrina?” he shouted into the kitchen. “I told you to make a real Christmas dinner. I gave you money for a real Christmas dinner.” ... “How could you forget the fucking pumpkin on Christmas,” Richie said, hurling the stainless steel bowl of rice pudding (Rowell, 2013: 198).

The situation alone explains how Richie easily gets mad and aggressive over the smallest inconvenience, such as not having his preferred dessert on the dinner table. When something does not go the way he wants, he becomes aggressive. The situation shows his dominance as a man as well as the head of the family that everything needs to be the way he wants.

On the other hand, Sabrina shows a lot of stereotypical traits of women. She is submissive, gentle, and she shows her weakness, especially towards her husband. When Richie is in a bad mood, she will walk around nervously while looking pale and anxious, acting relentlessly submissive (Rowell, 2013: 152). “She could hear things slamming. She could hear her mother in the doorway, talking softly, like she was trying to put a baby back to sleep” (Rowell, 2013: 153). The previous quotation indicates that even when Richie is furious and slamming things, which might harm her, she still tries to be gentle to him and calm him down. How she always lets Richie treat her harshly and abuse her shows her weakness for not being able to stand up for herself.

On the contrary to Richie and Sabrina who perform stereotypical traits that are expected by the society, Park has to experience resentment from his own father for not conforming to the socially set traits of men. Park’s father does not let him drive their automatic impala and get his license if he has not yet mastered driving a manual car. He compares Park to his younger brother, Josh. “Goddamn, Park, I don’t know what to do with you. We’ve been working on this for a year. I taught your brother to drive in two weeks” (Rowell, 2013: 78), “Learning how to drive an automatic is like learning how to do a girl push-up” (Rowell, 2013: 142). The

reference of girl push-up in this case emphasizes the stereotypical belief where women are considered inferior to men. It is why activities that are related to women are seen as easy and are often underestimated. Driving an automatic car is considered as being relatively easy or at least easier than driving a manual. Park's father correlating it with doing a girl push-up, which is technically easier than doing a regular push-up, shows him siding with the stereotypical belief. Since Park is only capable of driving an automatic, his father sees it as a weakness as a man and points it out by linking it to an activity supposedly designed for women.

Aside from the car situation, Park also says that he hates football and he cried when he goes pheasant hunting with his father (Rowell, 2013: 104). Football as a sport and pheasant hunting can be both considered as manly activities because they involve strength and are done outdoors. He thinks that his father is mad at him his whole life for not being like him or not showing masculinity.

3.2.1.3 Appearance

The representative cases of how the novel portrays stereotypes on appearance are delivered by Eleanor and Park. They both face criticism due to the way they decide to present themselves physically. The ones who point out the stereotypes are none other than Park's own parents.

Park's mother is a beautician who sells cosmetics and runs a salon. What she does on a daily basis basically revolves around beauty and cosmetics, hence she pays a lot of attention to women's appearances, including hers. "She never left the house without touching up her mascara" (Rowell, 2013: 122), implying that

Park's mother takes care of her appearance as a woman by always putting on makeup to look presentable.

When Eleanor comes to Park's home for the first time, his mother does not like how Eleanor looks because of her overall physical appearance. Eleanor wears men's clothing and she does not seem to take care of her hair, let alone wear makeup. It is often emphasized in the story that Eleanor would normally wear men's clothing like a stripped men's shirt, a plaid cowboy shirt, and men's golf shoes. Park's mother asserts that "Good girls don't dress like boys" when Park is trying to tell her that Eleanor is a good girl and not some "weird white girl" like she is claiming her to be. Her action shows that she holds onto the stereotypical belief that girls who do not present femininity through their appearance or girls who do not dress up the way society has set them to are not considered "good girls" or "weird".

Even when Park's mother is starting to welcome Eleanor, Park thinks that her mom still hates how Eleanor dresses up as she would look Eleanor up and down and shake her head (Rowell, 2013: 210). The gesture shows her distaste and judgment towards Eleanor's choice of clothes because she does not assert feminine qualities.

Park, on the other hand, experiences being shut out by his own father. The next morning after his mom puts eyeliner on him to show Eleanor, Park decides to wear black eyeliners to school. He thinks the eyeliner he draws himself looks better and more masculine and that it makes his eyes pop. His father finds out at breakfast and begins to scold him for wearing makeup like a girl. "What the fuck,

Park? ... Look at him, Mindy, he's wearing makeup! Are you fucking kidding me, Park? ... Go wash your face, Park. ... Park is not leaving this house looking like a girl" (Rowell, 2013: 218). Park's father's reaction to him wearing makeup shows the stereotypical belief that men are not supposed to wear makeup and that it only should be worn by women, emphasized by how he says that Park should not leave the house looking like a girl. The use of swear words like "what the fuck" and "are you fucking kidding me" also reflects Park's father's negative reaction to the situation.

3.2.2 Impacts of Gender Roles and Stereotypes

The stereotypical gender roles which have been rooted in the society may result in unfair treatments within the society itself. The existence of gender roles and stereotypes in the story lead to both negative and positive impacts on the characters.

3.2.2.1 Negative Impacts

3.2.2.1.1 Domestic Violence

Richie's abusive and controlling behavior towards Sabrina is portrayed all throughout the book. His stereotypical traits as a man result in him being superior, which eventually leads to domestic abuse. Sabrina being a submissive and frailty wife does not help in stopping the constant abuse that happens. She does not want to go against her husband and irritate him which will result in more abusive actions.

As the story progresses, it becomes obvious that Sabrina is the one who receives the most physical and emotional abuse from Richie. She is always the

target of Richie's outbursts. Bruises can often be seen on her face or hands and Eleanor will pretend not to see it, "Eleanor had pretended not to notice the bruises on her mom's wrist" (Rowell, 2013: 26). The bruises are proof that she has been abused by Richie, as they always show up in the morning after Sabrina has spent the night in the same room with him. Eleanor and her siblings are also frequently woken up in the middle of the night because of her mother's shouts and cries.

She woke up to shouting. Richie shouting. Eleanor couldn't tell what he was saying.

Underneath the shouting, her mother was crying. She sounded like she'd been crying for a long time... (Rowell, 2013: 48).

Eleanor even admits that sometimes she sleeps through all the yelling of her parents. Even the little kids are also used to the fights that they can sleep through all the yelling and crying (Rowell, 2013: 278). The way that they sleep through the chaos only shows that they must have heard enough fights, screams, and cries to get used to it and be able to sleep despite the loudness.

Aside from physical abuse, Richie also constantly uses curse words to his wife. At one moment, while he is not feeling well and Eleanor keeps making noises with her typewriter upstairs, he tells his wife "What the fuck is that noise? ... Fuck, Sabrina, can't you shut her up?" (Rowell, 2013: 152). It can be concluded that Richie also does verbal abuse to Sabrina. Even when Sabrina is not the one at fault, Richie will still project his anger towards her. "I WARNED YOU SABRINA" is what he says to her when clearly the one making a fuss is Eleanor. It indicates that he always frames Sabrina as a part of the trouble, even when she is not the one doing it. As much as she tries to not bother Richie and trigger his anger, Richie still finds a way somehow to abuse her.

She often gets abused at night while Eleanor and her siblings are already sleeping. Eleanor even feels relieved when she smells her mother's cooking the next morning after she has been abused, meaning that her mother is still alive (Rowell, 2013: 49). It explains that she is aware of how severe the abuse is thus she feels relieved to know that her mother is still alive the next morning after the abuse.

Aside from Sabrina, Eleanor also gets vicious treatments from Richie. Although Richie may not hurt her physically as often as Sabrina, Eleanor receives just as much emotional abuse as her mother does. Richie often makes unnecessary rude remarks towards her. One of the moments where Richie confronts Eleanor with his rude remarks is when Park has just visited their home, "I know what you're up to," "Nothing but a bitch in heat." He verbally assaults Eleanor just because she has been visited by a boy. Eleanor cannot even see Park except for when they are on the bus, or at the classes they have together. When Park asks her why they cannot see each other, Eleanor replies with "because my stepdad would kill me" (Rowell, 2013: 108). Her statement shows how controlling Richie is over her that she thinks Richie would kill her if she ever goes against his will.

On the day Eleanor gets kicked out, Richie is in a bad mood. Eleanor pisses him off by typing song lyrics on a typewriter that makes enough noises to piss him off. At one point, he loses it and shows his temper and aggressiveness by tearing the typewriter from Eleanor's hands and throwing it against the wall hard enough to break it into pieces. He also throws rude remarks at her, like "FAT", "FUCK, and "BITCH." He slams things and keeps screaming at the top of his

lungs “FUCK THIS”, “FUCK ALL OF YOU, “STUPID BITCHES” (Rowell, 2013: 153). The use of swear words indicate the fact that he verbally abuses the family members, especially Eleanor and Sabrina, every chance he gets as if it has become a part of a normal day in their household.

3.2.2.1.2 Criticisms

The way a man or woman acts will determine their self-image, whether it is based on the specific gender group they are associated to or not. It also decides how they will be treated in the society. Both Eleanor and Park have to go through unpleasant experiences for not conforming to the socially formed gender categories.

Eleanor faces criticism from Park’s mother who does not like the way she dresses like a man. She has Park’s mother naming her “trouble girl” and “weird girl” because of her appearance. Park, on the other hand, has to face his irritated father due to his traits and appearance. After seeing Park wearing makeup, his father completely ignores him and acts like Park is not there. There are students at his school calling him names too when he shows up wearing makeup. His father also lashes out on him because of him not being able to drive a manual transmission.

The experiences that Eleanor and Park have encountered are proof that the way a man or a woman behaves really takes part in how society will treat them. Since Eleanor and Park do not conform to the social standards, they receive criticism from people around them.

3.2.2.2 Positive Impacts

It is shown in the novel that Park's mother, Mindy, fulfills her part in the household according to the stereotypical roles and traits of women. She performs as a gentle and nurturing mother.

Mindy is always gentle towards Park and the rest of the family. It can be seen whenever Park is involved in an argument with his father, he indirectly wishes that her mother is there to defend him, "If his mom were here, she would have called foul at this," (Rowell, 2013: 78). It shows that Mindy is the one who would be stopping Park's father from yelling and getting angry at him. Mindy's gentleness is also portrayed when Park gets cussed at and scolded by his father for wearing eyeliner to school. She defends him by softly telling him to go to school while his father is still flipping at him, "You tell me Park all grown up now, almost man, make own decisions. So let him make own decisions. Let him go." (Rowell, 2013: 218). The fact that she calmly defends Park shows how her role as a gentle and nurturing mother benefits Park's position as a child.

3.2.3 Overcoming Gender Issues

The characters show different response to the gender issues in the story. Sabrina, Eleanor, and Park, are the three characters that receive the most significant unfair treatments caused by gender roles and stereotypes. They deal with the issues in their own ways.

Sabrina shows her submissiveness and timidity all throughout the story in response to the abuse her husband does. She is pictured to never go against him. However, a year after Eleanor's departure from Nebraska, Park walks past

Richie's house and finds that Sabrina and Eleanor's siblings no longer live there, leaving Richie to live alone with only his dog as a company. The kids do not come to school anymore and they cannot be seen playing in the yard (Rowell, 2013: 317). Sabrina leaving the house shows the possibility that she has overcome her fear and finally stands up for herself and her children to leave her abusive husband behind.

The same thing goes to Eleanor. After all the physical and emotional abuse she has to endure living under the same roof as Richie, Eleanor decides to run away and leave home. Initially, she assumes that the culprits who have been leaving sexual writings on her textbooks are none other than her school bullies. It is revealed later in the book that Richie is the one behind all of those. Afraid of the possibility of being harassed further, Eleanor leaves their house to live in her uncle's home in a different state.

Eleanor, who is criticized regarding the way she dresses, refuses to dress like how the society sets girls to dress like. She continues wearing men's clothing and refuses to wear makeup. Park's mother has tried to give her a makeover in her salon, only resulting in her not liking the makeover and crying over her own reflection in the mirror. She thinks she is putting on a "fake face" and she is in costume, and it is like she is *trying* to be pretty which she does not like (Rowell, 2013: 215). It leads her to refuse getting another makeover (Rowell, 2013: 224). She does not like the way she looks when she is wearing makeup because she looks too different from how she usually does. It shows that she refuses to appear

like how a girl is expected to, with all the pretty clothes and flawless makeup and hair, and continues dressing up like she always does.

On the contrary to Eleanor who likes to wear men's clothing and despises makeup, Park actually enjoys wearing eyeliner as it makes him feel powerful. He gets called out by his father and a few kids at school for appearing like a girl but he does not listen and still leaves the house with his eyeliner on as he claims to like the way it feels (Rowell, 2013: 221). "Park kept wearing eyeliner to school" (Rowell, 2013: 228), implying that he brushes off his father's disapproval and continues doing what he likes.

The three characters that face unfair treatments due to the standards set by the society are standing up for themselves. They choose to ignore the stereotypical roles and traits glued by the society to their assigned gender and embrace themselves for their own comfort and happiness.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

The issues of gender roles and stereotypes have been portrayed in literary works, including the novel *Eleanor & Park* by Rainbow Rowell. The novel focuses on the love story of teenagers named Eleanor and Park. Both of them having personal issues somehow makes them feel deeply connected in their own space, as they can forget their own problems for a while whenever they are together. Although the story revolves around how their relationship develops, the novel also puts an emphasis on gender roles and stereotypes issues.

The discussion of gender roles and stereotypes in this study involve the two main characters of the story, Eleanor and Park, as well as the family members surrounding them. It is found that the story features three components of gender roles and stereotypes, including domestic role behaviors, traits, and appearance. The stereotypical domestic role behaviors are represented by Eleanor's mother and stepfather, where they perform their assigned role according to the socially constructed gender norms in their household. Richie takes control of the family, showing his role and dominance as the head of the household, whereas Sabrina shows the submissiveness of how a good housewife should be. The case of socially constructed traits is also represented the two of them, in which Richie shows his aggressiveness as a man and Sabrina shows her weakness as a woman. Unfortunately, these roles result in severe domestic violence, with Sabrina and her children as the victims of Richie. The portrayal of stereotypical appearance is presented through the main characters, Eleanor and Park. Both of them are seen as

not conforming to their assigned gender by the people around them. Park has to undergo a hard time due to what he chooses to do, which does not embrace his father's definition of manhood. Eleanor also has to go through a hard time to be accepted by Park's mother because of the way she dresses, which does not abide by how his mother thinks a woman should appear.

Eleanor & Park puts an emphasis on the differences between the characters in terms of complying with the gender roles the society has set a standard for. Unlike Richie and Sabrina who abide well to the stereotypical roles of each gender, Eleanor and Park portrays how they decide to go against those roles.

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