



The 15th National and International Conference
"Global Goals, Local Actions: Looking Back and Moving Forward 2022"
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Main melody TV series is produced by the state and have the political function of promoting mainstream values to the public. Audiences are rarely dissatisfied with main melody TV series, but China's first anti-epidemic series "Heroes in Harm's Way" was boycotted by audiences and received many negative reviews on social media such as Douban, Zhihu and Weibo. The reason behind this is that the portrayal of female characters in series has deliberately demeaned the real female image.

Therefore, the researcher is aware of the great social importance of audiences' resistance to "Heroes in Harm's Way". Research into the portrayal of female characters in "Heroes in Harm's Way" and audiences' identification will contribute to the improvement of female characters, and promote gender equality awareness in the future.

Objective

To analyze the portrayal of female characters and explore the audiences' identification toward female characters based on main melody TV series "Heroes in Harm's Way".

Research Scope

Devined there are 2 scopes which are content scope that focus on female charators in Chinese Series "Heroes in Harm's Way" including two unit series "Retrograde" and "Anti-epidemic War between Mother and Wife". Meanwhile, time scope between January to August 2021, a total of eight months.

Methodology

1. Research Methodology: This research will use qualitative analysis in order to find out about the portrayal of female characters and to analyze the audiences' identification toward female characters based on "Heroes in Harm's way". Both case study and textual analysis method were used.

2. Data Collection: Both primary and secondary data were used for the research, with the primary data being series "Heroes in Harm's way" and the secondary data being used for TV series press releases, TV series review articles, and survey reports. The research select comments of female working audiences at the age of 25-31 on Weibo which show the boycott toward "Heroes in Harm's way", because 25-31 year old working female, who are well-educated, have stable income and more mature mentality, are able to live independently, and also they are more concerned about gender inequality in society.



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3. Research Procedure: This study will first organize the viewing and recording of the scenes and storylines related to female characters in the selected episodes, then summarize the features of female characters, discuss the connection between the female characters portrayed in series and culture, and then further explain the audience's identification with female characters.

Findings

1. Controversies of “Heroes in Harm's way”: A scene in “Retrograde” shows: during the epidemic in Wuhan, a manager of a bus company asking whether anyone would be willing to work in an emergency during the city closure. And those who volunteered to come forward were all males, and none were female. Audiences pointed out in social media that this scene was evidence of sexism in Chinese society in an attempt to obliterate the contribution of female to during epidemic (Wang, 2020). Another criticism from viewers of “Anti-epidemic War between Mother and Wife” was that it focused only on female’s contributions to the epidemic in the domestic sphere and ignored the public sphere. In reality, Xiao’s report (2020) shows that females are the majority of front-line workers during the epidemic, of the 42,600 doctors and nurses supporting Hubei, female accounted for 2/3, 90% of the nurses were females. The proportion of female doctors was also as high as 60%, and nearly half of the female workers at Huoshenshan hospital and Leishenshan hospital.

2. The portrayal of female characters in “Heroes in Harm’s way”: This study found the stereotypical portrayal of female characters and roles in series with the five aspects:

Table 1: The portrayal of female characters and roles in five aspects

Items	Description
Personality traits	Caring, gentle, and patient, having a strong and tough side.
Social status	Mostly are subsidiary status, secondary status
Scenes	Mainly in indoor scenes, lees outdoor scenes
Number	The number of female leads is the same as that of male, with two female leads in both unit series, but the number of supporting roles is significantly less for female than male.
Events and plots	More family related plots, play a secondary role, bad relationship between mother and wife



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3. The audiences' identification toward female characters in series: On rating sites, "Heroes in Harm's way" gets 2.4 score and 0.7 score (10 score systems) in Douban and Zhihu respectively. On Weibo, the hashtag of "Heroes in Harm's way immediately off the air" got 397.1 million reads and 3665 discussions. Audiences have sent many negative comments about the series in these social media sites, and have received a lot of responses and discussions. For media release, Pu (2020) states the story of "Heroes in Harm's way" is misrepresented, and the portrayal of female workers is unjustifiably discredited. Foreign media like Wang's (2020) report in the New York Times mentions Chinese official reactions reflect the government's sensitivity to the epidemic narrative and the vulnerability of the feminist movement in China. These audiences and media release shows the image of female characters portrayed in series is contrary to the reality, which is full of the male superior judgment of females in a patriarchal society, while ignoring female self-expression.

Conclusion and Discussion

Li (2018) describes feminist theory as a theory for achieving equality between men and women in all of humanity. Nowadays, female have more opportunities to get education and get job thus female are gradually awakening to their feminine consciousness and realizing that women should have the same rights and gain the same status and respect as men. This research concludes that the changing social and cultural environment requires main melody TV series to make changes, abandon traditional gender stereotypes, portray female in line with the main theme of the times and popular appeal, and advocate gender equality, thus promoting changes in traditional social thinking and social progress. This study found that:

1. There are clear gender stereotypes of male and female in "Heroes in Harm's way." The reason behind this is China is a patriarchal country that follows the social norm of "men dominates outside while women dominate the home" and "men are superior to women." Female are perceived as unsuitable for jobs other than household chores, weak and in need of special care or treatment, and "Heroes in Harm's way" portrayed female as lacking in responsibility, weak and family-oriented.

2. The female characters portrayed in the series fail to gain audiences' identification. This is because the widely spread of feminism and activism of feminists on China have contributed to the public's awareness of gender equality, and the increased participation of female in social work and educational opportunities has changed the public stereotype of female. The female characters in series are now showing a diversified development trend, they are independent, rational, strong, confident and decisive. On the other hand, females

