

Social Identity Conflict & Inclusion in Indonesian Films: Portrayals of Diverse Communities

Roosalina Wulandari¹, Hari Kristopo² and Adilla Amelia³

¹International Business Program, Management Program, BINUS Business School International Undergraduate Program, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia 11480

²Fashion Design Program, Product Design Department, BINUS Northumbria School of Design, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia 11480

³Film Department, School of Design, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia 11480

Keywords: Social Identity Theory, Content Analysis, Diverse Communities, Indonesian Films

Abstract: Identities are unique and universal. Individuals often associate and categorize themselves into groups that they feel they share similarities with. Social Identity Theory believes that group belongingness promotes individual and group discriminative behavior towards other groups and their members. While social identity is developed by individuals to categorize themselves in certain groups they belong to, it also affects the intergroup relations. Indonesia, with its diverse ethnicities and religious groups is a cultural collage. Despite the richness of the differences, Indonesia is also highly potent with conflict rooted in the rising awareness of segregated identity differences that promote discrimination of other group members. This study aims to analyze how social identities are being adopted and how the dynamics are displayed when interacting with members of different groups. A content analysis approach will be employed to capture a trend being portrayed in Indonesian films. Selected films were identified as posing a strong message on how identities are politicized and affect intergroup dynamics

1 INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, is rich and diverse as a nation and as a cultural collage. Comprising more than 17,000 islands and a broad variety of ethnicities, Indonesia serves as a melting pot strategically seated as the largest population in Southeast Asia, and the fourth largest in the world

Being the largest Muslim population in the world, the group holds the majority position in Indonesia, dominating more than 80% of the total population. This number gives the Muslim population of Indonesia the dominant power in intergroup relations. Sidanius & Pratto (1999) stated that according to the Social Dominance Theory, most norms and social constructs applied in the society are highly influenced by the majority power. Social dominance often produces forms of vigilantism that is aimed at the minority groups whenever differences of norms and values displayed are inconsistent with certain ideal standards that the majority upholds. Hence, vigilantism is often seen as a supreme aspiration of the majority in public

domain. Ahnaf and Salim (2017) also argue that there is a significant relevance between vigilantism and intolerance towards different standards of ideologies and/or religious views.

In addition to that, Ahnaf and Salim (2017) also see the conflict potential derived from a populism development perspective, which focuses more on the restructure of economic and political order that is deemed as unfair and promotes injustice. These perspectives have been well-nurtured the past few years and significantly affect the younger generation's capacity to exercise tolerance in diversity.

The latest research by CSIS (2017) tried to portray the millennials' social, economic and political orientation. The result shows that 53.7% of Millennial respondents did not accept (political) leadership by persons with different religions. A higher percentage (58.1%) was similarly shown by a group of respondents that were older than the Millennial respondent group. This result was supported by another study by Lingkaran Survey Indonesia/LSI in 2017 which targeted Muslim group

respondents; they were surveyed about leadership religious preferences and how they tolerate different religions practices in their neighborhood.

The third study that also needs to be highlighted focuses on the tolerance level of Gen-Z and a survey was conducted by *PPIM Universitas Islam Nasional Jakarta* (2017) in 34 provinces in Indonesia. Result shows that access to social media and technology enable Gen-Z to access websites and source of information that promotes intolerance and radicalism. Respondents with greater access to internet shows higher percentage of exposure to information that promotes intolerance and radicalism.

Jessica Senehi (2002) stated that one of the most effective ways to counter radicalism and promotes tolerance was through storytelling. Constructive storytelling was believed to be able to create positive narratives that could alter or neutralize sources of conflict. Storytelling was introduced as a tool to educate and promote values in many cultures to the younger generations.

Films as a storytelling media are deemed to be one of the most important are very versatile and can offer different perspectives and narratives. As a storytelling medium, film can be understood by its form and style. The combination of formal and stylistic elements will create an ideological standpoint (Boordwell & Thompson, 2013).

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Social Identity Theory

Tajfel and Turner (1979) introduced Social Identity Theory to explain how individuals identified themselves within a group or groups. The social identity itself stemmed from personal identity that developed into social identity through the process of self-categorization, where they tried to find similarities with certain groups then developed the self-identification as group members before they continued with the self-comparison towards those outside their groups.

Social Identity Theory shows how individuals relate their self-esteem and confidence to the groups they belong to, and establish connections and belongingness. In the development process of social identity, individuals will adopt cohesion with other group members and begin to see others outside the group as different. This dynamic will then create proneness to discriminating behavior towards those outside the groups and the perception of the outsiders as less-good. Through this stereotyping

process, Tajfel believed prejudice was created and conflict rises.

2.2 Social Dominance Theory

Social conflicts are usually based on the struggle of individuals or groups in society to attain bigger power or dominance toward others. Differently from other conflict theorists, who considered conflict as dysfunctional in a society with highly developed systems, Coser (1957) stated that conflict might have functional consequences and believed that conflict will not only generate new regulations, rules, structures or norms, but in reality, it will shape new realities in economic or technological changes.

We often question how conflict keeps appearing in our modern society. In her theory, Pratto (2011) stated that one way to explain this phenomenon is by identifying how social groups in societies maintain their dominance toward others. Pratto also delves into the fact that conflict could arise from the clash of one social group with bigger privilege and hold disproportionate power toward other group with little privilege or power. The classification of this group would be based on race, sex, ages, religion, education level or any kind of social attributes, or a combination of these attributes. Societies portray the privilege of the dominants and also view their way of life as righteous, which is also viewed as the characteristics of the society itself; meanwhile the other groups which are categorized as the subordinates receive smaller privilege, are unrecognized or even stigmatized.

SDT not only focused on the structural aspect of the societies that lead to group-based oppression, but also at an individual level. Rather than focusing on the form of the oppression or conflict, this theory delved deeper into why humans keep creating group-based hierarchies, which in the end lead to a disproportionate share of power and privilege, and finally create group-based oppression and conflict. Sidanius (2016) framed the group-based hierarchies as being of a trimorphic nature. The first nature is 'age system' which considered 'adults' as having more privileges in terms of social, economic and political power than 'juveniles'. The second nature is the 'patriarchy' type, which rules that 'males' has greater privileges than 'female' groups, to various degrees, based on culture and geographical location. The third nature is 'arbitrary-set', which includes all kind of social contributions that donate to power and social status differences among groups, which vary from culture to culture and could shift through the history of human civilization.

2.3 Social Paradigm Shift Through Storytelling

Storytelling was a powerful medium used to promote peace through creations of alternatives of positive narratives amongst conflicted groups (Senehi (2002), Luwisch (2001), Chongruksa, et al. (2010), Milojevic & Izgarjan (2014). Luwisch (2001) studied how the Arab and Jewish students in Israel learned to coexist, Chongruksa, et al. (2010) focused on the dynamics between a group of Thai-Buddhist and Thai-Muslim students, while Milojevic and Izgarjan (2014) explored how storytelling evolved to promote peace in Serbia.

These studies, despite the different contexts and conflicts, share the approval of storytelling as means to reconstruct tolerance in the society. Perhaps one of the reasons why storytelling is so versatile and powerful is because it does not require literacy and yet is still intellectually accessible (Senehi, 2002).

Furthermore, Senehi differentiated storytelling into *constructive storytelling* and *destructive storytelling*. The former fosters inclusivity, mutual recognition and encourages openness, dialogue and insights, while the latter focuses more on coercive power and exclusionary practices (Senehi, 2002).

2.4 Narrative in Film

Film itself is a narrative, a compilation of moving images that forms a story. These stories are a component of the discursive practice. Previous study state that Indonesia's audio-visual media is shaped by the national popular discourse and the realities of the imagination of daily-life practices [16]. Bordwell and Thompson [7], states that film creates symptomatic meaning which bears traces from a particular set of social values. This meaning comes from a system of cultural beliefs about the world such as religion, political opinion, social class, even our own preferred live values. These beliefs become references to the filmmaker, how they view the world and how they want their audience to understand it. Whether filmmakers intend to create specific meaning or not, a film enacts ideological meaning through its form.

3 DISCUSSION

3.1 Tanda Tanya

3.1.1 Synopsis of Tanda Tanya

'Tanda Tanya' meaning 'question mark', is a film directed by Hanung Bramantyo which was released in Indonesia at 2011. The storyline of the movie follows the interaction between three families with different backgrounds, that lives in Semarang during early 2010. With a background theme of religious pluralism, the conflict rose between these characters and portrayed the reality of interfaith and intergroup relations in Indonesia.

Menuk, one of the main characters, was a devout Muslim that worked in a Chinese restaurant, named Canton Chinese Food, managed by Tan Kat Sun, an ethnic Chinese Indonesian who was portrayed as a devout Buddhist practitioner with his wife. He was running his restaurant with respect for his staff and customers' faith and also gave permission for his staffs to do their religious rituals, although they have different faiths and beliefs. Due to his health condition, he is planning to hand down his business to his son, Hendra, who was previously Menuk's love interest.

Menuk in this movie was portrayed as a faithful wife to Soleh. Soleh was a character that had his own complexity on how to be a good husband, be a devout practitioner of Islam and a role model in society. Despite his unemployed status, finally he could get a position as Banser, that he felt to be an ideal work status, for not only was he able to provide for his family but also serve his God.

Another main character in this movie is Rika, Menuk's close friend, a Catholic converted widow with Abi, her Muslim son. She is involved in a relationship with Surya. Surya is a Muslim and he is an actor with complications in its portfolio as an actor. For the past 10 years living his life as an actor, he never got a main role and usually only got a role as minor antagonists. He is very conflicted when he gets an offer to play a role as Jesus in an Easter and Joseph in a Christmas celebration in the Church.

3.1.2 Points of Analysis

Social Identity Theory focuses on taking a snapshot of how individuals with their social identities compare themselves with individuals in the out-groups. Among the movies analyzed in this paper, *Tanda Tanya* represents the most complex conflict. Some of the scenes also displayed delivery of hate

speeches towards different interacting groups of race, ethnicity and religions, also discriminating behavior and prejudices, and was not in any way subtle. The characters in the movie were portrayed as possessing strong religious identities but at the same time hinting awareness of the intergroup relations and social dynamics. The conflict portrayed was obvious through prejudice and discriminating behavior between individuals of different group members.

In the last segments of the movie, strong elements of peace-building were introduced. Promotion of tolerant activities was inserted in the form of scenes where Surya was being entrusted to play Christian character for the second time as Joseph, the Buddhist restaurant contributed in providing catering for the Christmas Eve celebration, the pastor who advised his parish to be more understanding and tolerant towards Surya, and the Banser troops guarding the church outside to provide safety assistance.

3.2 Ngenest

3.1.1 Synopsis of Ngenest

The plot revolved around the life of Ernest, a young ethnic Chinese Indonesian man, experiencing bullying growing up due to his ethnicity and struggling to understand his social identity. Being bullied made him determined to prevent his children from having similar experience. Therefore, he was made his best efforts to find a spouse of non-Chinese descent [*pribumi* or *tiko*] so that he can have not-so-Chinese looking children to protect them from the risk of being bullied.

When he finally dated a Sundanese mixed-Javanese woman, he had to face a problem where his girlfriend's father applied a stereotype that all Chinese-descendants are fraudsters and cannot be trusted. But time seemed to solve the problem and they finally got both parents approval to get married.

After a few years of being married and still not conceiving babies due to Ernest's maximum effort to use birth control, this escalates into conflict. Ernest had an internal conflict that he did not share with his wife regarding the fear he had that his offspring would turn out to look like very much like him.

3.1.2 Points of Analysis

The story highlighted internal conflict that Ernest faced due to his identity as an Indonesian of Chinese descent. His social identity development began when he understood his ethnic-based identity was outside of the majority group in his school. Growing up as a

member of the minority group, he also faced with many stereotypes attached to his ethnicity that put him in the vulnerable position of being discriminated based on people's prejudices. Realizing that his ethnicity would continue to suffer from discrimination and prejudices, Ernest was calculative about having children to continue his bloodline, knowing that the children will have to face similar issues.

Based on Tajfel's Social Identity Theory, the main character in the movie (Ernest) developed his social identity as a Chinese Indonesian through the experience of being bullied due to his ethnicity. His self-categorization began with the ideation of his different physical appearance from most of his classmates, which was being called out often by a group of bullying classmates. He then identified similarities with his friend Patrick, who was also of Chinese Indonesian descent. Being minorities, they associated with each other and protected each other as an *in-group*, against the bullying of their classmates (the *out-group*).

Patrick and Ernest have their differences in perceiving the identification of their ethnicity. Patrick was more confident being a minority while Ernest struggled with acceptance. Therefore, Ernest, who was dissatisfied with his social identity, tried to have more shared similarities with the majority group by making an effort to befriend the classmates who bullied him and Patrick.

4 RESULT AND CONCLUSIONS

We hope you find the information in this template useful in the preparation of your submissi

The final sentence of a caption must end with a period.

Table 1: This caption has one line so it is centered.

CONFLICT MAPPING	MOVIE TITLE	
	Tanda Tanya	Ngenest
Identity based conflict		
• Race & Ethnicity	X	X
• Gender	X	-
• Religion	X	-
• Social Status	X	X
Personal bias toward other groups	X	X
Prerequisite Conflict	X	X
Internal Identity Conflict	X	X
Dominance-based Violence	X	-
Conflict Resolution	X	X
Peacebuilding Effort	X	X
Generation of New Norms Toward Inclusivity	X	X

- Existing and trending social identity conflict Based on the mapping of the conflicts found in the three films, the trend shows similarities of the fundamentals. The common trend shared among the films show that a prerequisite conflict must exist in order for a conflict to escalate. The prerequisite conflict enhanced by the personal bias towards members of different groups based on an individual's social identity conflict stemmed significantly as the basis of the conflict escalation. Each of the films tried to provide the audience with sufficient complexity of the context and the dynamics of the interacting group members.

- Film as a constructive storytelling medium Being a medium of storytelling and claiming the power to be able to offer alternative perspective towards issues and contexts, film highlight gestures of conflict resolution through peacebuilding initiatives that promote tolerance and inclusivity. This purpose of film as a storytelling medium was represented well in all three movies and reflected the idealism of the filmmaker as a storyteller to introduce an alternative of a constructive perception to the current existing social frames.

- Sustainability Promotion of tolerance and inclusivity does not occur instantly. It demands a long-term of collective efforts to ensure sustainability. Exploration of ways to create an alternative perception and positive narrative is essential and should be encouraged through different learning mediums. Embedding educational curriculum and integrate the concept in academic context will help expose more people to be exposed to the idea of preserving positive narratives to establish peace and tolerance. And as storytelling is recognize as a powerful educational tool in many cultures, inserting storytelling in mediums will help putting context into relevance.

REFERENCES

Ahnaf, M. I., & Salim, H. (2017) *Krisis keistimewaan: Kekerasan terhadap minoritas di Yogyakarta*. Yogyakarta: CRCS UGM.

Bayu, D. J. (2017). *Survei LSI: Semakin Religius Seseorang Tak Menjamin Bebas Korupsi*. <https://katadata.co.id/berita/2017/11/16/survei-lsi-semakin-religius-seseorang-tak-menjamin-bebas-korupsi>

Bordwell, D., & Thompson, K. (2013). *Film art: An introduction*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education.

Center for Strategic and International Studies. (2017). *Ada Apa dengan Milenial? Orientasi Sosial, Ekonomi dan Politik*. https://www.csis.or.id/uploaded_file/event/ada_apa_dengan_milenial_paparan_survei_nasional_csis_mengenai_orientasi_ekonomi_sosial_dan_politik_generasi_milenial_indonesia_notulen.pdf

Chongruksa, D., Prinyapol, P., Wadeng, Y., & Padungpong, C. (2010). Storytelling: Program for multicultural understanding and respect among Thai-Buddhist and Thai-Muslim students. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 5, pp. 282-288.

Coser, L. (1957). Social Conflict and the Theory of Social Change. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 8(3), pp. 197-207.

Heeren, K. V. (2012). *Contemporary Indonesian Film; Spirits of Reform and ghosts from the past*. Leiden – Boston: Brill.

Luwisch, F. E. (2001). Understanding what goes on in the heart and the mind: Learning about diversity and co-existence through storytelling. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17(2), pp 133-146.

McLeod, S. (1970). *Simply Psychology*. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/social-identity-theory.html>

Milojević, I. & Izgarjan, A. (2014). Creating alternative futures through storytelling: A case study from Serbia *Futures*, 57, pp. 51-61.

Muthahhari, T. (2017). *Survei UIN Jakarta: Intoleransi Tumbuh di Banyak Sekolah dan Kampus*. <https://tirto.id/survei-uin-jakarta-intoleransi-tumbuh-di-banyak-sekolah-dan-kampus-czQL>

Pratto, F. & Stewart, A. L. (2011). Social Dominance Theory. *The Encyclopedia of Peace Psychology*, ed D. J. Christie.

Senehi, J. (2002). Constructive Storytelling: A Peace Process. *Peace and Conflict Studies*, 9(2). <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/pcs/vol9/iss2/3>

Sidanius, J., Cotterill, S., Sheehy-Skeffington, J., Kteily, N., & Carvacho, H. (2016) Social Dominance Theory: Explorations in the Psychology of Oppression. *The Cambridge Handbook of the Psychology of Prejudice*, In Sibley and F. Barlow (Ed.), *Cambridge Handbooks in Psychology/Cambridge*, Cambridge University Press (pp 149-187)

Sidanius, J., & Pratto, F. (1999). *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression*. Cambridge University Press.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. *The social psychology of intergroup relations*. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Ed.), (pp. 33-37). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.