

CONSUMING GENDER AND DISABILITY IN INDONESIAN FILM

Novi Kurnia

Departemen Ilmu Komunikasi Fisipol Universitas Gadjah Mada,
Jalan Sosio Yusticia Bulaksumur Yogyakarta 55281,
No. Hp. +628169413961, Email: novikurnia@ugm.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to examine the film audience reception on gender and disabilities representation towards What We Don't Talk About When We Talk About Love (Yang Tidak Dibicarakan Ketika Membicarakan Cinta, 2013). This film directed by a prominent Indonesian woman film director, Mouly Surya, and produced in 2013. Such audience study is very important in the scholarship of women and Indonesian films dominated by studies on women representation in the film and women filmmakers. Employing reception analysis based on Stuart Hall's work, this study involves six Indonesian students as informant of a series of in-depth interviews. The study finds that the personal experiences and knowledge of informants, as well as their film habits, but not their gender, influences their interpretation toward the issue of gender and disabilities in the film.

Keywords: *gender, disability, film audience, reception, women director*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pemaknaan penonton film terhadap representasi gender dan kaum difabel yang terdapat dalam film *What We Don't Talk About When They Talk About Love* (Yang Tidak Dibicarakan Ketika Membicarakan Cinta, 2013). Film ini disutradarai oleh salah satu sutradara perempuan terkemuka Indonesia, Mouly Surya, dan diproduksi pada tahun 2013. Penelitian mengenai penonton film ini sangat penting dalam kajian perempuan dan film Indonesia yang didominasi oleh beragam penelitian mengenai representasi perempuan di film dan pekerja film perempuan. Dengan menggunakan analisis resepsi hasil karya Stuart Hall, penelitian ini melibatkan enam informan dari serangkaian wawancara mendalam. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pengalaman dan pengetahuan pribadi serta kebiasaan menonton film informan, bukan gender, mempengaruhi pemaknaan mereka terhadap persoalan gender dan kaum difabel di film.

Kata kunci: *gender, kaum difabel, penonton film, resepsi, sutradara perempuan*

Introduction

"Love. Disabilities. Beautiful." (Dara, interview, 12 September 2014)

"Disabilities. Simple. Love." (Bagus, interview, 12 September 2014)

"Poetic. Honest. Beautiful." (Condro, interview, 19 September 2014)

"Unique. Different. Brave." (Sinta, interview, 19 September 2014)

"Beautiful. Realistic. Touching." (Galih, interview, 25 September 2014)

"Out of the box. Brilliant. Excellent." (Dewi, interview, 26 September 2014)

Those six quotes are the answers of six informants I interviewed for a film reception study when I asked them to spontaneously mention three keywords regarding *What They Don't Talk About When They Talk About Love* (shortly called *Don't Talk Love*). The film is the second one directed by Mouly Surya, a young female director who firstly won Citra award, 'the Indonesian Academy Award' for the best director for her first film, *Fiksi*. (2008). Her newest film, *Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts* (2017) goes to Cannes Film Festival in 2017.

The reason why I asked the question is to find out the theme which emerges from the interpretation by the audience towards the film. Three popular words appeared, those are: 'love', 'disabilities, and 'beautiful'. These chosen words could be interpreted that the audience considers *Don't Talk Love* as a film about love among people with disabilities which is presented beautifully.

The preceding explanation is parts of the findings in my research, which I will discuss in this paper. It aims to elaborate the experiences, understanding and interpretation of the audience towards the issues on disabilities, women as well as the film language used by the director to deliver the messages of the film. This analysis is inseparable from the positions of the film and audience in the era of media convergence as mentioned by Lisa Cartwright (2002: 7) that in the era of media convergence, the audience consume films through various forms of media. Aside from that, by involving three women and men informants, the extent to which the gender difference influences the audience reception will also be interrogated.

I put this research as my 'pilot project' in applying the reception method to gather information from the informants as film audience. I combine the Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding concepts as well as the feminist standpoint theory explained later in the section of research method. Despite that the theories themselves are not new, personally this particular application of the theories would be something new for me. In my case, this study on reception

analysis of the audience towards women-directed films is an extension of my doctoral research concerning women directors and their films in the context of the post-New Order Indonesian films, where I still have not discussed the issues of audience.

In the midst of the growing studies on women and Indonesian cinema within this last decade, this study, therefore, is expected to contribute to filling the particular gaps on audience-related issues. This study will focus on two main objectives. The first is to carry out an examination in relation to the women director as the film producer, which takes into account who they are and their position in the Indonesian cinema (Trimarsanto 2002: para 2; Sen 2005: para. 1; Chaiworaporn 2007: 53; Hughes-Freeland 2011: 418; Tatyzo 2011: 4; Michalik 2013: 20; Kurnia 2013: 33; Kurnia 2014: 87). Secondly, the research will analyse the films with scripts written by women, in regard to various issues, including gender, ethnicity, sexual identities, and polygamy (Kurnia 2009: para 54; Imanjaya 2009: para. 13, Moerdjiati 2009: 91; Sulistyani 2010: 160; Chin 2012: 138; Monteiro 2013: 57; Paramaditha 2013: 92; Imanjaya & Citra 2013: 110, Sushartami, 2013:121).

To reach those objectives, this paper divided into several sections including introduction as the first section. In the second section, the research methodology will be explained, which includes an explanation on the reception method, with an elaboration on the data collection technique, data processing and analysis employed in this research. The third section

will deal with research findings divided into: the description of the film *Don't Talk Love* mainly in its position as a 'woman film', the conception regarding the film audience in general and specifically regarding the six informants involved in this research, which will be eventually related to who they are and their media-related habits, the understanding on the film in relation to the representation of people with disabilities in *Don't Talk Love* and the interpretation of the audience towards the representation of people with disabilities in *Don't Talk Love* as well as towards the film language from the aspect of cinematography. The final section will wrap up the analysis and discussion in this paper.

Research Method

As preliminarily discussed, this journal's article is written based on my research towards audience of *Don't Talk Love* with the application of the reception method. This method serves as a practical approach to analyse media audience, mainly in producing and spreading meanings in social contexts, where the audience is considered to be active in interpreting media text (Hagen & Wasko 2000: 8). According to Ido Prijana Hadi (2009:2), the reception method focuses on how the audience as individual consumes messages of media through their experiences as well as understand how the messages are processed.

This reception method will employ qualitative approach, and be within the interpretive and constructivist paradigms. As a result, in this method, the understanding on realities or research findings are produced

by the interaction between the researcher and the researched. Within these paradigms, the researcher will take a role as a facilitator, who bridge various subjectivities of social actors who become the participants in his/her research (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:19).

The reception analysis method offers three significant points, as Klaus Bruhn Jensen (1991) suggests, which are related to data collection, data analysis and data interpretation. The first point relates to a data collection from the side of audience, which can be carried out through interviews (both individually and in groups); through observation (with various degree of intensity in the observational participation), and a critical analysis towards texts (over the existing documents and literature). The second point is regarding the analysis on the interviews conducted for the public or the film audience based on the message they draw from their experiences watching films. The third point emphasizes that the reception analysis will not strictly distinguish between analysis and interpretation of the public over their experiences in consuming media.

Klaus Bruhn Jensen (2002:161) states that there are two main data collection techniques in reception method: participating observation and interview which researcher can choose or combine. Observation can be used to capture informants or audience members' responses to particular narratives and other content elements; while interview can be utilized to gather informants "introspection, retrospection as well as verbal recollection of their actions, which necessarily reproduce events from a current perspective." (Jensen 2002:161).

In this research, I chose to employ an in-depth interview method as the primary data collection. An in-depth interview is an interview method which is carried out informally, which address open questions and sometimes allow spontaneous ones to be asked. The interview was conducted separately one to another, in order to capture in-depth personal experiences. I selected six informants in Yogyakarta which has limited audience, as the film was screened only for three days in the public cinemas. Meanwhile, several other screenings were carried out once each in Jogja-Netpac Asian Film Festival at the end of 2013 and in a limited screening organised by Sintesa magazine in Gajah Mada University. The six informants consisted of three male and female students from Communication Studies Department, in the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Gadjah Mada University. One requirement they needed to fulfill was to have attended the class on the subject of Film and Cinematography, to examine to what extent they understand the cinematographical aspects in *Don't Talk Love*. In this study, pseudonyms was applied to protect informantss confidentiality. Here are the description of the informants:

Informant 1, Dara, an expressive and veiled female student was born in Yogyakarta 22 years ago, and lived with their parents. She was active in Kine Klub Komunikasi UGM, a student film organisation, and once attended a workshop on film production. She was a 'movie-freaker', who always watched films she loved repeatedly. Her infatuation to films could be seen from the

her collection of cinema tickets, some of which she kept in her purse. She did not only frequently watch films on the cinema, but also attended film festivals in Yogyakarta or Surakarta. She also had experience to be involved in the production of three short films, as script continuity supervisor, DOP and editor.

Informant 2, Bagus, a male and 23 year old student was originally from Semarang, Central Java. He looked a bit quiet. He stayed in a boarding house in the area of Pogung Baru. Bagus was not active in any organisation and has no experience in attending any film workshop nor film production. He loves to watch films he copied from internet booths or from his friends. After watching those films, usually he deleted those films from his private laptop, due to the harddisk quota limit. Beside watching from his laptop, Bagus also once watched a film in JAFF 2013.

Informant 3, Condro, a male student and aged 23 was a photo model. He came from Yogyakarta, and lived with her parents in the area of Banguntapan. He was active in the campus film organisation, Kine Klub Komunikasi UGM, and joined LA Indie Movie 2013 outside her campus. Desiring to be a director, Condro consistently learnt about film production by joining in short film productions as director and assitant director. The latest work he was involved in was a 80-minute long film the title of which he couldnot share. With a deep passion to films, he considered that films were the media he consumed most. He only watched films in cinemas only at the beginning and

the end of most years, as usually those times were when good films were released. Regularly he attended film festivals, such as JAFF (2011-2013), FFD, and German Film Festival. Aside from that, he also commonly read film articles on *Totalfilm*, *Cinemags*, and *Empire*.

Informan 4, Sinta, a 22-year-old-female student came from Bali. She lived in a boarding house in the area of Karangwuni. She seldom hung out with friends, and preferred to spend most of her times in her own room. For her, films is the third media she consumes most, after TV and internet. Usually she watched around one film a day. She usually copied films from internet booths or from her friends. She was involved as a volunteer in JAFF 2011 and JAFF 2012, while in JAFF 2013 she joins fully as audience. She was also active in campus film organisation (Kine Klub) and joined in two film productions as Assistant Art Director and DOP.

Informant 5, Galih, came from Yogyakarta. After having moved to several cities in Indonesia (Padang, Lampung, Jember, Banjarmasin), he stayed in Yogyakarta. This 22 year old male student lived in the area of Godean, with his mother and his older brother, while his father worked in Jakarta. Galih had some experiences in several film productions as Assistant DOP, Assistant Director, and Assistant Sound. He also participated in LA Indie Movie 2011 workshop. He considered that films are the third media he consume most, after internet and newspapers. In his laptop, he stored the films he thinks are good, divided into

two main folders, Asia and *Barat* (Western films). He kept himself updated about the information regarding film festivals, for example, JAFF (2010-2013) and French Film Festival. One of his hobby was to collect film tickets since he was in the first grade of junior high school in 2004.

Informant 6, Dewi, a 22 year old female and fair-skinned student was born in Bandar Lampung, and raised in Yogyakarta and still lived with her parents. Among her friends, she was known as a person who prefers to talk directly to the point in discussions, avoiding flowery explanation. She was not active in any organisation, film workshop, or film production. Films are ranked as the fifth media she accesses most, after internet, TV, radio, and newspapers. She loved to watch mini series she often copied from internet booths or from her friends. After being watched, if some films were considered as good, she would keep them in her laptop based on different folders: Asia, *Barat* (West), Indonesia and Foreign. Dewi also joined some film screenings as audience in JAFF 2012 dan JAFF 2013.

Apart from the in-depth interviews with the six informants, I also conducted an in-depth interview with Mouly Surya as the director and Rama Adi as the producer of *Don't Talk Love*. Both informants provided information concerning the issues related to the idea of the story, the concept of cinematography employed in the film, production process, as well as the process of film distribution and exhibition.

In addition to the in-depth interviews as already explained, this research also

collected secondary data, which included film reviews and critiques about *Don't Talk Love* released on the media, especially online media. These documents were used to examine the responses towards the film, which include those from film critics, audience, film festival circuits, both inside and outside Indonesia. This document analysis would also view to what extent women's issues and different-ability are discussed in the studies on women and Indonesian cinema.

The qualitative data in the forms of the transcripts of the interviews with the informants were processed by categorizing the information based on the important elements in the interview guide as previously explained. The documents collected would also similarly categorized. Based on this categorization, the data was processed and analysed, to answer the research question with the employed theoretical framework.

To examine how the informants receive *Don't Talk Love*, this research applies the Stuart Hall's concept of encoding and decoding (Hall 1980), which consists of three individual interpretative codes of audience in consuming media. The first, the dominant/hegemonis code, is where the audience shows their positions to directly approve and accept whatever the media presents. The second is the negotiated code, where the audience combines their social experiences with their interpretation on the messages and ideology in the media. The third is the oppositional code, which is when the audience confront or on the contrary of the representations offered by

the media. This research examines these three positions of the audience, in order to construct the meanings regarding women, different-ability and film language or cinematographical aspect in *Don't Talk Love*.

Furthermore, this research also applies the feminist standpoint theory to analyse how the gender differences affect the reception process towards *Don't Talk Love*. The central argument of the feminist standpoint theory is that women and men tend to develop different skills, attitude, ways of thinking, and understanding about life, as the results of their positions in socially-constructed groups. E.M. Griffin (2012: 447) asserts that a standpoint is a place where we can see the world around, so that whatever our viewpoints are, the location of our viewpoints tend to make our attention only to the things related to the social landscape we experience, while overlooking the other landscapes. The main point emphasized in this theory is that the membership in a particular social group will shape perspectives, identities, and individual capability. A different social position will allow a different standpoint, which reflects political awareness related to social hierarchy, privilege and oppression (Wood 2009: 57-58). Meanwhile, according to Julia T. Wood (2009:57-58) the differences between men and women do not lie on their biological, maternal instincts, or female intuition, but on the cultural treatment and expectation received by men and women from their counterparts (in Griffin 2012: 450). In this context, the

standpoint theory confirms that women are disadvantaged, while men advantaged, so that gender differences become critical issues. Despite the differences between men and women as discussed, Sandra Harding and Julia T. Wood (in Griffin 2012:450) remind that the notion about women as a monolithic group should be avoided, since women do not have same standpoints, neither do men. In addition, Harding emphasizes that economic status, race and sexual orientation are also parts of cultural identity, which can draw other people with similar identity into a community or repudiate them out (in Griffin 2012:450). The feminist standpoint theory is commonly employed in communication studies. Julia T. Wood (in Griffin 2012:448) perceives that for communication researchers, determining the women's standpoint seriously will show the urgency to select topics women are much concerned about.

Result and Discussion

Don't Talk Love: Women's Films and Women Directors

Don't Talk Love was screened for the first time in 2013, in a prestigious film festival, Sundance Film Festival. This film also screened in International Film Festival Rotterdam tells about the daily life of two teenage girls with physical disabilities in a boarding school for people with special needs. Diana (Karina Salim) is portrayed as a beautiful girl, fair-skinned and straight, long haired. She is refined and simple-minded. She is a person with low vision. Diana is depicted as a girl coming from a wealthy family and being obedient to the willingness

of her mother, who praises physical beauty, presented in several scenes related to make-up and ballet course. This girl who is waiting for her menstruation starts giving attention to a new student in her school, Andhika (Anggun Priambodo). She closely befriends to Fitri (Ayushita Nugraha), who is portrayed in contrast to Diana. Fitri is a brown-skinned, cunning girl with long curly hair. She is open, outspoken and expressive. She lost her vision since she was child. Fitri comes from a low-income family, living a simple life. She has an older, able-bodied boyfriend, who often makes use Fitri as the object of his sexual desire. Fitri, who also believes that a doctor-ghost is hanging around the boarding house, is portrayed as a young girl who is trying to explore her body, as well as her relationship with men. Beside Diana and Fitri, the film also presents the character Edo (Nicholas Saputra), the foster child of the lady who owns the canteen. Edo is depicted as a man with hearing loss and speech impairment. Edo, who looks sloopy, has feeling for Fitri and tries hard and does anything to have Fitri's sympathy.

Totot Indarto (2013: para. 3), a film critic, perceives that *Don't Talk Love* is characterized with the strong woman's perspective of Mouly Surya as the director. He argues that this film is an ode for women which can be only conveyed by the honesty of its maker. The women's perspective, as Indarto sees, is indicated by the slowly way the narrative is presented, which shows the complexities as well as the simplicity of women, which is illustrated by the strong efforts Diana and Fitri make, in order to

get the attention from the opposite sex; but when they love someone, they hold onto their feelings. Meanwhile, according to Andreas D. Arditya (2013: para. 3), Mouly Surya has managed to make *Don't Talk Loveshow* that the physical limitations of the two main characters, on the contrary, become the advantages. In this film, the advantages they have are certainly different in real life, where physical limitations often become obstacles for people with disabilities. In the other words, in *Don't Talk Love*, for Diana, Fitri and Edo who have physical impairments, their love life is not too different from the love life of many other teenagers with abled-bodies, without any physical limitations. Responding to the critique which sees *Don't Talk Love* as an ode for women; the film director, Mouly Surya, explains that: “*From insight, indeed, I live as a woman, so that the ideas sparked in my mind will be about women. But, I did not specifically make a film about women*” (Mouly Surya, interview, 14 November 2014).

Rama Adi, the film producer as well as Mouly Surya's husband, explained that the film making took around a year; and the initial intention to make this film was to present a teenage love story (Rama Adi, interview, 14 November 2014). However, Mouly then decided to focus on the a story about disabled teenagers, based on the experiences of Mouly's relative who has physical impairment but remains to have characters like other teenagers in general.

Apart from that, Lisabona Rahman (2013: para. 6), a film programmer and a

writer, sees that *Don't Talk Love* not only conveys strong concerns on the issues of women and different-ability, but also shows strength in its cinematography. Rahman perceives Mouly has prominent skills to play with the basic film elements many other directors seldom apply in a film. Rahman argues that even though, as in many other communication media, the basic film elements are closely connected to audio-visual sensory experiences, Mouly questions those basic elements through the film characters who have visual and hearing impairments. By separating audio and visual, Mouly plays the focus on the images to become *blur* as how life is ‘heard’ by Diana and Fitri. Accordingly, when it is related to Edo, Mouly removes the hearing element, so that suddenly the film becomes *mute*, as how life is ‘seen’ by Edo. At these particular elements, *Don't Talk Love* shows its courage to dissolve with the physical conditions of the main characters, which become the strength of the characters, so does of the film.

With such strengths in *Don't Talk Love*, Mouly Surya obviously has an important role as a director-scriptwriter in the film. Her courage in making this film as her second work is not less than in directing her first work, *Fiksi*, which was produced in 2008 and becomes the first thriller film directed by a woman. In this film Mouly does not only play with the film genre, but also relates the film narrative to the current social condition of Indonesia, related to, for example, identity, sexuality, and polygamy (Kurnia 2014: 206).

Mouly Surya is one of around 30 women directors who partake in mainstream film production; and among those hundreds of women directors who produce sidestream films since the fall of the New Order. Quantitatively measured, the presence of women directors surely shows a different landscape from the previous era of Indonesian cinema, which is mostly dominated by men directors. In regards to the film quality, their contribution gives a number of important features (Kurnia 2014:207). The first, some of the women directors show their awareness in relation to their identities as women, as an effort to 'overcome' patriarchal culture in film production. Secondly, some of them intentionally construct different gender representation compared to the existing stereotypes. Further, some of them do not only elaborate gender issues in their films, but also the issues related to religion, ethnicity and even different-ability, as exemplified by Mouly Surya's *Don't Talk Love*.

Considering films as cultural texts, the presence of women directors, particularly those who are aware of their subjectivities as women, brings about changes on how women are represented in the post-New Order Indonesian cinema. Women are no longer portrayed as objects, but they stand as subject, where they are depicted as active, progressive, liberal and empowered (Liestyaningsih 2009: 69; Puspa 2009:63). Felicia Hughes Freeland (2011:440) argues that the representations of women are now varied and complex. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that some residual aspects from

the New-Order cinema remains, which presents stereotypes of women in films (2010:160).

The main different representation of women in films written by women directors lies on their subjectivities, in relation to how they consider their position as directors, as women directors, and as women. For those who view that their identities as women are important in making films, they tend to position themselves as agents to voice up women's issues and/or frame their films in women's perspective (*feminist*). Conversely, those directors who consider that women's identities are not important to be presented will tend to adopt men's perspective in their films (Kurnia 2014: 148).

At this particular point it becomes apparent that identities of the directors as women serve as a significant factor in raising concerns on social issues in their films framed by women's perspective. Although, as previously discussed, the director of *Don't Talk Love* admitted that she did not specifically produce a film with women as the main theme in the film, her identity as a woman has brought her to the theme about women and frame her film within women's perspective.

Internet generation: the audience in the era of media convergence

The interesting finding concerning who are the film audience in this study is as consistent with what Lisa Cartwright (2002:7) argues, that in the era of media convergence, the audience consumed films through other forms of media, such as TV, home video, DVD or internet. All

the informants in this research used all those media, apart from going to cinema. However, to watch films directly from the internet, they often found difficulties due to the long streaming process. As a result, they consumed through internet indirectly, namely by watching downloaded films they copied from internet cafes or from their friends. This option to watch films were considered as the cheapest way, compared to purchasing DVD or waited until some TV channels screened the films, or went to cinema.

One of the informants, Condro, even stated that, *"I rarely buy DVD; I'd rather copy them for free from internet cafes."* (Condro, Interview, 19 September 2014). Among all the informants, Condro was the one who watched films the most. He considered films as the media she mostly access, compared to any other media, including internet, radio, TV, magazine and newspapers. On average, he watched two films in a day. Condro said that, *"Films are the most perfect form of art. It involves musics, architecture and photography. I enjoy watching films, as it feels like I am travelling."* (Condro, Interview, 19 September 2014).

Unlike Condro, other informants put films as the media they mostly accessed after the internet. Dara was internet addicted who could spend 14 to 15 hours a day for browsing on the internet. This was the longest amount of time, compared to the other informants. Three other informants (Condro, Sinta, Galih) spent their time around 5 to 10 hours, while the other two (Dewi and Bagus) spent approximately 2 to

3 hours per day.

Their proximity of all the informants to the internet was also connected to the other activities they performed before and after watching films. All the informants would look up on the internet before they decided what film they would watch. Dara, for instance, would check Twitter as the media to obtain information regarding the film as well as to update the status of the film she (would) watched. Dara also followed several well-known Indonesian film directors on Twitter, namely, Joko Anwar, Riri Riza and Fajar Nugros. The other two informants, Bagus and Galih, always accessed Youtube to watch the trailers of the latest films released, before they made their decisions. Meanwhile Sinta and Dewi tended to be more flexible in locating information on the internet. It could be through social media or news portals. Among the six informants, Condro was the only who commonly read reviews on films, either from magazines or from online websites.

After watching films, all the informants usually discussed the films they watched with their friends. This was a sort of habit, since they often got assignments to review or to discuss films in their campus. Beside obtaining information regarding films, four informants (Informant Dara, Sinta, Galih, Dewi) also often updated their statuses on social media. Dara would also seek for additional information about the films she already watched. These informants admitted that they would uploaded a little note regarding the film they watched on their blogs or social media.

Such findings confirms that film consumption is a practice which cannot be separated from other media, especially internet. This shows that film is not an autonomous media, but it requires connection to other media (Carwright 2002:7).

Perfection In imperfection : understanding Disabilities

In analysing the representation of youth with disabilities in *Don't Talk Love*, after watching the film, the six informants stated that they found that their knowledges about disability had been increased, so had their empathy towards people with disabilities, despite the different standpoints they had.

The first group was the informant who posited themselves in the position of dominant-hegemonic reading. They considered that the limitation and imperfection of the characters with disabilities in the film were not the main focus of the film, but their perfection as ordinary people. Dara, for example, stated that:

"Because of *Don't Talk Love*, I have come to know that they are just like us, having dreams and future goals. Their physical limitations do not limit their dreams. They are the special God creatures, while we are just the ordinary ones." (Dara, interview, 12 September 2014)

On another side, Condro perceived that in *Don't Talk Love* disability just serves as a context, because the real love is about their independence and struggle to reach their loves. Dewi also viewed similar things, as she stated:

"*Don't Talk Love* shows that people with disabilities can live independently. If we watch on TVs in our country, people with disabilities have to be really pitied, are invited to talkshows, wto

show their sufferings. In this film, they can live their love life just the way we do, live their daily life just like us, listen to the newest musics, and feel the same as we do. It is just a coincidence that they have different physical bodies." (Dewi, interview, 26 September 2014).

Unlike Dara and Condro, Galih stated that *Don't Talk Love* represented disability not in tragical ways, as those characters with disabilities are portrayed to develop relationships and friendships as usually other people do, and they are happy with their lives. He interprets that the focus of this film is on the love life of its characters.

The second group was the informants in the position as *negotiated reading* towards the representation of people with disabilities in this film. They combined their personal and social experiences and their interpretation on the messages and ideology of the media. In this group, Bagus said that,

"They live in an environment where people with disabilities commonly live in, so they feel treated as humans. They have their own world, but they also can feel what the other people feel, such as love, affection, and attention." (Bagus, interview, 12 September 2014).

The third group is the one in the position to oppositional reading code. It was represented by Dewi. She tended to reject the representation offered by *Don't Talk Love*. She stated that those people with disabilities are depicted as accepted by their environment, because they all have limitations. Dewi added that these kind of characters are just fictitious and impossible to exist in real life. This understanding is caused by the fact that personally Dewi did not have experiences related to people with disabilities in her social environment, including in her family, schools and society. Apart from that, the films that represents

people with disabilities are limited. These two reasons were the backgrounds Dewi to agree on the word ‘*normal*’ and ‘*not normal*’ to identify the people with disabilities. The reasoning she presented was that physically the people with disabilities can be considered as not-normal. Dewi’s views was on the opposite of Dara who stated that what people considered as normal condition was just because most people were similarly like that condition; while those “normal people” were not necessarily better.

The interpretation over the representation of the people with disabilities among these informants were more influenced by their knowledges and their social experiences towards people with disabilities, so that the gender aspect tended to be having no effects.

Women listen, men gaze: understanding women

This section discusses to what extent the informants understood women’s issues through the characters of Diana and Fitri in *Don’t Talk Love*. In giving responses regarding Diana, all the informants were in the position of *dominant-hegemonic code*, by accepting the representation of Diana offered in *Don’t Talk Love*. Dara, Sinta, Galih and Dewi considered that Diana is portrayed as a beautiful girl who is obedient to her mother; and she is taught to be willing to sacrifice herself for the sake of her beautiful physical appearance. This is presented through several scenes where her mother tries to dress her up and her efforts related to the ballet course. Meanwhile, according to Bagus, Diana is represented as a shy girl, who perceives her body as something she has

to look after properly. Dara regarded Diana as a character who is ‘so woman’, which means that Diana is so concerned about her physical appearance. Dara perceived that the issue of menstruation as brought in this film shows the sensitivity of Mouly Surya as a woman director, as in the case of Diana, menstruation is an achievement and can serve as a ticket to enter a romantic relationship (*tiket pacaran*). Similarly, the first menstruation Diana is looking forward, according to Bagus, “...is a sign of maturity; so that if she has been mature, she is allowed to have a love relationship.” (Bagus, interview, 12 September 2014). Similarly, Condro chose a term of ‘maturity gate’ (*gerbang kedewasaan*), while Sinta, Galih and Dewi called it “a sign of maturity (*tanda kedewasaan*).” All the six informants agree that the Diana’s first menstruation is necessary to be symbolised, as it becomes a sign for Diana as a mature woman in the film.

Responding to the portrayal of Diana who make the first move to approach a young man she expects to be her boyfriend boy, all the informants considered that Diana’s move is something acceptable, as what Dewi said: “Diana is a quiet girl and obedient to her parents. Diana is also courageous to make s first move approaching a man; and it is something acceptable”. (Dewi, interview, 26 September 2014).

These informants understand Diana’s move without criticizing that it is considered as taboo when a woman makes a first move or express her love first. The similarity in the informant’s responses made sense, as

they had sufficient knowledge regarding gender issues in their social experiences in their family, so that they believed that the social construction of women and men can be exchanged.

In giving responses related to Fitri, the six informants shared different interpretations, which were divided into several categories. The first category was *hegemonic-dominant* code. This group accepted the characterisation of Fitri as portrayed in *Don't Talk Love*. The informants in this group were Condro, Sinta, and Dewi. Condro and Dewi considered that Fitri is portrayed as a young, energetic, and beautiful girl who has high curiosity and opportunities to explore her *self*. This argument was not far different from what Sinta perceived who saw that the film represents Fitri looks happy with Edo as a person she like. Conversely, according to her, in front of her boyfriend who has no physical limitations, Fitri is portrayed to be unhappy and as if she becomes an obedient girl.

The second group was the informants with the position of *negotiated code*. Dara considered that Fitri is a girl with high sexual desire. According to Dara, "*Fitri is explosive-tempered, likes to try new things and obsessive.*" (Dara, interview, 12 September 2014). Dara explained that Fitri's obsession to find a person who makes her comfortable causes Fitri to be a sexual object of her boyfriend or Edo. Dara sees that the film shows how Fitri loses her control over her own body, as she said, "*If a girl has surrendered her body, well, it means she has no more control. She is off, she does*

not hold the remote anymore. So, I sees that Edo also gives his body, but he asks for Fitri's body in return." (Dara, interview, 12 September 2014).

Bagus shared similar response, "*Fitri is the ruler over her body. But, as her boyfriend has seized Fitri's heart, so, well, he can touch her then.*" (Bagus, interview, 12 September 2014). A bit different from what these informants, Galih added an aspect of 'morality' in relation to the sexual intercourse by Fitri and Edo, by saying that, "*Fitri is a reckless girl, short-sighted, delinquent, a typical of teenage girls who often hang out outside their houses.*" (Galih, Interview, 25 September 2014). Galih also mentioned that in his interpretation, Fitri is portrayed as a naive girl who does not know that all those things should be done within marriage. Despite his interpretation, Fitri and her boyfriend are forced to have the sexual intercourse; viewed from their expression when they do it and the way they do it which do not face each other. Meanwhile, Galih saw that the sexual intercourse between Fitri and Edo involves desires, so it is depicted that they face each other.

From the preceding discussion, it can be drawn that the understanding of the informants on women's issues through the character Diana and Fitri is not automatically related to the gender identity of the informants. The three male informants involved in this research are raised in a family which flexibly arranges household chores, without distinguishing between female and male tasks. Similar

things also occur in the families where the female informants are raised; the 'modern' families which allow their parents to work shows the gender equality back home.

To balance gazing-hearing: understanding film language

Regarding the film language in *Don't Talk Love*, this research shows several groups of audience. The first group was the one in the position of *dominant-hegemonic reading*, who agreed on all the film language employed by Mouly Surya as the director. The extremest statement came from Dara, who spontaneous states, "My eyes is getting pregnant. Its cinematography, it's just so beautiful. I am melting." (Dara, interview, 12 September 2014). Dara spontaneously said that the filming is 'so heavenly', as it plays with the composition, shady colouring and detailed focus. Dara saw that the editing is neatly done, although it does not distinguish between the colours for real life and imagination in the film. The lighting, as Dara viewed, is natural, which suits the idealism of the director who play with the logics of gazing-hearing with the effects of mute and blur, in order to encourage the audience to empathize and exchange positions with the character with disabilities in this film. This effect can be seen as a deliberate effort of the director to present the world of the people with disabilities to the audience's sensory experiences, to sense what the people with disabilities feel. This detailed review came up because Dara was a person who enjoy film festival and works as an independent film-maker. Similar to Dara, Condro accepted the film language

used by Mouly Surya, and he argues that, "the camera moves patiently, following the world of the people with disabilities, slowly and fumbling." (Condro, interview, 19 September 2014).

According to Condro, this particular technique then followed by an effective editing process and wise lighting as well as a play on gazing-hearing has become a brave and wise decision in its cinematography, as it is risky but succesful. Another informant, Galih, argued that, "the cinematography in this film is nice, well-composed, well-connected, and not confusing." (Galih, interview, 25 September 2014). Galih felt that the filming is smoothly done and not rushing. The editing is refined and also done smoothly, not jumping. The lighting is well-controlled, so that the film can deliver its message to the audience, especially the audience can feel the position of the people with disabilities through the effects of mute and blur.

The second group consisted of the informants with the position of negotiated reading in interpreting the film language in *Don't Talk Love*. Bagus who learnt filmmaking only in university considered that the filming and editing chosen for this film is not too different from many independent films, which tend to take long-shot filming with common editing technique. He viewed that he could not assess much, especially related to the lighting technique in this film, as his experiences in watching this film was not obtained from a cinema, but in a class in campus, not set like in a cinema. Nevertheless, he loved the play on

gazing-hearing employed by Mouly, so that he could understand the world of the people with different-abilities, who are unable to see and to hear.

The other informant under this category was Sinta, who said that the cinematography in *Don't Talk Love* has nothing special, including its editing and lighting. However, similar to Bagus, Sinta was impressed with the play of gazing-hearing employed in this film, as the audience also can feel the limitations experienced by the characters with disabilities in the film.

The third group consists of Dewi who was in the position of oppositional reading. She considered the filming, editing and lighting in *Don't Talk Love* do not offer something special. Instead, those are not as good as other wide-screen films. Unlike the other five other informants, she could not follow the effects of mute and blur, and felt confused why those techniques should be employed in this film. The reason was, Dewi, argued that the most important aspect in the film is not its cinematography. This is understandable, as for her, it is not the cinematography aspect which affect her decision to watch some films, but the actor or actresses starring the films, as for her "*star is the best*", and then followed by the story. Even she admitted that her reason to watch this film was because her idol film star, Nicholas Saputra, plays in this film. Her answers made sense since she was not active in any film organisation, workshop or film production; although she obtained knowledges about films and cinematography in her study. Film was ranked in the fifth

place among other media she mostly accesses. Rather than watched films, Dewi connected more to the internet, watches TV programs, listens to radio programs, and reads newspapers.

Although the six informants had similar formal educational background and already took the subject of film and cinematography, but their personal experienced related to their habits in consuming media, film references and their active involvement in film production and film festival caused differences in regard to their interpretation towards the film language or the aspect of cinematography in *Don't Talk Love*. Meanwhile, their gender differences does not affect their interpretation.

Conclusion

To understand, read and interpret *Don't Talk Love*, the six informants as the film audience in this study assigned the film-consuming process as an integral parts of the other media-consuming proses, especially the consumption of the internet. In this case, the film audience partake not only as active audience, but also interactive audience, as they process their experiences from consuming films to be a status on social media or a note on their blog. Meanwhile, in consuming *Don't Talk Love* it is appears that the theme about disabilities becomes the most influential theme for them, which encourages them to feel the position of the people with disabilities through their experiences in watching the film. The theme about women and cinematography become the secondary themes in interpreting *Don't Talk Love*. With the selected informants

who tend to be homogenous, this research shows that gender differences tend to be insignificant. This is understandable, because there is no standpoint considered to be monolithic, owned only by women audience. As an effort to read the film directed by women, although all the informants do not express it explicitly, the understanding about women's perspective—which is also employed to understand the people with different-abilities—indirectly also cause meanings for the audience as well as for Mouly Surya as the director. Nevertheless, as a researcher who employ the reception method for the first time, I feel that the concept of decoding-encoding with the three positions of audience tends to make my reading towards the audience's interpretation towards *Don't Talk Love* losing its fluidity; and it cannot express the dynamic interaction actually occurred during the interviews. Therefore, for the future research regarding women and (Indonesian) film especially about films directed by women needs to employ a deeper analysis, for example using ethnographical method, so that not only the understanding, reading and interpretation of the film meaning can be collected, but more importantly the way they consume the film.

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