

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter aims to discuss the answers to the research questions raised in this research. In this study, the writer examines and discusses the dialogues and scenes of *Mulan* and Xianniang using feminism theory. In this chapter, the results are divided into two parts. The writer splits the analysis into two parts because the writer discusses two characters, *Mulan* as the heroine and Xianniang as the female villain in *Mulan's* film. The first part aims to discuss *Mulan's* feminist traits. In this part, *Mulan's* behaviours in various scenes and dialogues align with the traits of feminists. The second section aims to discuss Xianniang's feminist traits in *Mulan's* film. This second part consists of various scenes and dialogues from the film which represent Xianniang's feminist traits.

#### 4.1 *Mulan's* Feminist Traits

In this section, the writer analyses *Mulan's* film using Zembat's feminism theory. According to Zembat (2017), many feminists believe that there are five basic principles of equality. The first is working to increase equality. The second is expanding human choice. The third is eliminating gender stratification. The last two principles are to end sexual violence and promote sexual freedom. Below, the writer will discuss feminist traits that are found in *Mulan*:

#### **4.1.1 Working to Increase Equality**

Mulan is a character who shows the feminist trait of working to increase equality. In the film, Mulan is represented as a woman who has strong chi and great fighting ability, but her parents told her to hide her power. Initially, her decision to go to the camp and fight as a soldier happens because of her injured father. She chooses to replace her father to go to war to defend the family's honour. Even though she knows that only men can become a soldier, Mulan insists on doing what she thinks is right. Mulan knows that she has to protect her family, especially her father, and her family's honour.

Mulan's decision to join in training and warfare is also a way to realise the talent and the power she has. At that time, Mulan is not simply working or having specific occupations, instead, she does the man's duty to bring honour by joining the training as a soldier and fighting in the war. By becoming a soldier, she works to increase equality. As generally known, working as a soldier is considered a man's job, women rarely choose a soldier as their occupation because being a soldier needs physical strength. Mulan's choice as a soldier can be seen as her efforts to be equal to man. Unfortunately, her challenge is her identity as a woman. To hide her true gender, she decides to disguise herself as a man.

Dialogue 4.1

Sergeant Qiang : “I told you to line up for showers. You lot stink and I need a volunteer for night guard duty.”

Mulan : “Me! I mean, I volunteer, sir.” (Caro, 2020, 31:10)

Mulan’s work to increase the equality of a woman is supported by her personality. In the film, Mulan's character shows a side of a woman who is independent and strong; the stereotypical traits associated with men. Mulan hides her real identity behind the identity of Hua Jun (Mulan’s name as a man). Mulan decides to cover her female physique, dress up as a man and go to the training camp. She also tries to change her voice and act like a man. Because she hides her real identity as a woman, Mulan has to take care of herself. Mulan is not relying on others to solve a problem, whether the problem is caused by herself or her family, such as the absence of a son to join the war.

In addition, Mulan is a strong woman who can adapt to the conditions and follow the tough training that she receives in the camp. She tries her best to wake up earlier than the other soldiers to train her skill in martial arts, passes every training mission, and does the night’s guard duty while the other soldiers go to sleep. The film depicts Mulan as a self-assured woman on a quest to prove herself. She wants to show that she can make it through the training camp on her own and is capable of overcoming any difficulty on her own. Mulan’s action represents the traits of working to increase

equality because she does the duty associated with the men's field and works hard to prove herself.

Mulan's quality as a good soldier is even acknowledged by Commander Tung. He said, "[walking into Mulan] "Hua Mulan, your actions have brought disgrace and dishonour to this regiment, to this kingdom, and to your own family but your loyalty and bravery are without question." (Caro, 2020, 01:18:43). Later, Mulan is trusted to lead a small army that returns to the Imperial City to save the Emperor from Bori Khan's plan. This means that Commander Tung trusts Mulan, a woman, to do important jobs associated with men's fields.

Furthermore, Mulan is an individual who is seen as a strong person by her peers and has a leadership spirit. Mulan can calm the tense atmosphere of her friends the night before they descend directly into the battlefield. Mulan promises that she will protect each one of them, "Listen to me, all of you. We will live. I guarantee it because I will protect you. We'll protect each other. We'll fight for each other." (Caro, 2020, 55:49)."

Mulan breaks the notion that women are considered incapable of leadership. She has authority and assertiveness. The commander and her friends consider Mulan as a person who has enough power to protect the other warriors and become a reliable leader. Mulan succeeds in proving that she can become a leader regardless of her gender. This agrees with Zembat's theory of working to increase equality which hopes

that women can gain the same opportunities as men. In this case, Mulan as a woman gains the chance to become a soldier and a leader in the war. By becoming a leader, Mulan works to increase equality.

#### **4.1.2 Expanding Human Choice**

Expanding human choice means promoting the idea of women having the freedom to express and determine actions in their life. In the film, Mulan indeed freely expresses and determines actions in her life. Mulan is a depiction of a woman who is quite different from how a woman should be at that time. The ideal woman in Mulan's society is supposed to be someone who hides her emotion in the bad time, acts gracefully, and acts properly. In Mulan's time, women must know their place and how to behave according to their role (Christy & Tano, n.d.). If a woman does not behave in such a manner, it will be seen as strange. The film shows that Mulan is different since she was a child. She was and still is an active, agile, and expressive person. For example, at the beginning of the film, it is shown that the young Mulan is trained in martial arts. When she grows up, it turns out that Mulan continues doing what she adores, which is training her ability in martial arts and horseback riding even though her parents forbid her. Mulan's action is different from other women of her age who are expected to assist their mother with the household chores.

The film also shows that Mulan always does what she wants, even though her family forces her to follow her cultural tradition. Mulan's parents worry about their

daughter because she cannot control her chi. They wonder who wants to marry a girl that behaves like Mulan. Mulan's personality, actions, and choices to go against her society's tradition promote the idea of women having the freedom to express and determine actions in their life.

Another example of Mulan's expanding human choice is when she reveals her true identity by kneeling and admitting her fault in front of Commander Tung, her friends, and the rest of the soldiers. As a consequence, she is fired from the army and exiled. However, the commander decides to send her back to the village. This scene reveals that Mulan is not afraid of the punishment she has to bear for revealing her true identity. Mulan dares to take the risks to do what she thinks is right. She only thinks that as a warrior she should fight.

#### Dialogue 4.2

Mulan : [kneeling down] "I'm Hua Mulan. Forgive me."

Commander Tung : "You are an imposter. You've betrayed the regiment. You've brought disgrace to the Hua family."

Mulan : "Commander..."

Commander Tung : "Your deceit is my shame."

Sergeant Qing : "Commander, what is the punishment assigned to this imposter?"

Commander Tung : “Expulsion.”

Mulan : “I would rather be executed.”

Commander Tung : “From this moment forward, you are expelled from the emperor’s Imperial army. If you show your face again, your wish to be executed will be granted.” (Caro, 2020, 01:12:30)

The trait of expanding human choice here means women want to show their ability and potential, without any hesitation to prove themselves. Mulan hopes that by revealing her identity, Commander Tung and her friends will accept her and let her join the war as a soldier. Mulan’s characteristic in this act represents a feminist woman who desires to show their ability as a soldier. She tries to attest that she is capable of becoming a soldier and fighting in the war land, which is considered a men’s job at that time. Other than that, a form of expanding human choice is shown through Mulan who displays the freedom of expressing her voice and determining actions in her life.

Another scene that shows Mulan expanding human choice is when Mulan decides to return to her battalion to warn the commander and the other soldiers of the Khan’s real plan. She is not afraid to return to her battalion even though she will be executed. Mulan’s decision to return to the camp after her expulsion reveals that she has a great desire to save her country. It also highlights Mulan’s struggle to fight for her right to become a soldier. In the end, Mulan is able to realise her dream to become



a soldier and a leader. Commander Tung finally decides to forgive and let Mulan lead the rest of the army. Her courage to speak the truth and her loyalty to the country help her to reach her dream. She is also supported by her colleagues who say that they believe in Mulan.

#### 4.1.3 Eliminating Gender Stratification

Eliminating gender stratification means fighting the traditional value about women stereotypes that creates gender inequality. In the film, Mulan fights against the traditional value about women who should act elegant, and graceful, remaining silent and invincible. Mulan shows her difference by fighting with her male friend, Hong Hui. Figure 4.1 shows that Mulan looks very shrewd in martial arts and does not show any difficulties when fighting against Hong Hui, one of her comrades in the imperial army. She can read the movements of her opponents, fend off the attack and strike back at the right time.



Figure 4.1 Mulan fends off the attack from Hong Hui (39:40)



It can be concluded that the battle between Hong Hui and Mulan is evenly matched because both of them can defend and attack at the right time. This action proves that Mulan is a woman who can go down to the battlefield with her abilities. It happens because of the chi that she possesses, the training that she does since childhood, and the hard work that she does in the camp which helps her deal with the opponents. In this scene, Mulan's actions break the stereotype that women are weak and not sufficient to perform male roles.

The elements of eliminating gender stratification are also shown through Mulan's character who carries buckets filled with water up to the hill without dropping her hands and spilling the slightest amount of water. Meanwhile, no other men soldiers have been able to get to the top of the mountain without resting and spilling water from the buckets like Mulan. The other soldiers are looking at Mulan and are fascinated by Mulan's actions because they could not match the abilities that are possessed by Mulan. They consider Mulan as a strong individual who succeeds to fulfil the soldier training mission and becomes a true soldier.



Figure 4.2 Mulan climbs the hill carrying two buckets filled with water (49:44)

The limitations of physical abilities and stereotypes of weak women are sought to be refuted through this act. It highlights that women can also have the same strength as men and excel in fields that are related to men. The element of eliminating gender stratification is shown through Mulan who is capable of bearing a heavy burden and completes the soldier training mission. Mulan's action changes society's perspective on women where women are no longer seen as weak and incapable individuals.

Another scene shows Mulan and Bori Khan who are physically involved in a fight. She uses her swordsmanship to attack Khan. Nonetheless, Bori Khan fends off Mulan's sword which causes her sword to fall and Mulan has to fight Khan without the sword. Mulan continues to combat using her own strength in martial arts. It is shown that Mulan can defend herself from the attack of Khan and strike back at him in a

precise time. In the end, Mulan wins the fight against her enemy and rescues the Emperor.

In this case, Mulan's action represents those feminists who indirectly break the stereotype that women are often perceived as weak creatures when compared to men. Here it is shown that even though Mulan is a woman who has a smaller body than Bori Khan, Mulan has enough strength to defeat Bori Khan who is a man. Furthermore, Mulan's characteristic considers eliminating gender stratification because she stands a chance of becoming a woman soldier who fights to save the emperor. Mulan is bringing a new era and a chance for women to be recognised as women warriors.

Another act presents Mulan who stands a chance of saving the emperor. The emperor calls Mulan a soldier, whereas in the past only men were recognised as a soldier. The emperor's words state that women with capabilities like Mulan can gain recognition as soldiers regardless of their gender. Another scene shows the time when she is invited directly by the emperor to come to the palace. The emperor is impressed by Mulan's action and offers her a position in the army.

Dialogue 4.3

The emperor : "Stand up, soldier. Tell me your name." (Caro, 2020, 01:34:40)

Dialogue 4.4

The emperor : “Hua Mulan, the people owe you a debt of thanks. I owe you my life. In gratitude for your service and dedication, I invite you to take your place with our greatest decorated warriors as an officer in the Emperor’s guard.”

Mulan : “Your majesty, I’m deeply honoured by this immeasurable invitation but with humble apologies, I cannot accept it. I left home under cover of darkness and betrayed my family’s trust. I made choices I knew would risk their dishonour. Since then, I have pledged an oath to be loyal, brave, and true. In order to fulfill this oath, I must return home and make amends to my family.”

The emperor : “Very well, Hua Mulan. Devotion to family is an essential virtue.” (Caro, 2020, 01:35:42)

Mulan proves that women can perform the male role which is becoming a soldier and fighting in the war. This scene reveals that Mulan has succeeded in eliminating gender stratification because her action has contravened the stereotypes of women who are seen as weak people, not suitable for the war land condition, and incapable of becoming a soldier. Mulan also breaks the traditional value of women who should act elegant and preoccupied with marriage. The element of eliminating gender stratification is also shown by Mulan’s action who creates her personal identity as a woman warrior and enlightens society to have a new perspective on women’s roles.

In the film, there is a scene where the troops from the kingdom are directly sent by the Emperor to come to Mulan's house. The Emperor entrusts a gift in the form of a sword to Commander Tung and Sergeant Qiang. The sword that is given to Mulan shows the Emperor's trust in a woman who does work normally done by men. The Emperor also gives Mulan a chance to think about the offer to join the kingdom's greatest warrior because Mulan has contributed to saving the dynasty and the whole kingdom is indebted to Mulan. The element of eliminating gender stratification is found through Mulan's character who brings honour to her family in her own way. She is not the same as other girls who usually bring honour through marriage. Mulan certainly breaks the traditional rule that women should be elegant and only be preoccupied with marriage instead. In addition, Mulan inspires other women who profess traditional thought and opens up opportunities for women who are not brave as Mulan to get the same opportunities as herself.

#### **4.1.4 Ending Sexual Violence and Promoting Sexual Freedom**

The goals of ending sexual violence and promoting sexual freedom traits are ending male domination, raising the idea of equal partnership, women have control over their life, body, and sexuality. In this act, Mulan expresses the value of an ideal woman which focuses more on personality rather than physical attractiveness. The film shows when Mulan and her comrades have a conversation about the ideal woman which attracts their attention. Each one of them except Hong Hui alternately says their

own argument about what they adore the most in women. All of them agree that the ideal woman should have attractive physical characteristics. Nonetheless, Mulan who pretends as a man expresses that the woman whom she adores is brave, smart, and funny. In this scene, Mulan seems to be expressing different thoughts regarding the ideal type of woman that her friends said earlier. Mulan sees that a person's character is more important and she knows exactly the type of person she wants to love.

#### Dialogue 4.5

Ling : “We were matched 28 days ago. Her name is Lili. Her skin is white as milk, her fingers like the tender white roots of a green onion.”  
[smiling].

Cricket : “Ling is a romantic.” [smiling]

Ling : “Her eyes are like morning dewdrops.” [smiling]

Yao : “I like my woman buxom with strong, wide hips.” [smiling]

Cricket : “I like kissing women with cherry-red lips.” [smiling]

Chien-Po : “I don't care what she looks like.”

Mulan : “I agree.”

Chien-Po : “I care what she cooks like.” [laughing]

Hong hui : “Tell us, Hua Jun. What's your ideal woman?”

Mulan : “My ideal woman is courageous.”

Chien-Po : “A courageous woman?”

Mulan : “Yes, and she has a sense of humor. She’s also smart.”

Chien-Po : [laughing] “Smart?”

Cricket : “Well, what does she look like?”

Mulan : “That’s not the point.” (Caro, 2020, 36:53)

Mulan considers that the ideal woman does not need to have certain physical characteristics. Mulan points out that the ideal woman is brave, smart, and funny which is contrary to the traditional value that women should remain silent, invisible, obedient to men, and cannot speak their voices. Mulan thinks that women should not limit themselves and match their value to the feminine traits that matchmakers give. In this case, Mulan shows the traits of promoting sexual freedom. The terms promoting sexual freedom mean equality in terms of partnership where both partners have the equal right, voice, and freedom to express themselves in partnership. In the film, Mulan is also shown as a brave, smart, and funny woman. The criteria of ideal women that she mentioned above. In this case, Mulan gives an example to other women out there to not match their personalities with the traditional value that exist. In addition, Mulan opposes the concept of women being obedient to men but it is more about how women are free subjects in expressing themselves. Mulan considers that the life of marriage should be fun and interesting where both individuals can share their feelings, and opinions, involve in the process of decision-making, and be free to express themselves.



## 4.2 Xianniang's Feminist Traits

### 4.2.1 Working to Increase Equality

Xianniang is another female character who is gifted with strong *chi* besides Mulan. Xianniang is a depiction of a woman who wants to be recognised for her existence and power. In the film, she is exiled from her village because others discover her magical abilities. She is found wandering alone in the desert with no place, family, and friends to help her. Therefore, she does everything to be recognised and gains the freedom to use her power even though she has to walk on the wrong path. She assists Bori Khan, the leader of the Rouran tribe in destroying the Qing dynasty and killing the emperor.

Xianniang's character shows the traits of working to increase equality for women because she decides to join Bori Khan's side to prove herself. She desires to show that she is capable of becoming a woman warrior. She also wants to gain honour for being a woman fighter. Xianniang thinks that women's job is not only limited to becoming decent housewives and daughters. She wants to prove that women's position is equal to men's and deserve to have the same opportunities as men.

The traits of working to increase equality are also revealed through Xianniang who works hard to prove herself. In the film, she does a lot of tasks in order to make the plan succeed. Before the war, she trains an elite force of shadow warriors to assist Bori Khan. In addition, she uses her power by impersonating the soldier and chancellor.

Xianniang gathers information to sway and thwart the emperor's plans. She gives commands to gather the imperial army to fight the northern invaders and lead them into traps. Xianniang is also trusted to attack the northern garrison and kill almost all of the imperial army which causes the dynasty to lose many soldiers. It can be said that Xianniang is playing an important role in making Khan's plan stand a chance.

#### **4.2.2 Expanding Human Choice**

Mulan's film brings up Xianniang's character as a female villain who expands her human choice by freely showing to the public who she really is. In the film, Xianniang bravely shows her power and identity in public without being afraid of society's perspective. The life of exile that she experiences does not seem to limit Xianniang in proving herself and reaching her freedom. Xianniang's action portrays the idea that it is usual for women who have such power to fight, and that women should not hesitate to show their abilities. She inspires other women to be brave in expressing themselves. She shows that women are as equal to men in their ability to become warriors. Women also deserve to have the same opportunities as men. Xianniang also wants to show that women should have the freedom to express themselves and reach their full potential.

The trait of expanding human choice is also evidenced through Xianniang who confronts Mulan about her identity. During the war, Xianniang meets Mulan and she knows that Mulan is actually a woman. She taunts Mulan about her false identity. She

looks sad knowing that Mulan is not able to show her power and hide her identity. Xianniang thinks that women should have their own freedom and dare to show their ability without any hesitation to prove themselves. She hopes that there will be other women out there who bravely fight to reach equality. Xianniang's action helps Mulan to realise her worth and be brave to show her power despite her identity as a woman.

Another example of expanding human choice is shown through Xianniang who sacrifices herself to save Mulan. In the film, Xianniang leads Mulan to where Bori Khan kidnaps the Emperor. Bori Khan, who knows that Mulan comes to save the Emperor, suddenly shoots an arrow at Mulan. But the arrow that is fired by Khan fails to hit Mulan because Xianniang sacrifices herself to save Mulan. In critical condition, she leaves a message to Mulan and encourages her by saying, "take your place, Mulan." (Caro, 2020, 01:29:27).

Xianniang's characteristic represents the traits of expanding human choice because she sacrifices herself for the development of female freedom. Xianniang is not only protecting Mulan but also countless women who stand behind them. She hopes that Mulan can save the emperor and bring equality to women. In addition, Xianniang promotes the idea of women having the freedom to express themselves by supporting Mulan to take her place regardless of traditional values.

#### **4.2.3 Eliminating Gender Stratification**

In Mulan's time, only men are allowed to show their power, and their duty is to fight in the war. Women are not having the same opportunities as men to engage in the public sphere. Women who show their power and the ability to fight are considered evil witches and a user of black magic. Xianniang's characters are portrayed as having equal strength and even exceeding men. In the film, Xianniang is involved in a fight with four imperial armies. She is surrounded by the four soldiers who take turns attacking her from four directions. Fortunately, Xianniang can read their movements and fight back at each one of them at the right time. She moves quickly and agilely to eliminate every opponent with ease.



Figure 4.3 Xianniang is attacked by four soldiers from various directions (50:59)

Xianniang's action highlights the traits of eliminating gender stratification because she breaks the stereotype of women who are seen as weak. Instead, she chooses to show her power. Xianniang wants to prove that as a woman, she has the same ability

as men and deserves to get the same opportunity. She does not want society to see women as second-class (weak or in low position) creatures after men.

Another scene shows Xianniang's action of eliminating gender stratification. In the film, Xianniang meets Mulan who comes to the palace to protect the Emperor. But she does not know that the Emperor is already kidnapped by Khan. Then, Mulan asks for Xianniang's help and tells her, "you can still take the noble path, it is not too late." (Caro, 2020, 01:26:31). Xianniang is a smart woman who knows that this may be a chance for women to declare equality. She also thinks that she must try and never give up easily. Therefore, she decides to lead Mulan to the place where Bori Khan has captured the Emperor. The dialogue reveals Xianniang who comes over and threatens Bori Khan. This is a form of Xianniang's rebellion against Bori Khan which she initially regarded as the only person who can help her to gain an opportunity and freedom to show her power.

#### Dialogue 4.6

Xianniang : "The attack has met a fierce resistance."

Bori Khan : "From who?"

Xianniang : "A young woman from a small village."

Bori Khan : "A girl?" [underestimate]

Xianniang : "A woman, a warrior, a woman leads the army and she is no scorned dog."

Bori Khan : "You led her here." [surprised] (Caro, 2020, 01:28:37)

The dialogue above shows Xianniang's character who is no longer under the lead of Bori Khan. Xianniang's rebellion breaks the control that Bori Khan has over her. Xianniang is the representation of women who eliminate gender stratification by releasing herself from Khan. She is also no longer obeying and relying herself on men. She decides to have her freedom and reach equality in her own way. Xianniang thinks of herself as a woman who can reach equality. She only needs to prove it in the right way.

#### **4.3 The Heroine and Villain Character**

Mulan and Xianniang are represented as two powerful women characters who struggle to prove themselves. They have the same goal to fight and bring gender equality. However, despite the similarity that they have, Mulan and Xianniang are two female characters who choose a different path to prove themselves. The different path that they take influencing their actions to fight for equality. Here is the difference between the heroine's and villain's characteristics.

Mulan's Heroine Characteristic	Xianniang's Villain Characteristic
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<p>She disguises herself as a man to join the war. But, then, she decides to reveal her true identity and become a woman soldier who fights for her country in the war.</p>	<p>She does not disguise herself. She bravely introduces her female identity and uses her power in public. She chooses the wrong path by helping Bori Khan to overthrow the Qing Dynasty.</p>
<p>She trains herself to become a skilful and reliable soldier. She also fights Bori Khan and rescues the Emperor.</p>	<p>She does a lot of evil actions. She impersonates the Emperor's chancellor and kills almost all of the Emperor's army.</p>
<p>She gains recognition as a woman warrior and brings honour to her family by becoming a woman warrior. She also gets an offer to join as the Emperor's soldier.</p>	<p>She becomes Mulan's companion. She leads Mulan to Bori Khan and sacrifices herself to help Mulan.</p>

The table shows that Mulan is represented as a heroine character who chooses a good way to prove herself. Meanwhile, Xianniang is a villain character who decides



to bring equality on the wrong path. But, in the end, Xianniang changes her decision and turns her path to help Mulan. She sacrifices herself to save Mulan and without Xianniang's help, Mulan will not be able to save the Emperor and become the hero in the film. Xianniang's action proves that she is not only a villain character who does evil or illegal actions but she also does good deeds.

