

The Characterization of Female Protagonists from the Perspective of Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Theory: A Case Study of the *Hunger Games* Series

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Abstract. The female protagonist Katniss portrayed in the "Hunger Games" film series breaks free from the constraints of mainstream films on female protagonist images. Such a young woman can make brave choices as the protagonist in a tyrannical and chaotic world full of oppression and slaughter, not relying on those men and igniting a revolutionary wave. This is extremely rare in mainstream commercial films. In this paper, text analysis and comparative analysis will be used as the main research methods. First of all, with the help of Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions, the Hunger Games series of films is carefully analyzed, the construction process of Katniss's image and his personality characteristics are deeply explored, and an attempt is made to bring a new interpretation to the audience. The purposes of this study are to draw attention to how important Katniss's role has been in subverting conventional gender norms in movies and to provide some references for future studies.

Keywords: Cultural Dimension Theory, Character Shaping, Hunger Games.

1. Introduction

In the traditional literature and artistic works that people are exposed to in their daily lives, men have always dominated. That is to say, the protagonists of most novels are men. Even if there is a woman, it is just a subsidiary or supporting role of the male role [1]. The bravery and strength of men always form a natural and distinct contrast with the tenderness of women. This is not only manifested physically, but also mentally or psychologically. People can always see women being saved by men [2]. Due to the certain time constraints of movies, this characteristic is very clearly reflected in movies. The perspective in mainstream movies limits the audience's viewing and sensory range, as well as the diversified development of female characters in film works.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions include power distance, individualism and collectivism, masculinization and feminization, and restraint [3]. In the movie, the audience can see a clear manifestation of power distance, such as the protagonist's distrust and resistance towards the government. The comparison between individualism and collectivism can also be observed in the behavior and decision-making of different roles, such as Katniss' individual heroism and the collective resistance of the people of the 12th district. Masculinization and feminization can be analyzed through the gender role division and personality traits of characters, such as the strength and bravery exhibited by Katniss. This contrasts with traditional female values. Finally, one's own indulgence and constraints can be analyzed through the decisions made by Katniss at each critical point, such as choosing the latter between fleeing and bravely facing the consequences of one's actions. Through the analysis of these cultural dimensions, it is beneficial for viewers to have a deeper understanding of the complexity of character behavior in the movie *Hunger*.

2. Power Distance

In the movie, people are strictly divided into hierarchies; in addition to the richest 'Capitol', there are twelve administrative districts and a 'thirteenth district', which was destroyed by the Capitol because of the liberal revolution. The Capitol of Panem has absolute rule over its twelve districts, owns most of the country's goods and money, and also has the main power in Panem. With the increase in the number of districts' names in the twelve administrative regions, they will be farther away from the Capitol, resulting in fewer rights of speech [4]. The protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, born in the twelfth district, has never mentioned the concept of 'right' since childhood; being forced to work by peacekeepers in the mining industry day and night and not having enough to eat made the social atmosphere dull. Most people are paralyzed by the country's unequal distribution of power and its long-standing obedience. In the first and second districts, which are relatively influential, people regard it as a privilege to be the winner of the Hunger Games, and the champion will become the minion of the Capitol, which makes the first and second districts have many volunteers in the annual Hunger Games tribute collection, willing to gamble with their lives as jettons against future money and power. By contrast, in District Twelve, people are less concerned with 'power' and more likely to trade wild birds for bread in the black market than to win a lifetime of glory and power.

Back to Katniss, before the Hunger Games began, she just had the idea of surviving, and instead of her sister Prim participating in the game, she saw the exaggerated dress of people in the city, the expectation of the Hunger Games, and the use of money and investment for the favorite players to send airdrops, which casually decided a person's life and health. Katniss felt extremely disgusted. In the later revolution and the beginning of the war, as an important figure, she not only has a strong spiritual leadership position but also has a certain leadership power, but she knows that she is still a chess in the battle [5]. In the face of the temptation of power, she still gave up becoming a leader, almost top of everyone, and returned to District Twelve alone, back to the poor but stable days. Regardless of whether she is rich or poor, she always sticks to the principle of distance from power, never wants to involve innocent lives, and never yearns for power—even if she becomes the winner of the Hunger Games and has the temptation of the minion of the capital, she always, never yearns for power and only hopes to protect her family and friends around her, which is not to be brave in Katniss. Instead of the desire of the hero in traditional literature when she climbs to the highest peak and then obtains the highest power, Katniss is full of the most simple and ordinary temperament praying for peace and not willing to participate in disputes, and it is this character that will not easily reveal her female characteristics and the delicacy. The greatness of feminism showed in Katniss is not limited to her strong determination and fighting ability, but also in her compassion for all creatures. Even if the power is far or near to her, she only adheres to the original belief and guards the people around her with compassion and sacrifice.

3. Individualism versus Collectivism

Hofstede defined individualism and collectivism as: "In an individualistic society, relationships are loose, everyone takes themselves and their families; contrary, in a collectivist society, people are united from birth with powerful and internal groups, which provide lifelong protection for these loyal members." In contemporary American heroism movies, most of them are filled with strong individualism. However, based on the influence of mainstream values, the Hunger Games emphasizes the "big self" value orientation of female characters, especially the heroine Katniss shouldered a collectivist emotional concept, from dedication to family to heroic revolution [6].

Katniss is an ordinary girl living in District 12. In the 74th Hunger Games, her sister was unfortunately drawn as a tribute to participate in a dual program. Upon hearing this bad news, Katniss did not hesitate at all and resolutely stepped forward to replace her sister as a tribute. The female protagonist here appears as a "protector", although not for the purpose of seeking her own interests. However, from the perspective of her sister as a "protected", it is based on the family as a unit. At this moment, Katniss is not out of consideration for society, so this is consistent with the definition

of individualism, reflecting the maternal trait of the female protagonist who is willing to sacrifice to protect her family.

During the Hunger Games, Katniss is besieged by competitors, the weak Lulu suggests that the female lead must poke the hornet's nest to resolve the crisis at a critical moment. Afterwards, Katniss took the initiative to form an alliance with Lulu, sharing food with her and sleeping next to her, fearing that she would catch a cold. Thus, they established a sincere and profound friendship. After Lulu was killed by other contestants, Katniss was heartbroken and decorated her body with wildflowers, showing her appreciation for this friendship. The female protagonist and Lulu have no blood relationship, so at this moment, it seems more like a unity within a collective. The collectivism at this time is stronger than individualism, showcasing the character image of Katniss as compassionate, united, and friendly.

In the later stages of the Hunger Games, Katniss and his fellow district partner Peter fought to the death, forcing the ruler to change the game rules. The two eventually won the game. This reflects the spirit of the female protagonist who is not afraid of power and dares to fight against evil forces. Due to Katniss's outstanding performance, she became the spiritual leader of the people in 12 districts. Finally, realizing the severity of the oppressed people and social problems, she acted as a representative and led the people to launch a rebellion, ultimately overthrowing the Panam regime. At this moment, Katniss has a strong collectivist color, and the oppressed people have united to form a strong cohesion. Her image of being concerned about the people, pursuing equality and freedom, and yearning for peace left a deep impression on the audience.

In summary, in the movie, the analysis of the character image of the female protagonist Katniss based on the individualism and collectivism of Hofstede's theory is quite distinct. Strong girl protagonists are becoming popular in Young Adult Fiction and Blockbuster Hollywood films [7]. However, it is worth studying that, unlike typical American heroism films, the heroine of this film not only conforms to the traditional stereotype but simultaneously resists them [8]. This film starts from individualism and gradually moves towards collectivism to shape the character image of the protagonist, which has a certain innovative significance.

4. Masculinity versus Femininity

After the drawing day, when the "tribute" from the 12th district appeared in front of the camera, the female protagonist Katniss had a very different expression from the other "tribute", almost expressionless. When she saw her cold and indifferent expression on the screen, she seemed to be proud of herself. The male protagonist Peeta Mellark has always been tearful and undisguised. Just from the expressions of the male and female protagonists, it can be seen that the female protagonist Katniss in the work is calmer and more rational [9].

Katniss was fearless in the face of the cruel rules of the hunger game, and she voluntarily replaced her sister to participate. This selfless courage made her a spokesperson for the people of the region and also inspired other contestants and audiences to pursue justice and courage. In addition, Katniss possesses excellent archery skills and wilderness survival capabilities. This allows her to gain an advantage in the Hunger Games and protect herself and her allies. Meanwhile, Katniss not only protects herself in the game, but also protects her companion Peeta. And refuse to kill him after the game ends. She demonstrated a spirit of sacrifice for others. She is willing to take risks and face danger to protect the weak. These traits have been mostly reflected in male protagonists rather than female protagonists in previous film works.

In the first movie, it was her sister Prim who was selected as a tribute. This led Katniss to step forward and actively participate in the game to protect her sister. Later, it was the death of the adorable black little sister Rue, who was sacrificed in the 11th District, that made Katniss truly realize the cruelty and terror of this system and made the Mockingjay a symbol of revolution. In the second movie, the impact of Rue's death continues. And this also profoundly influenced Katniss's thinking on whether to resist and encourage revolution. In the Hunger Games Championship, it was the brave

and kind-hearted old lady Mags, who was weak and frail in Zone 4, who sacrificed herself to buy time for the protagonists to escape the toxic mist. Wiress, who was treated as a madman by people, muttered "tik tok" to the gods, prompting that the game scene setting is a clock. Johanna, who never acted according to common sense, took Katniss' tracker and diverted the enemy to save her, which allowed Katniss to escape the pursuit of President Snow. By contrast, although Peeta and Gale are the second and third main characters in the movie, they are not the decisive force that led Katniss to decide to declare war on this system. When the badge of the tongue bird lights up at the end of the film, swearing that the spark is already everywhere and the prelude to change is about to begin, people think of Katniss' arrow that cuts through the sky, as well as Rue and those hopeful people who raise three fingers without fear of power.

As a player participating in the Hunger Games, Katniss needs the courage and resilience of male traits to compete with other players and protect herself to survive [10]. However, deep down in her heart, there is a sacrificial spirit of feminine traits. She is willing to give up her life to protect others. She not only strives to protect herself, but also takes risks to protect her family, friends, and other vulnerable individuals. She exhibits a caring trait towards others. She always remembers her responsibility and pays for it. This selfless and sacrificial spirit inspires the audience to reflect on their responsibilities and obligations towards others and to approach the challenges and needs of vulnerable groups in society with a more positive attitude.

5. Indulgence versus Restraint

This dimension mainly refers to the extent to which a certain society allows people's basic needs and the desire to enjoy life. Katniss' character development in the Hunger Games series shows her inner struggles and growing up.

In the beginning, Katniss is a girl who only participates in the Hunger Games to protect her younger sister, is indignant about the cruelty and violence of the games, and only cares about herself and the people she loves. However, through the experience of the game and the participation in the uprising movement, Katniss gradually realized the hope and responsibility that she carried in her body. Although she did not pursue fame and fortune, she was also carried by the tide of The Times to resist.

In District 12, she was used to hunting in the forest and trading her animals for black-market bread, and she learned this skill at a very young age. Teenagers are the hardest to resist outside temptations; black market accessories and dolls attract her attention, and she learned to restrain her desires from an early age. bound herself to buy the bread that her mother and sister needed. In the game, Katniss is forced to face life and death trials and has to make a series of difficult decisions against her nature to kill a fellow human child, to face the death of her best friend, Rutin, and to choose between survival and humanity. She needs to restrain the rash actions she takes for her own selfish desires; she needs to restrain the cruel treatment of other people's lives for her survival instinct; and she needs to restrain the emotions that rush up because she misses home.

Since the end of the first Hunger Games, Katniss has realized that the little bit of hope she inspired might actually bring true freedom to the people, who see her as a savior, a leader who represents the revolution. She is transformed from a girl who only pursues personal survival to a woman rescuer who possesses charisma and inspires others.

However, Katniss's inner struggle didn't end there. As a leader, she constantly faces the pressure of power and responsibility to make choices, and every choice and action is vital to the people. At the same time, she also has to face her own inner pain and fear. When she came to the 13th District alone, Peeta and Finnick's wife Annie were imprisoned in the congressional district. To save their lives, they said words against their hearts. life and death are uncertain. Katniss must balance her personal feelings with her principles of fairness, constantly making difficult decisions that do not compromise her livelihood.

At the end of the revolution, a new regime is about to emerge. Katniss knows that she will gain more power if she supports President Cohen, but she holds the bottom line in her heart. She knows

that Cohen is just another President Snow, and her desire to rule is not for people to live a better life but just for a higher power. When Cohen proposes to let the children of the Capitol District participate in the Hunger Games again, Katniss agrees, but in the end, she holds back and shoots Cohen during the execution of Snow, giving the people true freedom.

Katniss 'character development reflects how an ordinary person grows up in extreme circumstances to become a strong and responsible leader, constantly pulling between self-indulgence and constraint, facing the test of humanity time and time again, and ultimately choosing the latter.

6. Conclusion

From the Hunger Games series of movies, it can be seen that female protagonists can initiate a political revolution storm, and female actors can interpret the great heroes who pursue freedom and lead revolution and rebellion with a level no less than that of male actors. This is undoubtedly a huge breakthrough and success in the setting and production of the movie. At the same time, this series of films strongly countered the previous commercial films that pornographed women under the guise of feminism and sexual liberation. In the trend where most high box office commercial blockbuster stories are dominated by men, with women serving as assistants or eye-catching elements, the emergence of the Hunger Games series movies can be said to be a great challenge. Moreover, it is worth celebrating that it has successfully broken through the constraints of mainstream films on female images within a certain range, providing a valuable example for the emergence of related types of films in the future.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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