

OH SILLY DADDY PIG! A POSITIONING ANALYSIS OF POST-FEMINIST MASCULINITY IN 'PEPPA PIG' CARTOON NARRATIVES

 Fatima Zohra Benabdellah¹  Leila Benstaali²

¹ PhD Student, University of Abdelhamid Ibn Badis-Mostaganem, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Gender Studies, Languages and Sociolinguistic Diversity (GSLSD), (Algeria)

Fatima.benabdellah@univ-mosta.dz

² Lecturer, University of Abdelhamid Ibn Badis-Mostaganem, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Gender Studies, Languages and Sociolinguistic Diversity (GSLSD), (Algeria)

lila.benstaali@univ-mosta.dz

Abstract: Cartoon shows are ubiquitous elements in children's early media experience. They serve as cultural repertoires, disseminating social values and norms. Through constant exposure to captivating visual narratives, children develop perceptions of their social reality and shape their knowledge about the world around them. Cartoon characters provide children with exemplary models who teach them how to perform their masculinity(s) and femininity(s) adeptly. Children classify the knowledge they acquire from cartoons as appropriate cultural norms and acceptable gender-typed behaviors. These shows are helpful learning tools, especially with the presence of appealing characters that are visually captivating. This qualitative research is particularly interested in contributing to the burgeoning trend of post-feminist readings of animation. The study focuses on masculine identity portrayals in the British animated series 'Peppa Pig'. It explores how Daddy Pig's masculinity is navigated through narratives. The aim is to unveil how masculine identity attends to dominant discourses. This article draws upon Bamberg's (1997a) and (2020) positioning analysis and dilemmatic spaces in retrospect to a discussion of post-feminist sensibilities. The findings reveal that Daddy Pig represents a 'New Man' model. Throughout the episodes, he performs his masculine authority as a providing father who accepts handling domestic chores. Unlike traditional patriarchs, Daddy Pig is an affectionate and caring man of the house who humorously experiences vulnerability and helplessness.

Keywords: Cartoons; gender; identity; masculinity; narrative; positioning; Post-feminism

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¹ Corresponding author: Fatima Zohra Benabdellah, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6288-6130>

1. Introduction

Media plays a crucial role in children's early socialization. The institution contributes momentarily to shaping how children perceive the world around them and construct identities for themselves. The evolution of youth media allowed for the proliferation of gender discourses by assigning appropriate roles to each gender through iconic characters. The socialization cycle begins with family members. Parents are the first imitated role models; they shape our experiences by teaching us how to perform our prescribed gender roles (Harro, 2000). Despite their significant role, parents remain ill-represented in animation. Disney, for instance, is well known for its typical portrayal of parents as deceased, absent, or helpless (Cheung et al., 2022). Post-feminist scholarship has burgeoned scrutinizing analyses of masculinity models presented in the anime genre (Gill, 2014; Rumens, 2017; Macaluso, 2018). This research study intends to corroborate the existing literature by exploring how Daddy Pig's masculine identity is discursively positioned throughout the episodes. We apply a narrative positioning analysis in retrospect to a discussion of post-feminist sensibilities. The show's unprecedented success has led scholars from a variety of disciplines to examine the potential effects of its exposure on young viewers. Nevertheless, the researchers have noticed that gender elements have minimally been explored.

2. Literature Review

Media enchants young viewers with various forms of entertainment, making them spend hours in front of the TV, where they innocently consume its content. Constant exposure to media may shape the individual's social reality. At a tender age, popular culture is considered a highly 'educational agent' that instills in children socially accepted behaviors attributed to each gender by creating appealing characters (Madej, 2003). In 2004, Astley Baker Davis released the anthropomorphic masterpiece 'Peppa'. The British cartoon unfolds through its episodes the daily life adventures of the cheeky piglet "Peppa" with her family members: Mommy Pig, Daddy Pig, and little brother George (Hughes, 2016). Dunn (2011:2) explains in her prelude that anthropomorphism entails attributing human life characteristics to animals allowing them to "deal with the same daily issues and concerns that humans have". By leaps and bounds, the show has gained startling popularity worldwide and has aired in more than 182 countries for eight (08) seasons now. Peppa has managed to transcend from being a plain 5-year-old piggy to a trendy cultural icon (Papasarantopoulos & Cohen, 2021).

2.1. *Cartoons as a Learning Tool*

Piaget (1961) considers films as cultural resources through which children, as active readers, identify with the main characters, internalize the perpetuated stereotypes, and learn social meanings. Children's earliest media experiences begin during their formative years. Cartoons serve as a reference point for understanding early learning and media education. Chichón (2023) believes that cartoon producers focus on visual effects to capture the full attention of the target audience. Alexiou and Kokla (2019) share the same standpoint. They purport that cartoons are 'ideal stimuli' that grab children's attention. According to them, "All forms of visual stimuli facilitate memory development and recall"(Alexiou & Kokla, 2019: 26). Attention spans are activated and remain under the viewer's control to comprehend the animated film. It is hypothesized that children's attention is guided by their urge to find answers to their 'comprehension schemata' (Anderson et al., 1986). Children arrange gender-appropriate roles to males and females based on their interpretation of the observed data (Kohlberg, 1966). Gender Schema theorist Bem (1983) proposed that, by the age of 5, children can process new information patterns (schemas) about gender representations based on existing mental structures that are culturally prescribed. Eventually, they classify

conforming and non-conforming behaviors under each gender and express their categorized knowledge by engaging in identity talk.

Since masculinity constitutes the central focus of this research, scholars in the discipline of masculinity studies call for the exploration of identity talk (discourse) as it relates to how men recognize themselves, perform identity work, and display power (Whitehead, 2002). In the same vein, Archer (2001) proposes that by focusing on identity talk, we come to understand the patterns by which masculine identity is constructed and performed through discourse. Inspired by feminist theories of patriarchy and its transformation, Connell (1987) introduced the theory of “hegemonic masculinity” to discuss the making of masculinity and the experience of men’s bodies. According to her, hegemonic masculinity represents a set of idealized masculine conduct that stems from men’s fantasies. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) note that there is no fixed monadic masculinity to be learned; they defend the recognition of multiple masculinities that are subject to change depending on the cultural gender order. They suggest that “masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting”(Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.836). The concept has found prompt use in the study of admirable masculine conduct and men’s representations as narrated by the media.

2.2. Gender Representation Effects on Children

As children grow older, they develop an awareness of how to engage with or resist gender patterns. Gender refers to the behaviors ascribed to a male or a female in a given social context (Ariès, 1996). Representations entail the process of giving meaning to the world around us through the way we emotionally describe them, the images we create, and the categorizations we ascribe to them. (Greeno & Hall, 1997). Martin and Ruble (2004) concluded that children develop an understanding of gender, which they use to distinguish between ‘the self’ and ‘the other’. Soares (2017) has tackled the possible effects of gendered content on children. She posits that the consumption of recurrent gender images implies eventual normalization and acceptance of the latter. Levine (2005) suggests that exposing children to animated narratives at a tender age when their ability to distinguish between what is fictional and what is real is ‘blurry’ drives them to accept stereotypes and embedded ideologies.

Romer (1981) contends that children learn appropriate sex roles from television, as they tend to believe that ‘television tells the truth’. Television has always been a potent medium in children’s socialization. Gerbner et al. (2002) introduced the ‘Heavy viewer’ as a central tenet in cultivation theory. He explains that heavy exposure to repetitive patterns leads viewers to accept those patterns as similar to their social reality. The degree of influence is measured depending on the degree of exposure. The greater the exposure, the greater gender cultivations are legitimized (Morgan, 2009). Social learning theorist, Bandura (2009) asserts that children learn through imitation and observation, either through media or direct personal contact. Bettelheim (1976) argues that fictional characters are extensions of real social actors. The creation of admirable characters invites children to emulate attractive models. Children “imitate the social behavior of those they see and admire” (Binkley, 2016, p.15). Turner and West’s (1998) ‘Modeling influence’ suggests that when there is no role model to aspire to, it is highly probable that the child will select one from his favorite cartoons; thus, the entirety of the character’s attributes are endorsed.

Gender is inherently relational, whether the characters are drawn from reality or fiction (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The global dissemination of gender constructs—such as post-feminist masculinities—through media may influence and reshape local understanding of gender politics. Globalization has exerted pressure on the redefinition of gender norms and power relations (Connell, 2005). In an attempt to investigate children's identification with cartoon parents, Robinson et al. (2007) concluded that female caregivers are portrayed as competent and mature, whereas; male caregivers are depicted as buffoons and immature. The findings of Macaluso (2018) converge with those of Robinson and colleagues. Macaluso investigated post-feminist masculinity as represented in the superhero film *The Incredibles 2*. He highlights the role reversal between the two lead characters. Mrs. Incredible, the mother, is depicted as an empowered, independent woman. At the same time, Mr. Incredible struggles as a vulnerable stay-at-home dad who cannot even handle babysitting his children. Al-Jbouri and Pomerantz (2020) have examined representations of hegemonic masculinity in Pixar animated films. They suggest that although Pixar is presenting to the audience the new man model with a feminine twist, it continues reinforcing hegemonic masculinity through promoting heterosexuality and contradicting femininities.

2.3. Postfeminist Masculinity in Cartoon Narratives

2.3.1. Identity in narratives

Bamberg (2011, p.1) defines narratives as “discourse modes”. According to him, when a story is being told, narrators create narrative forms where they position identities in spatial and temporal realms. Simply, they categorize and give meaningful interpretations to narrative events (Bamberg, 2012). Narratives appear in different contexts and perform a manifold of functions. In his research, Chatman (1978) introduces ‘story’ as an abstract entity that cannot exist outside of discourse and cannot be activated without narratives. He argues that films as a discourse genre portray every aspect of characters, stimulating the viewer's imagination to create a link with the appealing ones. Consequently, the viewer can decipher the cinematic codes related to the various themes that are important (Hughes, 2016). Bamberg holds the belief that narratives are deemed special because they serve: “Individuals learn to position their own values and actions in relation to established and shared categories and thereby engage in their own formation” (Bamberg, 2011, p.1).

What narratives bring to the field of applied linguistics is the manifestation of a 'sense of self' in the identity work of institutions and individuals (Bamberg, 2011). This motivates Bamberg to use the plural form ‘identities’ to imply that they are re/negotiated in daily interactions (Bamberg, 2020). Bamberg aligns with masculinity researchers, such as Jefferson (2002), who have criticized the monadic conception of masculine identity, advocating instead for the recognition of layered masculinities. Modern discursive approaches to identity (Bamberg, 2011; Bamberg et al., 2011) suggest that identity is not an abstract, fixed entity in the individual's mind but rather a set of complex possibilities that establish meanings in social interactions. (Kroskrity, 1999) suggests that membership in a given social group is linguistically established through and by interaction. Howard (2000) believes that interaction participants perform their identities through talk, which she refers to as ‘identity talk’. “It is the talk of ideas related to the behavior of males and females that makes them different, rather than the behavior itself” (Shaikh & Khan, 2012, p.153).

2.3.2. Postfeminist masculinity

Masculinity refers to the way male individuals engage in the social construction of their identity (MacInnes, 1998). Masculinity “embodies the currently most honored way of being a man; it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men”(Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.832). Feminists have led impetus campaigns against pop culture producers to create positive feminine images with equal power relations. Post-feminism marks the triumph of feminist advocates to reach a world where women’s agency is a fundamental tenet. The concept of post-feminism is often referred to as a sensibility (Rumens, 2017). For the sake of avoiding misconceptions, it is primordial to define it clearly. Post-feminism refers to the body of discourses related to gender. It studies the manifestations of gender within media discourses that are deeply embedded within a given culture (Macaluso, 2018). Notably, we moved from traditional masculinities and femininities to new models.

The postmodern era has witnessed an accentuated evolution of female identity. Women are often described as “strong-willed, adventurous, and bold” (Azmi et al., 2016, p.2). In contrast, foolish masculine characters are sometimes portrayed as naïve, idiotic, and sarcastic. The post-feminist man “experiences some type of crisis or vulnerability, usually in relation to his understanding or performance of masculinity” (Macaluso, 2018, p.4). Another aspect of the post-feminist claim would be the demurring and diminutive roles attributed to male characters. Antoniazzi (2019) points out that female characters display determination and autonomy, whereas male characters convey a set of alarming stereotypes related to domestic and educational realms. In their analysis of the ‘New Man’ in Disney/Pixar productions, Gillam and Wooden (2008) assert that Pixar celebrates the creation of a new model of masculinity that still maintains his authority and manages his tasks by adhering to updated cultural prescriptions of the nurturing community. They highlight that the “post-feminist world is a different place for men” (2008, p.7). Connell & Messerschmidt (2005) assert the possibility of change in gender relations through the ongoing reconstruction and redefinition of socially endorsed images of masculinity such as that of a partner who helps in domestic roles rather than embodying the traditional patriarch.

3. Methodology

Based on the review of existing literature, we are not aware of any research that has explored post-feminist masculinity portrayals in Peppa Pig cartoons. Peppa Pig has gained astonishing popularity worldwide. As the episodes are freely available on TV and YouTube, children have daily access to their content. Repeated exposure to cartoons may imply the possibility of gender identity learning. The research at hand aims to provide a deeper understanding of masculinity representations within the British cartoon Peppa Pig, which was created in 2004 and continues to maintain substantial success. The inquiry is guided by one overarching research question:

How is Daddy Pig’s masculinity discursively positioned within post-feminist narratives?

The derived hypothesis in this study is stated as follows:

Post-feminist masculinity is positioned as maintaining masculine authority with a demurring twist of clumsiness and vulnerability.

3.1. Population and Method of Sampling

Cartoon shows are ideal to work with because of their straightforward and flexible content (Bamberger, 2022). This applies to the corpus of this study, as Peppa Pig episodes represent the input the child receives. The primary motive for applying Bamberg’s narrative

positioning analysis to cartoons is that Bamberg (1997a) provides an empirical model that can be applied to film studies. The approach has proven its efficiency when dealing with audio-visual data. A sample of (04) episodes will be analyzed to decipher Daddy Pig's identity work. To achieve our aims, we have opted for the non-probability sampling technique, specifically, the purposive sampling method, during the episode selection process. The method in question provides profound insights into qualitative research (Ahmed, 2024). The researchers focus on episodes where Daddy Pig's character is central to the story, overlooking those that relegate him to a secondary character. The episodes that met the research requirements were viewed and transcribed from the official Peppa Pig YouTube channel.

3.2. Data Collection

To identify how masculine identities are situated within 'Peppa Pig' narrative stories, we need to explain narrative positioning analysis as developed in Bamberg's (1997a) article, positioning between structure and performance. He identifies three levels of positioning:

1. Positioning on the level of the story: "How are the characters positioned in relation to one another within reported events?"
2. Positioning on the level of the interaction: "How does the speaker position him- or herself to the audience?"
3. Positioning with respect to the "Who am I"- question: "How do narrators position themselves to themselves?". (1997a, p. 337)

Bamberg, (2020) extends that, while Levels One and Two are related to the interpretation and contextualization of identity navigation or dilemmatic spaces (sameness/difference, agency/passivity, continuity/change), Level Three is concerned with how the narrator wants to be understood beyond the level of the interaction by attending to dominant discourses (master narratives).

We draw on the narrative positioning framework, as theorized by Bamberg (1997a), which investigates how identity is conceptualized and situationally constructed by and through three interrelated levels of storytelling positions. At the first level of analysis, we examine closely how the male character, namely Daddy Pig, is positioned in relation to others within the narrative events. Here, we study how gender patterns are framed in terms of authority, competence, decision-making, and relational dynamics. We further emphasize how traditional gender patterns are maintained or challenged. The second level enables us to examine how Daddy Pig positions himself in relation to the audience. This entails narrative utterances, tone, and visual cues. To illustrate, we take as an example Daddy Pig's humorous moments of hesitation and self-deprecating humor, which may suggest to the viewers the social expectations of masculinity and how they are meant to be understood. At the third level, we attend to consider how the Peppa Pig show positions the male character within broader cultural discourses about what masculinity and fatherhood mean today. Bamberg (2020) defines it as positioning in relation to dominant or "master" discourses. This level includes looking at the possible interpretations of how the male character is narratively positioned and engaged with master discourses of 'the incompetent bumbling father' figure. The aim is to highlight contemporary shifts in gender norms.

To carry out an in-depth interpretation, Peppa Pig episodes were purposively selected based on featuring Daddy Pig in central roles, mainly related to parenting, work, and family dynamics. The purpose of selection allows for rich comparative insights across different contexts of masculine representation. Each episode was viewed a minimum of three times. The first viewing was intended to gain familiarity with character interactions and the narrative setting of the episodes; the second viewing covered a detailed transcription and coding of relevant scenes relying on Bamberg's three levels of positioning; and the third involved

interpretive analysis, identifying how masculine identities are situated across story structure, character interaction, and alignment with or resistance to dominant gender discourses. This process allowed for tracing how Peppa Pig's identity narratives about masculinity are performed and engaged with dominant social themes accessible to young audiences.

4. Results and Discussion

Positioning analysis and dilemmatic spaces are employed to study how identities are articulated and maneuvered in relation to one another to perform their roles as social beings within a given context of interaction (Bamberg, 2022). In this section, summaries of the selected episodes serve as triggers to launch a discussion of the findings, using examples from the excerpts.

In the episode "Daddy Loses his Glasses," Daddy Pig is completely helpless because he cannot remember where he put his glasses. The family members try to find them so Daddy Pig can see clearly and stop being grumpy. They look all over the house, even in the most ridiculous places. They find out, by the end, that silly Daddy Pig has been sitting on them the whole time. In this story narrative, the characters are positioned vis-à-vis one another through three dilemmatic spaces. Daddy Pig is portrayed as different from the rest of his family members since he cannot see clearly without his glasses. He is a passive recipient of his current situation when he claims, "Somebody must have put my glasses somewhere". He blames someone else and entails that it is not his fault that the glasses are missing. This justifies his grumpy attitude. Daddy Pig losing his glasses is not a first. Mommy Pig implicitly explains that he turns grumpy every time he loses them.

Moving to the contextualization of the above identity navigation spaces is needed to understand how Daddy Pig introduces himself to the audience. He gives up by saying, "I suppose I will have to learn how to do without them". Here, Daddy Pig reinforces his helplessness without his glasses and conveys to the audience that his agency is absent to change the situation, as opposed to the rest of the family members, who perform their agency to provide help. His identity is challenged, and his role is relegated to a secondary position. He positions himself as a subordinate who relies on his family members. By the end of the story, so embarrassed, Peppa discovers that Daddy Pig was "sitting on them all the time, silly Daddy!". Mommy Pig comments: "You may have been a bit silly, but at least you're not grumpy anymore".

The whole family agrees that Daddy Pig tends to be clumsy and forgetful most of the time. They are accustomed to his absurdity and silliness in their daily routine. Daddy Pig positions himself as a silly, loving father who regularly forgets his valuable belongings. The story is narrated in a humorous, implying the ridiculousness of the male character. This attends to Robinson et al.'s (2007) and Gill's (2014) post-feminist readings of masculinity of the unreliable, buffoonish man who is in constant need of help, as opposed to the competent woman who is skilled at problem-solving and can handle dilemmatic situations, as well as remaining successful at household management.

The second selected episode for analysis, "Daddy Lost the Car Keys in the Drain", revolves around Daddy Pig bragging about being an adult and playing with car keys after a family picnic in the mountain beauty spot. To his misfortune, he drops the keys in a deep drain. Mr. Bull shows up with construction materials, excavates the drain using specialized equipment, and retrieves them. Initially, unlike the rest of his family, Daddy Pig carves out a role for himself as a responsible grownup who can juggle the car keys without losing them. Regrettably, he fails to meet his expectations as a result of acting like a bumbling fool, playing with keys near a drain. Now that the children have witnessed his absurdity and Mommy Pig is upset with his clumsiness, he cannot shift the blame on someone else.

Ultimately, he performs his agency and considers some ‘immature’ solutions, such as using a stick or a fishing rod to retrieve the keys from the drain. Mommy Pig’s tone reveals that Daddy Pig’s foolishness is not new.

By contextually situating the previously mentioned dimensions, we develop an understanding of Daddy Pig’s image promoted to the audience. Daddy Pig displays a lack of skill in retrieving the keys. He turns to Mr. Bull to solve the pickle. Daddy Pig’s dependence on another male makes his identity demurred. Moreover, he is positioned as an impotent man who needs support from other male characters. This is emphatically highlighted when Peppa repeats four times that her dad has dropped the car keys down the drain. Once again, Daddy Pig is depicted as a careless person who often puts himself and his family in situations of frustration and powerlessness. Although he was trying hard to get the keys back, Daddy Pig proves to be a negligent man who acts irresponsibly. Contrary to Mr. Bull, who represents traditional masculinity as a problem solver, he does his best to achieve his objectives. Despite having a minimal contribution, Mommy Pig adds a calming relief to the story plot. Her identity is portrayed as that of an organized and responsible mother (Rumens, 2017).

The “Windy Castle” episode tells the story of the Pig Family going on a road trip to the windy castle with Mommy Pig driving and Daddy Pig doing the map reading (which he sucks at)! Mommy Pig realizes they are lost. Daddy Pig turns grumpy because he cannot figure out where they are. She calls Grandpa Pig for guidance. They eventually arrive at their destination. For the road trip, Daddy Pig identifies himself as a decision-maker who takes the initiative with map reading while Mommy Pig drives. Although the whole family knows he is absolutely clueless about maps, he likes to consider himself a bit of an expert on the matter and reassures the family that they will not get lost. When Mommy Pig asks for directions, Daddy Pig gets utterly bumbling. He does not even know how to hold a map. He carries it upside down. The map clearly shows one main road; however, Daddy Pig is too clumsy to figure out where they are. How can an architect who draws blueprints be incapable of map reading? What are the odds? Daddy Pig turns passive and grumpy when he cannot find the way. Unlike him, Mommy Pig possesses a more reasonable and calm identity. She chooses to call Grandpa Pig for help. Both of them ironically mock how terrible he may be with directions. The family is accustomed to Daddy Pig’s foolishness around maps.

The story context suggests that Daddy Pig is an evolving identity. He is working on himself to improve, as he recognizes his inadequacy in certain tasks. Although he attempts to resolve the situation, he is destined to fail. Daddy Pig has consistently shown a need for help and support from those around him. Mommy Pig and Grandpa Pig’s parody about map reading illustrates that Grandpa Pig embodies traditional masculinity, where men are seen as the source of all answers. Daddy Pig represents a softer version that requires guidance (Connell, 2005; Gillam and Wooden, 2008). Mommy Pig, on the other hand, is portrayed as fully aware of her circumstances. She maintains her composure and takes charge of the entire family. She is a determined problem solver, in contrast to her problem-making husband. The family dynamics reveal that Daddy Pig exerts his authority, yet he experiences vulnerability in a light-hearted way when he feels lost on maps. This is when Mommy Pig steps into the role of authority and rationally manages everything (Gill, 2014).

The Pig family decides “Going Boating” and chooses to paddle across the lake. While technically, Daddy Pig is the paddling engine, Peppa makes fun of him and hopes he won’t break. Soon, friends joined in on a sailing boat and a canoe. Everybody agrees to start a race. Daddy Pig does his best to win. Mommy Pig did not believe him and started paddling herself. She later discovers that paddling is not easy at all. Daddy Pig enthusiastically signed the family up for a boat trip. He is shown as a determined man who attempts to conform to the traditional stereotype associated with physical strength and outdoor activities. Throughout the

episode, his identity undergoes a roller-coaster effect. He starts from an authoritative position and transforms into a clumsy guy who often finds himself in silly situations. Daddy Pig gets excited and competitively driven when he enters a race in the water with friends. He demonstrates agency and competitiveness against other male counterparts to win the race. As he struggles to paddle, Mommy Pig interferes and ultimately realizes how hard paddling can be.

It is noteworthy that Daddy Pig struggles to maintain his authority and leadership. He works hard to achieve male superiority. Unlucky as usual, Daddy Pig's identity is navigated as a leader who experiences failure in a light-hearted manner. The story also communicates subtle gender portrayals. The character invests his physical strength in an outdoor activity and tries to win the race competitively. This may entail the reinforcement of traditional stereotypes about masculine supremacy. Mummy Pig's contribution is confined to feeding everyone at the lake, while Daddy Pig takes on the leader role (Connell, 2005; Al-Jbouri and Pomerantz, 2020).

This research has begun by asking the question: How is Daddy Pig's masculinity discursively positioned within post-feminist narratives? In an attempt to clarify how he has been portrayed and delivered to the audience, an emphasis has been put on the episodes where he is introduced as a central character. Overall, it is discernible that traditional gender roles are not particularly reinforced in Peppa Pig show. Daddy Pig does not mirror the traditional breadwinner patriarchal model. Different from hegemonic masculinity, which is culturally celebrated, Daddy Pig's identity positioning portrays a softened version of masculinity. The pig family is represented as an egalitarian unit with equal partnership, where power relations are constantly contested.

It is evident that Daddy Pig is a loving father who is fully committed to his children's education. He is present in their indoor and outdoor activities to support Mommy Pig in domestic chores. The father performs his authority as a provider and accepts the responsibility of taking on nurturing roles in the household. Mommy Pig's role in the family is not rigidly limited to domesticity. She has proven to be an active family member who demonstrates a high sense of responsibility and organization, unlike her husband, who tends to be affectionate yet buffoonish. Post-feminist tropes are explicitly manifested in Daddy Pig's identity maneuvers. His authority is questionable following his foolishness. He is positioned as a family leader who lacks conventional masculine skills, such as physical strength, decision-making, and problem-solving abilities. Daddy Pig's post-feminist identity traits are manifested in his constant dependence on others to provide help. Gillam and Wooden's (2008) and Macaluso's (2018) findings align with the current study. The researchers conducted in-depth analyses on three major production *Cars*, *Toy Story*, and *The Incredibles* where they track the masculine identity progression from alpha male to the New Man. They conclude that the progression is charted starting from the traditional model of masculinity, portraying the man of the house as strong and competitive, towards a vulnerable version of masculinity that accepts its feminine side.

The production of such a post-feminist version of masculinity and femininity suggests that these models will be reproduced and reinforced by and through discourse. This leads to the normalization and acceptance of power asymmetries. Post-feminism legitimizes the alteration of gender identity representations. It accentuates the shift from patriarchal underpinnings towards a version of immature, clumsy men vs. competent, skilled women. The primary concern is that cartoons play an educational role in children's early socialization. The study of audience interpretations of such twisted content, of unreliable fathers, as opposed to empowered mothers, stands inevitable. Since popular media promote the image of power

asymmetries between genders, this can suggest that a powerful man and a powerful woman are mutually distributed, and their coexistence is impossible.

The findings of the study point out that post-feminist men are identified as goofy juveniles who exhibit vulnerability when facing their problems. They most likely tend to ask for help from their female counterparts or their surroundings. Whereas, women are brought to the forefront as mature. They are depicted as rational beings that solve their problems independently. These results converge with those of Macaluso (2018), who studied how Disney is advancing post-feminist masculinity in its recent productions by focusing on the sociological aspects of masculinity and the reception of such representations in popular media. We cannot claim that all child entertainment content requires parental supervision. However, some of it hinders the child's fertile imagination from creativity (Gillam and Wooden, 2008). On the contrary, it makes them recall the behaviors promoted by popular culture and the media. Media producers are invited to uphold the responsibility for the proliferation of gendered discourses by creating healthy identities with equal access to power.

5. Conclusion

This research study confronted its share of limitations. The major one would be overlooking the study of body language and Para-linguistic cues related to the emotional aspect of the character. Future research may be interested in scrutinizing inter-personal and intra-personal gender identity positioning. Another related avenue to future studies would be to analyze the audience's interpretations of post-feminist portrayals. Moreover, it is of paramount importance to explore emerging child entertainment releases to comprehend the perpetuated discourses and ideologies better.

The article at hand sought to analyze representations of masculinity within youth media and post-feminist discourses. It has grounded its argument in the notion that gender identities are context-bound. They are not fixed but rather fluid. They can be subject to alterations depending on cultural and societal change. The child entertainment industry stands as a crucial agent in reflecting gender evolution. It is responsible for disseminating of re-imagined gender roles through iconic characters. The post-feminist media portrayals now increasingly represent empowered female vs. stumbling male figures, which might signal a departure from traditional binary norms toward a more complex portrayal of gender. The inter-connectedness of media, identity, and ideology merits the attention of scholarly inquiry as it represents a fertile source for gender research. Future research avenues should deeply scrutinize the implications of gender role evolution for young audiences. Notably, it examines the representations related to identity development and the internalization of power dynamics.

To conclude, representations of gender identity can change over time and vary within and between cultures. In recent years, a notable evolution in gender portrayals has been witnessed. The modern world is now gaining acquaintance with new versions of masculine and feminine identities. The media, particularly the child entertainment industry, contributes significantly to the generation and dissemination of post-feminist discourses through iconic characters. Popular culture producers expose children to new gendered models that seem different from the traditional ones in terms of skills, power, and even sometimes intelligence level. Post-feminists made a giant step away from male supremacy and women's subordination towards a bumbling male and a powerful female.

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