Masculinities in Doraemon: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Zhouyan Wu, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong SAR
Zhaoxun Song, The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR

Abstract
This study conducts a critical discourse analysis of the masculinities of male characters in Doraemon, a famous Japanese manga series. It aims to explore the masculinities in Doraemon from three perspectives: text, process, and society. The content analysis of the male characters in terms of their appearances, characteristics, behaviors, and values reveals major masculine traits such as the maintenance of patriarchy, the pursuit and yearning for fame and fortune, competition, and aggression. The process analysis identifies corresponding masculinities of the creators of Doraemon through their life experiences. The social analysis of Doraemon attributes the masculinities in the manga to Japanese culture, which has been deeply influenced by Confucianism, androcentrism, and Bushido. This study sheds light on the masculine traits rooted in Japanese culture and invites audiences to reflect on the male characters in Japanese artworks.

Keywords: Manga, Cartoon, Doraemon, Masculinities, Critical Discourse Analysis

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1. Introduction

The Doraemon series of cartoons and manga, created by Fujiko F. Fujio, have been popular in Japan and other East Asian and Southeast Asian countries for many decades. The core story focuses on the time-traveling cat robot, Doraemon, who assists a boy named Nobita with his daily life by drawing on advanced technological items from its dimensional pocket. Entrusted by Nobita's grandson to improve the family situation, Doraemon travels through the time tunnel to Nobita's primary school era. The artwork also reflects many of the social issues relevant to the time period when it was created (Lin, 2004).

Doraemon has been broadcasted in many countries and has a wide influence, making it a valuable subject for research. This study applies Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis to analyze and discuss the masculinities of male characters in the Japanese cartoon Doraemon. Through text, process and social analysis, the study draws attention to how gender traits are strongly influenced by the author's early life experiences and the era he was living in. It examines which parts of Japanese social culture could have had an influence on the artwork during its production process and why the author shaped the male characters in this particular way.

2. Literature Review

Previous research (e.g., Wu, 1994; Lin, 2004; Hu, 2007) has shown that the Japanese cartoon series Doraemon is not only entertaining but also has an educational purpose. It was determined that the author intended to convey his educational concepts through entertainment, in effect making it another "textbook". Furthermore, cartoon characters often become virtual identity objects for children when images and patterns appear in their lives regularly, in addition to family, school, and society. Additionally, the most preferred programs for both boys and girls to watch were determined to be cartoons.

In Japan, gender traits of men and women are different, with men being more dominant and women being more obedient. Men are more independent, competitive, criminal, dominant, superior, focused on the big picture, and concerned with things, while women show dependence, receptivity, shame, obedience, inferiority, attention to small things, and concern for people (Kunimoto & Yoshikawa, 2000). Extant research (e.g., Lin, 2004; Huang et al., 2010; Su, 2014) on Doraemon includes investigations of its characters and their settings, gender norms and stereotypes, relationship dynamics, and any potential political context. One particular example is Lin (2004), who identified the main female characters as traditionally femininized wives and mothers, with Nobita's mother appearing most frequently as a dutiful caregiver. Her prominence reflects the traditional family values in Japan, which view the family unit as a suitable stage for such roles.

Research has found that the characters of the Japanese manga series Doraemon, particularly Nobita, demonstrate gender stereotypes. Huang, Wu and Zeng (2010) conclude that Nobita is successful in escaping stereotypical male roles while other male characters fit most of them. Su (2014) studied the interactions among Nobita, Suneo and Goda, and the reason why their friendship can be maintained under bullying. Also, the author uses conflict theories and social exchange theories to describe peer relations, and many of the pictures and language in the manga present scenes of negative emotions, aggression, directing others and money-oriented ideas.

Napier's (2005) research into masculinity in Japanese animation and manga has found a wide variety of symbols, ranging from contemporary society to forms of dreams coming true. In the cartoon InuYasha, for example, the sword is seen as a symbol of potential masculinity, but InuYasha disliked it at first. Male characters in Wolf's Rain are often divided and confused by the past, while Howl in Howl's Moving Castle is portrayed as an emotional character with a strong and dark masculinity. These characters represent various ways masculinity is viewed in Japanese animation and manga.

Results from research conducted by Dohrmann (1975) and other relevant studies have confirmed that television presents distorted and stereotyped gender roles and that there is a possible relationship between watching television and the development of gender roles in children. This relationship has been found to be equal for boys and girls, regardless of age. Furthermore, McGhee & Frueh (1980) discovered that children who watched more television had more gender stereotypes held by adults than those who watched less.

3. Research method

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a critical theory that regards the use of language as a form of social practice. It addresses questions relating discourse to relations of power, such as how the text is positioned, whose interests are served, whose interests are denied, and what are the consequences of such positioning (Fairclough, 1989). On the one hand, CDA allows researchers to focus on the symbols that form the text, specific language choices, juxtaposition, order, and layout. On the other hand, researchers need to be aware of the historical judgment of these choices and understand that these choices are closely related to the likelihood of this expression. In other words, texts are instances of socially normative discourse, and the processes of production and reception are socially conditioned (Janks, 1997; Fairclough, 1989, 1995).

Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (1989, 1995) consists of three interrelated analytical processes linked to the three interrelated dimensions of discourse, each requiring a different analysis.

1. The first dimension is text analysis, which involves descriptions of verbal, visual, or verbal and visual texts.
2. The second dimension is process analysis, which interprets the process of producing and receiving objects by human beings, such as writing, speaking, listening, reading, and viewing.
3. Finally, social analysis is the third dimension, which explains the socio-historical contexts in which these events took place.

This study adopts CDA as the research method. It enables us to view the cartoon from both a macro perspective (historical and social environment) and a micro perspective (personal experiences of the author). By revealing what influenced the author to create the male characters and their masculinities, a more comprehensive understanding can be gained.

4. Findings of the analysis

The CDA analysis yields the following findings at the three levels.

4.1 Text analysis

The text analysis focuses on exploring the masculinities (appearance, speech, behavior, personality, and value, etc.) of the main male characters in Doraemon, including Doraemon, Takeshi Goda, Suneo Honekawa, Nobita, and Nobita's father.

Doraemon is an imagined product of 22nd-century robot and does not belong to the human community. However, the authors inevitably substitute gender stereotypes as part of the imaginary robot personality. Doraemon exhibits certain masculine qualities. He holds a large number of high-tech products and can skillfully use them, which is more in line with the public's stereotype that high-tech users are mostly male. As a friend who can accompany Nobita at home day and night is male, not a female.

When comparing Doraemon's appearance with that of his sister, Dorami, Doraemon's masculinity in design becomes apparent. Doraemon has a simple design, with his main color being blue, a cool color, and his obtaining bag being pure white. He has no long eyelashes but has whiskers on his face. When laughing, his mouth becomes quite wide, and the shape of his mouth is almost semi-round, creating a bold and generous image. In contrast, Dorami was designed in warm colors such as yellow, red, and pink. She has more feminine factors, such as a pink and white checkered pattern on her obtaining bag, long eyelashes, and a flushed face. When she laughs, her mouth is much smaller than her brother's, and the shape of her mouth is similar to a small triangle, showing her restrained and self-command personality traits. Such appearances cater to traditional gender stereotypes of men and women.

Doraemon's body is made of metal, and his obtaining bag always contains high-tech products to overcome danger, which, combined with his intelligence, can solve Nobita's difficulties, and provide entertainment, encouragement, and education for Nobita. Doraemon is also a character who rescues people from danger when necessary. However, Doraemon's mortal personality, such as his preference for dorayaki and fear of mice, somewhat diminishes the robot's cold, flawless, and almighty competence. This does not diminish Doraemon's brilliance but makes his image more approachable.

Another male character Goda's sitting posture and body position indicate that he is very confident, likes to be on top and thinks that he is far superior to Suneo. In Goda's mind, people who are lower than him cannot be on an equal footing with him. Secondly, Goda values power very much. After learning about Suneo's plan for the game, he attacked Suneo until Suneo showed fear and stopped talking about it. By attacking Suneo, Goda controlled Suneo's words and behaviours within the acceptable range of Goda's situation, and he did not allow Suneo to do anything against his will.

The specific manifestation of aggression in Goda is that he often beats his companions. Goda's behaviour of beating up weaker companions can strengthen his masculinity, vent his anger, and consolidate his dominant position among his companions. Goda builds a terrifying reputation by bullying his peers in exchange for his own safety, which is an act of self-preservation. At the same time, Goda gains recognition for his masculinity by bullying his less masculine peers.

Among the main characters, Goda is the one who excels the most at playing sports. Previous studies have explained that being good at sports is also proof of possessing masculinity. According to Manzenreiter (2013), the perseverance of male domination is outstanding in

sports that value mental and physical characteristics closely related to traditional notions of masculinity, such as fighting spirit, leadership skills, willpower, aggressiveness, and strength.

Suneo Honekawa is a main figure in the social network of Goda and Nobita. He is smart and good at bargaining. Additionally, he loves to praise himself, show off what he has, and flatter others. Every time he encounters danger, such as when Goda was about to beat him and Nobita, Suneo can often change Goda's attitude and mind instantly through words. In the end, only Nobita was beaten. Here, Suneo's behavior is not only adaptable but is also based on his knowledge of Goda, especially that Goda easily gets angry and tends to deal with things with violence, as well as the things that Goda hates the most. By saying these words, Suneo can get himself out of Goda's threat range and successfully turn Goda's contradictory attention to Nobita. In this case, Suneo can think calmly and get himself out of danger, which shows that he has strong analytical abilities.

Nobita Nobi is the only child in his family and a fourth-grader in elementary school. He is kind-hearted, compassionate, helpful, timid, and not good at sports. Among the male characters in Doraemon, Nobita is considered the least masculine. However, no matter how many setbacks he suffers, he still wants to become a better person. Nobita often rethinks his behaviors, and although he changes back to the original after rethinking, he still wants to do better than before. From this point of view, Nobita's also exhibits his male strength and toughness. Moreover, Nobita was disappointed with his ancestor, who hunted gentle animals and will run away when encountering ferocious animals. While the ancestor of Suneo was a brave general, who was rewarded and held high posts. Comparing in any way, Nobita feels that his ancestor is inferior to others. It can be seen that Nobita wants his ancestors to be people with amazing accomplishments, so that he can reduce the arrogance of Suneo on this topic, and overturn the negative stereotypes and biases of Goda about Nobita himself and his ancestor. Although Nobita is young, he has a clear awareness of pursuing fame and wealth. In addition, the ancestors the boys mentioned were all in the line of male ancestors. No boys ever traced or mentioned the history of female ancestors, which shows the lack of female presence under the patriarchy. It can also be revealed that they are defending patriarchy, and one day they will also become the ancestors of their future generations, and they will also be the representatives of patriarchy in the future society. Therefore, to defend the status of male ancestors is to defend their own interests.

Nobita's father Nobisuke grew up in a poor family and wanted to pursue painting, but his family could not afford it due to financial problems. Despite this situation, he refused a rich man's financial support and marriage to the rich man's daughter because he wanted to rely on his own efforts for success, not money and power. He firmly believed that the ideal of becoming a painter could not be bought with money. Nobisuke has high expectations for his son and hopes that he will bravely pursue his dreams.

Through the analysis of the drama episodes, masculinities such as aggression, competitiveness, confidence, sportiness, toughness, pursuit of fame and wealth, maintenance of patriarchy, ambition and morality can be found in male characters in Doraemon.

4.2 Process Analysis

In the process analysis section, we explore the influence of personal experience and characteristics of the artist on the creation of the work, the reasons why he integrated

masculinity into the artwork, and the potential understanding of the masculinity of anime characters by readers.

Fujimoto Hiroshi whose pen name was Fujiko F. Fujio, was the cartoonist of Doraemon. he was born on December 1, 1933, in Japan. The Doraemon manga was first published in December 1969, and the cartoon was first aired in April 1973. Since then, more and more episodes and films of Doraemon were produced, gaining popularity in Japan (Lin, 2004).

Fujimoto Hiroshi's childhood experiences were also the source of his creation of Doraemon. He achieved outstanding results in science and related subjects during his secondary school years, and after further studies, he chose to study electrical engineering at the College of Technology (Ling, 2004). In people's stereotypes, engineering has always been considered a profession where men are more competent than women.

Fujimoto Hiroshi was kind and had a sense of justice. He hated classmates who bullied or looked down on others. With a high sense of responsibility and care for his family, he would try his best to rest on holidays to spend time with his family, which is the most important thing (NHK, 2004). His actions were in line with Confucian values of devotion to family and hard work.

As a child, Fujimoto was often immersed in the world of science fantasy, and he loved to read comic books, draw comics, and explore. Osamu Tezuka, known as "the Father of Manga" in Japan, had a profound influence on Fujimoto's creation. The storyboard and ambitious story of Osamu Tezuka's manga deeply attracted the two manga fans, and they aspired to become manga artists. Later, the shared pen name taken by the two, "Fujiko Fujio", which is a male name, was also inspired by Osamu Tezuka . (Ling, 2004). Osamu Tezuka's male identity inadvertently establishes a positive and professional presence in Fujimoto's heart during his youth. Fujimoto's intense admiration for Osamu Tezuka, due to his love of drawing and reading manga, unconsciously led him to learn and imitate Osamu Tezuka's personality traits. The pen name, style and technique of creating manga, and personality traits of Osamu Tezuka all contained the masculinity of a male manga artist.

In the society in which the author lived, boys were encouraged to engage in more intense and physically demanding activities such as playing football, while such sports were not encouraged for girls. On the other hand, girls were not encouraged to engage in more physical games like football. Additionally, girls are more likely to cry and express their emotions, and this behavior is not appreciated by boys. The author may have wanted to use this comic to encourage readers to reflect on the impact and constraints of gender stereotypes on people's lives.

Some of Fujimoto Hiroshi's characteristics are consistent with the traditional concept of masculinity in terms of his childhood experiences, studies, character, hobbies, and creation concepts. However, he also had the consciousness to introspect and challenge existing gender stereotypes in creating characters, so readers could see someone like Nobita, who is not traditionally masculine, as the protagonist. Additionally, Fujimoto's wild imagination is on display in the story of male and female personality switching, questioning what kind of society would result.

In Doraemon, Fujimoto organized his own childhood experiences into comic stories, bringing the characters to life for the audience and making them relatable to children's daily lives. This

approach increased the opportunity for readers to empathize with the characters and created resonance between the author and readers.

4.3 Social Analysis

Social analysis aims to analyze the influence of Japanese social environment and culture on Fujimoto and to reveal the factors that affected his construction of male figures in Doraemon. This section will discuss three pillars: Confucianism, androcentrism, and Bushido spirit.

Japan is a highly hierarchical society in which relationships are defined by subordination, especially for men who work in companies. The strong root of Confucianism ethics may also influence their personality development, since Confucianism puts great value on rules and the royalty for power. This can also be interpreted as obedience to parents, teachers, bosses, and companies (Yoko Sugihara & Emiko Katsurada, 2000). Reischauer & Craig (1973) also pointed out that Confucianism is an idea originated from China, which emphasizes the hierarchy of society, assumes male dominance, and advocates the intrinsic qualities of man, such as integrity and justice.

The influence of Confucianism is easily seen in Doraemon. Regarding obedience to parents, Fujimoto was too obsessed with drawing manga as a child, and after his family dissuaded him, he gave up. In the episode *Helping Dad Fulfill His Wishes*, when Nobita's father was making life decisions, Nobita's grandpa said to grandma privately, "Nobisuke is still a child, in short, he must first listen to his father, that is, my opinion." The older generations think that they have a higher status than the younger ones and should take the responsibility of taking care of the younger generations. On the other hand, although the younger generation has personal opinions, they are afraid of the seniors and believe that the final decision is in the hands of seniors.

The ethics of diligence and high responsibility were also incorporated into post-industrial society in Japan. As the main laborer, men should work outside for long hours, while women remained doing housework and looking after children at home. Therefore, mothers and children were left behind without males, and the mother is the custodian of the child and the authority to discipline the child, thus showing a feminine image with both feminine and masculine qualities. Furthermore, Japanese women expected males to present masculinities and femininities at the same time, and children may also learn and internalize the various expectations towards men from their mothers. The condition of Nobita's family can well explain this phenomenon, with a father only coming home at night and working long hours during the daytime at the company, and a mother in charge of cooking, washing, any other housework, and looking after Nobita. To some extent, Nobita may internalize his mother's expectation towards men through staying with his mother day and night. In Doraemon, Nobita is a typical character who combines femininity and masculinity. He has both feminine traits such as shyness, gentleness, submissiveness, less dominant, and less harsh words, as well as masculine traits such as loyalty, integrity, tenacity, and morality.

Androcentrism refers to theories and practices based entirely on males' experience. Gilman (1914) pointed out that male life patterns and masculine mindsets are considered universal, while female life patterns and feminine mindsets are seen as biased.

Japanese society is not exempt from androcentrism in its culture. Through acculturation, both men and women internalize cultural expectations of each gender and androcentrism in society.

By learning the gender-polarizing approach to view reality, boys and girls are shaped as gendered males and gendered females (Bem, 1993). Males are expected to be aggressive, independent, objective, dominant, competitive, confident, and analytical. They are expected to become leaders, risk-takers, and decision-makers. Women, on the other hand, are expected to be intelligent, gentle, affectionate, sensitive to others' feelings, quiet, and not use harsh words (Azuma, 1979). These gender-related personality traits are considered the normal, healthy, and adjusted personality reflection of Japanese society. Healthy and adjusted mature women are considered less dominant, independent, and adventurous, and they are more subjective, conceited, and weaker than men (Azuma, 1979).

Unlike Nobita, Suneo and Goda embody more masculinities accepted by Japanese society, such as confidence, analytical skills, aggression, and competitiveness. They represent the expectations held by society universally, as "qualified" men. Although they bully Nobita and other peers quite often and solve problems with violence, which presents a negative image of them to readers, Suneo and Goda still go their own way after making mistakes. In comparison, Nobita possesses fewer masculinities. For example, he feels upset about what others say, self-examines, is less dominant, and is bullied by Suneo and Goda very often. Born as a boy yet lacking the masculinities expected by society, Nobita deviates from male life patterns and thinking patterns. Therefore, androcentrism in society has caused men like Nobita to be frequently frustrated and not welcomed by people like Suneo and Goda.

Bushido can be translated as the principles that soldiers, knights, disciplines, and samurai must observe in their daily lives and professions; in short, "the precepts of the samurai," the aristocratic obligations of the samurai class. As an ethical system in Japan, Bushido is not a written law. More often than not, it is a code without verbal and non-verbal words, showing strong binding force through practical actions and inscribed laws. It is not original to a talented person nor based on the life of a prominent figure, but the result of decades and centuries of samurai's life (Inazō, Wang & Yu, 2019).

As a privileged class and a brave race that fights, the samurai class absorbed the bravest and most adventurous warriors in the war-torn years. Previously researchers described them as people who are full of manliness and are beastly strong. When samurai had great honour, privilege, and responsibility, they found that a common code of conduct to restrain their group's misconduct behaviours was necessary. Elements like rectitude or justice, courage (the spirit of daring and bearing), benevolence (the feeling of distress), politeness, veracity and sincerity, honour, and duty of loyalty are contained in Bushido (Inazō, Wang & Yu, 2019).

In Doraemon, the most athletic, strongest, and brave character, Goda, may represent the spirit of Bushido. However, due to the frequent use of violence to solve problems, the character of Goda is less popular in real life (Lin, 2004), which may hint at a change in the perception and status of the Bushido spirit in modern Japanese society. Moreover, Goda pays less attention to Shizuka than the less athletic Nobita. And Bushido believes that people who are engaged in sports should not pay too much attention to women, which may also reflect that Bushido is the element that influences the author to shape Goda.

In summary, a social analysis of Doraemon reveals that Confucianism, androcentrism, and Bushido had the most profound impact on the Japanese view of gender at the time.

First, the hierarchical structure of Confucianism, which emphasizes loyalty to rules and regulations and all powers, is reflected in the life and works of the author, Fujimoto Hiroshi.

Whether it is Hiroshi's abandonment of comic painting at the behest of his parents or Nobita's father in Doraemon, who lacks autonomy in the face of parents and superiors, and is busy with work and rarely at home, Confucianism had a significant influence.

Second, Japanese society was influenced by male centrism, which had expectations for men's lifestyles and thinking patterns. As the saying goes, "Those who submit will prosper, and those who resist will perish." Suneo and Goda, who meet society's general expectations, have done many bad things, have not corrected their mistakes, and are still boldly active in the social circle. Nobita, who deviates from society's general expectations, often suffers.

Third, Bushido, as an ethical system, had a strong binding and leading role on people, and even requires men engaged in sports activities to weaken their feelings for women. Goda, who has the spirit of Bushido, does not pay much attention to Shizuka. In addition, Goda's excessive violence, despite his Bushido spirit, may indicate that the original noble spirit of Bushido has declined in modern Japan's status.

5. Conclusion

This study conducted a text analysis of Doraemon and found that the male characters in the series exhibit characteristics such as aggression, competitiveness, confidence, sportiness, analytical skills, toughness, ambition, morality, high expectations for future generations, defenses of patriarchy, and pursuit and yearning for fame and wealth. The study also analyzed the author Fujimoto's childhood experiences, study, personality, hobby, and creation concepts, which showed that some of his traits are consistent with traditional masculinity. However, out of his gender consciousness and skepticism, he presented readers with a less masculine character, Nobita, and made him the main character. Finally, the study explored the social influences on the author's understanding of masculinity and the shaping of male characters, including Confucianism, androcentrism, and Bushido.

This study provides valuable insights into the gender characteristics of Doraemon comics and animation works, from the text to the process and social context. By understanding how authors shape characters and masculinities, and the influence of authors on their personal understanding of gender, we hope to draw more attention to the setting of gender traits in comics and animations for children. This awareness can then be applied to real-life situations outside of comics and animation. Moreover, this study can deepen the understanding of creators of children's animation and comics about gender role settings. We hope that this study inspires comic creators to think more about gender when designing characters for children and create more characters that are free from gender stereotypes in a society that is increasingly calling for gender equality. Television stations can also choose animations that promote gender equality.

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Contact emails: joanngcy@gmail.com
howardsong@hsu.edu.hk