



REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE CHARACTER IN CHILDREN'S PICTURE

BOOK: *GRACE FOR PRESIDENT* BY KELLY DIPUCCHIO

A THESIS

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for
The Bachelor Degree Majoring in American Studies in English Department
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Submitted by:

Savira Sasqia Karamina

13020116130060

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DIPONEGORO UNIVERSITY
SEMARANG**

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PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer genuinely confirms that the thesis entitled *Representation of Female Character in Children's Picture Books: Grace for President by Kelly DiPucchio* is written and compiled by herself without taking any results from other researches in S-1, S-2, S-3, and in diploma degree of any university. The writer also ascertains that she does not quote any material from publications or papers other than the references mentioned.

Semarang, August 2020

Savira Sasqia Karamina

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

“To infinity and beyond.”

— **Buzz Lightyear, Toy Story**

“Our fate lives within us; you only have to be brave enough to see it.”

— **Merida, Brave**

“When life gets you down, do you wanna know what you've gotta do?

Just keep swimming!”

— **Dory, Finding Nemo**

This thesis is dedicated to

myself and to the people

in my life who mean everything to me

**REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE CHARACTER IN CHILDREN'S
PICTURE BOOK: *GRACE FOR PRESIDENT* BY KELLY DIPUCCHIO**

Written by:

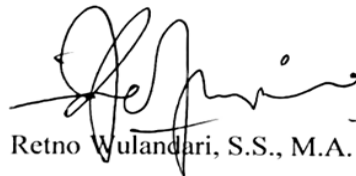
Savira Sasqia Karamina

NIM: 13020116130060

is approved by thesis advisor,

on August, 2020

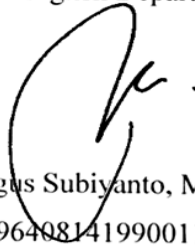
Thesis Advisor,



Retno Wulandari, S.S., M.A.

NIP. 197505252005012002

Head of English Department



Dr. Agus Subiyanto, M.A.

NIP. 196408141990011001

VALIDATION

Approved by

Strata 1 Thesis Examination Committee

Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University

On September 23, 2020

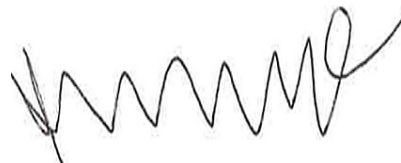
Chair Person



Rifka Pratama, S.Hum, M.A

NPPU. H.7.199004282018071001

First Member



Hadiyanto, SS, M.Hum

NIP. 197407252008011013

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As this thesis came to a completion, the writer realizes that it is far from being perfect. For this reason, constructive criticism is greatly appreciated for the better improvement in the future study. Finally, the writer hopes this thesis will be valuable and useful for a lot of people who want to learn about female role models in children's literature.

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Savira Sasqia Karamina

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ABSTRACT

Female characters have long been underrepresented in children's literature, as a consequence, they have been viewed as the weaker creatures. This paper is written to analyze children's picture book entitled *Grace for President*. This paper discusses gender role-stereotypes and female representation in the children's picture book portrayed in the main characters. The purpose of this study is to analyze how the children's picture book portrays the traditional feminine and masculine gender-role stereotypes through the main characters and how the children's picture book represents its young female character. To analyze this children's picture book, the writer uses of close reading method and feminist approach. From this analysis, the writer found that the society's expectations towards gender concerning traits, roles, and occupations are illustrated in the main characters. This study also revealed that the young female character possesses strong characteristics that rise above her stereotypical images. It leads her to a real chance in helping her to grow as an individual she aspires to and in making a big difference to improve the representation of female in the children's literature.

Keywords: Gender-role Stereotypes, Female Representation, Positive Gender Role Models, Strong Female Character, Children's Picture Book

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Women's UN Report Network (WUNRN) states in a 2018 WUNRN Releases that society has always been structured up a patriarchal system in which men have more power and privilege than women for most of human history. Men, inevitably, tend to predominate about almost everything. Under the circumstances, women in every age and country have been experiencing unfair treatment which leads to the struggle for existence and equality that is disadvantageous for them to attain their full rights in every aspect of life (Feminist Theories of Patriarchy, 2018). Discrimination against and oppression of women and girls becomes one of the issues that has increasingly gained importance. Progress in improving gender equality and empowering women have been made, however, there are challenges women still facing in the present-day for being equal in terms of lacking of women in positions of power, lacking of equal access and opportunity in all fields, and experiencing discrimination (What Are the Biggest Problems Women Face Today, 2019). This forces young girls and women around the globe to unite in the movement carrying out the mission to create an environment where they can get the same opportunities just like men, and they have the ability to make decisions of their own and for society.

In the world of children's literature, female characters have also been considered as inferior and always underrepresented. Taylor as cited in Nebbia's states that female characters are usually portrayed with their distinctive characterizations, such as having attractive physical features (straight hair and perfect white skin – as typical examples), being sensitive, weak and dependant, and contributing little to society. As for male characters, they own higher chance to be leading roles of the story. They also are represented in opposite patterns of female characterizations which are strong, intelligent, and dominant (Taylor in Nebbia, 2016: 30). To put in another way, representation of people of color with children from different lives and cultures as the main characters is rarely seen in the children's literature. This creates negative images due to the lack of strong, empowering girls leads from a variety of backgrounds. In the recent times, however, it is apparent that feminism and female empowerment have embraced to literature of children, especially, in children's picture book.

According to Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson, children's picture book is defined as an illustration book in which the illustrations are helpful to the pleasure of reading and understanding of the story (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999: 68). It is relatively new form of product in the twentieth century which the portrayal of female characters has already developed into the healthy and positive images. Hooks claims that, *“children's literature is one of the most crucial sites for feminist education for critical consciousness precisely because beliefs and identities are still being formed,*

and more often than not narrow-minded about gender continues to be the norm on the playground” (Hooks, 2000: 23). It matters as it is part of children’s journey in the childhood in order to help them in exploring their way of thinking and emotions, particularly, in improving the self-worth of girls. It becomes a platform to educate and to inform young readers that men and women are equal throughout simple yet inspiring stories, and fascinating illustrations. It would be thus of interest to study children’s picture book through a feminist perspective and how it can encourage and raise young girls’ awareness towards gender roles and representation. One of the children’s picture books that draws the attention of the issue is *Grace for President*.

Grace for President is an American children’s picture book written by Kelly DiPucchio and illustrated by LeUyen Pham. It was originally published in the year of 2008 which has a lot to say about female character in terms of breaking the natural and traditional patterns, challenging expectations, and fighting against the injustice. The book tells a story of a black girl who dreams to be the first female president in the United States. It gives people the thought to enlighten young girls in building up their courage and independence, and to empower them to strive for their equal opportunities on participating in social activities.

The study attempts to analyze female character representation in children’s picture book entitled *Grace for President*. First, the writer will review the life story of the author and the storyline of the book in chapter II. Second, the writer will explain the theories that are used in analyzing the book in chapter III. Third, the discussion

regarding how female character is represented through *Grace for President* will be written in chapter IV. Finally, the summary of the whole arguments and the conclusion about what has been analyzed about will be presented in chapter V.

1.2 Research Questions

The statements of the problem in this study are:

1. What are the intrinsic aspects in *Grace for President*?
2. In what ways does the children's picture book portray the gender-role stereotypes experienced by the main characters?
3. How is female character represented in the children's picture book entitled *Grace for President*?

1.3 Aims of the Study

The aims of the study are:

1. To analyze the intrinsic aspects in *Grace for President* relating to theme, character, and plot
2. To identify the gender-role stereotypes experienced by the main characters in *Grace for President*
3. To examine how female character is represented in the children's picture book entitled *Grace for President*

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study brings the focus on analyzing the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. The intrinsic aspects look into the narrative elements, in particular theme, character, and plot. In regard to extrinsic aspects, it examines the representation of female character which the writer will highlight on the concept of strong female character in the twentieth-first century of children's picture book entitled *Grace for President*.

1.5 Methods of the Study

1.5.1 Methods of Research

In analyzing the book, the writer uses a method of research called library research. This method involves two types of collecting the data: primary data and secondary data. Primary data is obtained from the book itself, which is titled *Grace for President*. Meanwhile, the secondary data is acquired from books, lecture materials, and internet in order to support the analysis of the study.

1.5.2 Methods of Approach

In this paper, the writer uses close-reading and feminist approach to analyze the children's picture book *Grace for President*. The intrinsic aspects in children's picture book which will be analyzed are theme, character, and plot. The feminist approach in support of theory from Heine and Inkster on the representation of female

characters is used to examine the extrinsic aspects on the subject of strong female characters in children's literature.

1.6 Previous Studies

In this study, the writer uses two previous studies related to the representation of female character as reference.

The first study entitled *The Princess and The Poor Self-Image: An Analysis of Newberry Medal Winner for Gender Bias and Female Underrepresentation Leading into the Twentieth-First Century* which has been done by Melissa A. McCleary and Michael M. Widdersheim (Pennsylvania Library Association, 2014). It analyzes and evaluates the content of 12 Newberry Medal-Winning children books which represent gender. In examining the study, McCleary and Widdersheim use five aspects regarding gender representation and count the percentage of each aspect for the progressive and traditional gender roles and activities portrayed in the characters, the representation of male and female characters in character types consisting of active and passive, protagonist and antagonist, major and minor, the acceptance or rejection of strong female characters by their peers, the stereotypical beliefs voiced by the characters, and the balanced feminist perspectives in historical fiction books. The result shows that the female characters in children books are represented more progressively and equally than those in past decades indicating the acceptance of

strong female character, however, it is also found that there is bias towards traditional male stereotypes.

The last previous study is *The Representation of Female Characters as Black Feminists in Hidden Figure Movie* by Destri Delastuti (Universitas Diponegoro, 2017). It has the purposes to elaborate the gender, race, and class oppressions experienced by the African-American women as the main characters, and to identify characteristics and the thoughts of black feminism in the movie. From the study, the writer found that the life of African-American women is close with oppression, but they fight against it in favour of bringing equality for black women. This, somehow, grows their black feminist thoughts and characteristics in terms of self-definition, self-valuation and respect, self-reliance and independence, self-change and empowerment which result to the enhancement life of the characters.

From all these studies, the writer gets inspired to explore more the characteristics of the strong or positive image of female character in children's literature with *Grace for President* as the object of the study which shows the struggle of being a girl for getting the equal treatment and opportunity in the society.

1.7 Organization of the Writing

The paper consists of the following chapters:

Chapter I: Introduction

This chapter deals with introduction covering the background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, scope of the study, methods of the study, previous studies, and organization of the writing.

Chapter II: Biography of the Author and Her Work

This chapter contains the biography of the author, and the summary of storyline in the *Grace for President* as the work of literature.

Chapter III: Theoretical Framework

This chapter underlying the theories as foundation and guidelines to analyze the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects.

Chapter IV: Discussion

This chapter comprises the analysis data of the intrinsic aspects including theme, character, and plot, and the representation of female character in children's picture book.

Chapter V: Conclusion

This chapter is restating the arguments and summarizing the thoughts on the analysis of the study.

References

CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR AND HER WORK

2.1 Biography of the Author

According to Scholastic, Kelly DiPucchio was born on March 7, 1967, in Warren, Michigan, United States of America. She is an American author of children's books who currently lives with her husband and three children in Detroit, Michigan. DiPucchio attended Michigan State University taking child psychology and development as her focus of study. Her brilliant performance in writing was noticed by her professor from creative writing class as the professor fiercely encouraged her to publish her work. In 1989, she graduated and until after giving birth to her kids she started growing interest in writing picture books for children. Her first book, *Bed Hogs*, was published in 2004. She has written and published a number of children's picture books, such as *Liberty's Journey*, *Dinosnores*, *Grace for President*, *The Sandwich Swap*, *Zombie in Love*, *Gaston*, and *Everyone Loves Bacon* (Kelly DiPucchio's Biography).

Beckwith notifies that as for *Grace for President*, it was originally inspired by the real-life experience. The teacher of Brooklyn's Cobble Hill Playschool showed a poster of US president and informed the class that there were no any females as presidents. One of the students named Grace McAllister was very displeased. She,

then, promised herself that one day she would run for president. The teacher told the story to the principal. The principal shared the story to the Grace's mother who worked as a book editor through email. DiPucchio was asked to write by Grace's mother and later published it in the form of children's picture book in 2008 collaborating with LeUyen Pham as the illustrator. The book gave effect to the cultural tradition for young girls to dress up as Grace in the Halloween and managed to New York Times Best Seller list in 2008 (Beckwith, 2015).

2.2 Summary of the Work of Literature

The story of *Grace for President* revolves on a black girl named Grace Campbell who has a dream to be the first female president of the United States. It all begins on one morning in September at Woodrow Wilson Elementary, when Mrs. Barrington shows the students a big poster with all of the Presidents' pictures on it. Grace notices that their nation has never had women president ever which makes her feel bothered. She, then, tells the whole class that she would like to be president. Some of her friends just laugh hearing her statement, yet Mrs. Barrington is supportive of her student's aspiration. Mrs. Barrington informs the class that they can run their own presidential election simulation. With all the excitement, Grace participates herself in as one of the candidates.

The next day, Mrs. Barrington announces that Mr. Waller's class is joining the election, as well. His class has nominated Thomas Cobb, well known as the school spelling bee champion, the science fair winner, and the captain of the soccer team, to be their presidential candidate. The teachers explain how the election works. The rest of students get to pull from a hat choosing a state from all fifty states and District of Columbia they will represent in the electoral votes. In order to win the election, the candidate has to receive 270 electoral votes or more. Grace realizes that it is going to be a tough competition.

As the competition begins, both the candidates do campaign in order to attract constituents. They come up with their own campaign slogans and promises, posters and buttons. At recess, Grace keeps on continuing by doing her best like giving speeches, handing out free cupcakes, and holding rallies. Even before the election, she has joined safety squad, organized the school beautification committee, and volunteered her time in the school cafeteria. Meanwhile Thomas, he just does his usual activities in school. He seems pretty confident to win the election simulation as he has already calculated that he will get all the male votes.

In early November, the school hosts the special Election Day assembly. Each representative takes to the podium for casting its electoral votes for the presidential candidate. After all the votes are counted, Mrs. Barrington declares that the winner is Grace with 270 electoral votes as Sam, the representative for the state of Wyoming who goes last to the podium, votes for Grace.

The following week, Mrs. Barrington's class holds Career Day presentation. Grace, once again, tells the class that she is more inspired to reach her dream for becoming the first female president in the United States, and for this time everyone believes that she will.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Intrinsic Aspects

Intrinsic aspects are the fundamental component as it constructs the structure of literary works. It consists of narrative elements which will be divided into theme, character, and plot.

3.1.1 Theme

Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson define theme as underlying message (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999: 30). As stated by Lurken in *Children's Book in Children's Hands* by Temple, Martinez, and Yokota, theme is the main idea that combines the story or the central meaning in a story (Lurken in Temple et al., 2014: 37).

Theme of a story may be expressed both in explicit and implicit ways. Temple et al. describe that an explicit theme is the message of a story that is clearly stated. As for an implicit theme, it is an idea that is not stated explicitly but is suggested strongly (Temple et al., 2014: 37).

3.1.2 Character

According to Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson, characters, otherwise known as the people who are represented in a story, are the element of fiction that is essential to the enjoyment of a story. How the characters are portrayed and how the characters change and develop throughout the story play a fundamental part in young readers' development since characters can inspire and guide them from being their friends, role models, or temporary parents (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999: 29). Young readers can also infer the inner thoughts and feelings of characters based on what they do, what they say, and how they say it which helps young readers to see and to understand the role they play in the plot (Temple et al., 2014: 30–31).

There are generally two important characters from the children's picture book that will be discussed in this study, which are protagonist and antagonist. In reference to Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson, protagonist is the character who leads the plot of a story. It can be defined as a complex individual who owns both positive and negative qualities similar to a real person in life (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999: 29). Temple et al. also explain that protagonist is a character in a story who encounters significant change and development as the story progresses (Temple et al., 2014: 32). Antagonist, on the other hand, is a character that contradicts the protagonist (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999: 29).

3.1.3 Plot

Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson define plot as the sequence of events in a story (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999: 26). Temple et al. explain that the typical plot comprises the following structure:

1. Exposition

Exposition is also known as introduction which provides initial situations of a story, and information regarding the characters and settings

2. Complication

Complication introduces the conflict of the story and the characters start making their attempts to resolve the conflict

3. Rising Action

Rising action presents the part where the characters thrive on the particular situation in the way of achieving their goals

4. Climax

Climax is described as the point of maximum tension when the characters strive to resolve the conflict

5. Falling Action

Falling action is the section of the plot which includes a series of events after the tension in the story decreases

6. Denouement

Denouement means the resolution or the final outcome of a story where the conflict is resolved (Temple et al., 2014: 34).

A good plot creates conflict. Conflict is the interaction of plot and character or the result of an opposition of two sides which is vital to build the excitement and emotional strain for the young readers. The basic types of conflict within the plot in literature are categorized in four different forms, which are person against self, person against nature, person against person, and person against society.

3.1.3.1 Person against self

It is the basic of conflict that occurs within the character. The character struggles against the inner desires and ambitions, and personal propensities in aim to accomplish the goal

3.1.3.2 Person against nature

It is the struggle of the character experiences with the forces of nature. This basic type of conflict is usually found in books with survival theme

3.1.3.3 Person against person

The conflict involves two characters. In children's story, for examples, the conflict person against person can be the stories of children having problems with friends and sibling rivalries, and the stories of children rebelling against an adult

3.1.3.4 Person against society

The conflict happens when the society embraces prejudice that goes against the character's strong belief or idea (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999: 26–27).

In this regard, the writer will examine the conflict of the story using Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson's three types of conflict, in particular person against self, person against person, and person against society.

3.2 Extrinsic Aspects

Extrinsic aspects are also examined in analyzing the topic that becomes a problem discussed in the paper which includes gender role-stereotypes and representation of female character in children's literature.

3.2.1 Gender-Role Stereotypes

In history, society has always been treated young girls and women in unequal manner. They have been subjected as individuals who are not as valuable as men. In this point, experiences and perspectives are explained through the gender lens.

According to Lindsey, the term 'gender roles' concern on the attitudes and behaviors that society expects for both two sexes, male and female (Lindsey, 2005: 4). In other words, gender roles indicate society in which males and females live has set of expectations or standards regarding what and how they should act, think, speak,

dress, and present themselves depends on their sex assigned at birth as explained by Sigelman (Sigelman, 1999: 298).

People gain an understanding of how to be girls and how to be boys throughout biological factors and social influences (Sigelman, 1999: 313). At the early age, children have obtained and learned some basic knowledge of the interests, toys, and activities associated with boys and girls (Huston in Sigelman, 1999: 301). Just as children grow, they develop even stronger senses and preferences towards gender roles affecting on how they socialize with each other (Sigelman, 1999: 303). Later in the stage of adolescence, most of them start to view gender roles in more flexible way (Sigelman, 1999: 305).

William & Best (1990) as quoted in Brannon's state "*a gender role consists of activities that men and women engage in with different frequencies*" (William & Best in Brannon, 1996: 168). This can be implied that women and girls are expected to appear nurturing and sensitive, and have been more often in charge of caretaking roles at home such as taking care of children, cooking, and cleaning, and as well as in employment. Men and boys, as in opposite nature, are thought to be dominant, strong and assertive, and are more likely than women to hold positions associated with authority and to involve in activities that offer benefit in terms of higher income (Brannon, 1996: 169; Eagly & Wood, 2012: 459 & 466). The division between male and female nature, as a consequence, creates a pattern in relation to male gender role and female gender role which should be accepted and followed by both two sexes in

order to fulfill their parts in performing masculine and feminine roles (Brannon, 1996: 168).

The concept of gender role tends to be related to gender stereotype (Brannon, 1996: 168). Alice H. Eagly's social role theory (1987) as mentioned in Sigelman's describes that the differences in the roles played by women and men in society have an influence on creating and maintaining gender stereotypes (Eagly in Sigelman, 1999: 300). Gender stereotypes, in the opinion of Kite, Deaux & Haines, "*are not simply labels, but are assumptions about traits and behaviors that people in the labeled categories are thought to possess*" (Kite, Deaux & Haines, 2008: 206). The oversimplified conceptions of certain traits of people can include the positive traits, however, they most often contain the negatives ones which are influential and powerful causing judgments of self and others (Brannon, 1996: 168–169; Lindsey, 2005: 3).

Stereotypes about gender have four different components which society uses to draw a distinction between male and female: traits, domestic role behaviors, physical characteristics and appearances, and occupations (Deaux & Lewis in Brannon, 1996: 179). Each component of gender stereotypes has a masculine and a feminine version. Society expects men and women to present themselves in typical, traditional, and usual ways to their gender. For instance, within the component of physical appearances, men and boys, who engages with the masculine qualities, are supposed to be wearing pants, and having tall athletic body types and short hairstyles.

On the contrary, women and girls are always expected to embrace their femininity by wearing dress and makeup, and having thin attractive physique.

The issue with gender-role stereotypes is that since they are traditional and general beliefs, society constructs false conceptions and assumptions in regard to gender which lead to sexism. It is discrimination on the basis of gender, typically, against women and girls who have been socialized from birth to accept sexist thought and action. They undergo unfair treatment by others because these others are in power over gender stereotypical beliefs perpetuated by the social structures and norms in which men dominate (Lindsey, 2005: 3; Hooks, 2000: viii–ix).

3.2.2 Representation of Female Characters in Children’s Literature

According to Swanson, representation in media studies refers to the way images and language construct meanings based on sets of conventions shared by and familiar to makers and to audiences. Part of the cultural knowledge which covers the context of meanings such as assumptions, common knowledge, widespread beliefs and popular attitudes, is shaped by conventions that can influence the process of representation. This context and individual knowledge are ruled by a system of power that some meanings come to be dominant and others marginalized. To put it another way, representation embraces how media deals with conventions, how audiences create

meanings, and how representation works and are used within cultural context (Swanson, 1991: 123).

As regards representation of female characters in children's literature, numbers of studies have conducted throughout the years. Early study in the year of 1972 which was conducted by Weitzman et al., *Sex-Role Socialization in Picture Books for Preschool Children*, has shown the underrepresentation of girls and women and the roles of characters through gendered lens in children's literature. Females were nearly invisible in the aspects of titles, central roles, and illustrations of 1967 to 1971 prize-winning children's picture books (Weitzman et al., 1972: 1128). Most of females in children's picture books appeared in the stereotypical images who were less valuable and did less fascinating activities than males (Weitzman et al., 1972: 1130). They were characterized as passive creatures in skirts and dresses waiting for men to rescue them from troubles and were associated with service activities in taking care of the men and children and cooking at kitchen (Weitzman et al., 1972: 1132–1133).

Kortenhaus and Demarest in *Gender Role Stereotyping in Children's Literature: An Update*, analyzed the gender role content in 150 children's picture books published between the 1940s and the 1980s. In regard to the roles of gender in children's story, the result seemed to indicate a decrease sexism, nevertheless, both females and males were still depicted in stereotypical patterns of traits and behaviors (Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993: 229).

Hamilton et al. discovered that female characters in children's picture books were still underrepresented as male characters outnumbered females in titles, main characters, and illustrations in *Gender Stereotyping and Under-Representation of Female Characters in 200 Popular Children's Picture Books: A Twenty-First Century Update* analyzing 200 children's picture books from the year of 1995 to 2001. Another result was 53 percent of male characters were seen outside the home, whereas females portrayed indoors had 47 percent indicating occupations were gender-stereotyped since both male and female characters often performed in their traditional jobs rather than non-traditional jobs. On top of that, the range of female characters' occupation has grown, yet, males were still in more diverse range since males depicted in 32 different jobs and only 12 for females (Hamilton et al., 2006: 763).

More recent studies have also shown the gender imbalance in children's literature. Based on McCabe et al. 's study, *Gender in Twentieth-Century Children's Books: Patterns of Disparity in Titles and Central Characters*, woman and girls, and particularly female animal characters in 5,618 children's books published between 1900 and 2000 were less fundamental than male characters in the story (McCabe et al., 2011: 218). The study revealed that females featured in the titles of 17.5 percent of children's books per year, whereas males in titles were in higher percentage with 36.5 percent of children's books per year. As to central characters, females had 31 percent of children's books published per year for being the central characters, but

males had 57 percent per year. Even in children's books that bring up non-human characters, female animals were underrepresented compared to male animals. Female animals portrayed as the central characters with only just 7.5 percent of books which was published in each year while male animals had 23.2 percent each year (McCabe et al., 2011: 208).

According to Crisp and Hiller in *“Is This a Boy or a Girl?”: Rethinking Sex-Role Representation in Caldecott Medal-Winning Picture books, 1938–2011*, seventeen out of seventy-four Caldecott medal-winning children's picture books from 1938 to 2011 identified as having female leading characters. When females are represented as main characters fighting against traditional values and standards, they are nevertheless described in traditional traits as individuals who are dependent on males as a means to satisfy the conflict of story (Crisp & Hiller, 2011: 203).

Brower also conducted a study examining the earliest Newbery-Award winning children's books published in 1922 and 1923 and the more recent winning children's book published in 2014 and 2015 in *Gender Roles and Gender Stereotypes in Four Newbery Award-Winning Books*. The findings of this study revealed that the dominance of male characters and the stereotypical elements of gender roles were depicted in both earlier and latter children's books. From this most recent study, however, Brower found that in the latter children's book there were a couple of changes in the depiction of gender roles. Female as the main character performed

both male and female stereotypical interests, and the parents were presented in doing non-traditional roles and activities (Brower, 2016: 25–26).

To put it in a nutshell, a number of studies regarding children's literature have indicated the ideals of gender roles and the expectations of society for both women and men. Even though there have been improvements in the appearance of gender role-stereotypes in children's literature, it has been known for years to be a serious issue which much still remains to be done.

3.2.3 Female Role Models in Children's Literature

Hooks defines feminism as “*a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression*” (Hooks, 2000: viii). This definition implies that feminism is an alternative social system that has a goal to replace domination and violence inside a patriarchy system with the culture of mutuality. As stated by Tyson, feminism in the world of literature relates to its feminist theory which examines how literature reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of girls and women and seeks progress towards gender equality (Tyson, 1999: 81 & 92).

In regard to children's literature, female characters have long been oppressed in most of stories since male characters are the dominant force. In such a way, feminism has started to focus in providing positive role models for young girls and

encouraging young readers to be aware of the prominent role of girls and women have played in every area of life. According to Weitzman et al., role models in children's literature give significant influence to the boys and girls as “*role models not only present children with future images of themselves but they also influence a child's aspirations and goals*”. By the time children read books, they tend to observe and learn the characters of the same sex. They, therefore, desire to be just like the characters in books and shape their own self-concepts of what they will be supposed to do or to be when they grow older (Weitzman et al., 1972: 1139).

Having similar ideas about the importance of female role models in children's books, Harrison in *Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History* declares that,

“I think about what kinds of dreams I might have had if I had known about all these women when I was growing up, if I had known that so many people who looked like me had done such incredible things. To be able to see yourself in someone's else story can be life-changing. To know a goal is achievable can be empowering.” (Harrison, 2017: viii)

The representation of female role models that look just like children who read children's books, undoubtedly, guides light for their minds concerning what they want to be when they grow up. It can also be considered as an encouragement that young girls also open to many exciting possibilities in life.

Heine and Inkster, in a journal article entitled *Strong Female Characters in Recent Children's Literature* published by National Council of Teachers of English, state that females, for the most part, are valued from how attractive physical features

they have and how their minds can be easily influenced by others. The gender issues that females are inferior to males can also be found in children's literature which affects young girls and women's self-worth. As children's literature plays a fundamental role to the young female growth and development, they engaged in a deeper and wider discussion regarding children's literature that features courageous, spirited, creative, and insightful female characters. They committed to study several children's literature with captivating storyline, important themes, complex characters, eloquent language, and even impressive illustrations in order to find qualities of positive female role models for children (Heine & Inkster, 1999: 427–428).

According to Heine and Inkster, there are six characteristics to consider in examining children's literature for gender representation. They emphasise that,

“These evaluation criteria enabled us to move beyond looking solely for positive female role models to examining personal characteristics, issues, problem-solving methods, relationships, stereotypes, and underrepresented or misrepresented groups among young female lead characters in recent children's literature.” (Heine & Inkster, 1999: 428)

The six characteristics include how personal traits of the character, what type of issues important to the character, how the character resolves problems, how the character builds relationship with other, how the character departs from traditional stereotypes, and whether the character gives voice to those oftentimes unheard in children's literature (Heine & Inkster, 1999: 429).

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

4.1 Intrinsic Aspects

4.1.1 Theme

As previously stated in theoretical framework, theme can be expressed explicitly and implicitly. On the surface, *Grace for President* presents the theme of the United States Presidential Election process. It focuses on the mechanism of electoral systems, the campaign rallies, and the general election written in its typically humble way of children's literature since the story tells about two children in their elementary years, Grace Campbell and Thomas Cobb, having a battle in a school's election contest. As the story proceeds, the competition between them gets on fiercer. Both candidates find themselves running their own campaign plans and strategies to get more people to vote. From this reference, it can be implied that the author tries to portray the excellent qualities in a person who deserves vote. Young readers, in consequence, will perceive that determination, hard work, and bravery are the keys of achieving everything their heart and soul desire.

Grace for President explores the theme of equality expressed in implicit way. The election simulation at Woodrow Wilson Elementary is an account of how equality is presented. Although the author does not inform the ethnicities of the

characters, it is shown in the children's picture book through the colorful illustration that Grace and Thomas, and their friends played as supporting characters come from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Depicted as a black child, Grace may be indicated that her distinct from African-Americans. As for Thomas, he belongs to the white people.

As stated before, Grace engages herself in school's election running against Thomas. It is the competition between female and male representing their own race and ethnicities from the very first moment. The status of Black or African-American people as minority forces them to face intolerable prejudice and discrimination in white-privileged society. Being black and being female happen to be more struggling since, with the reference to the history, lower status has been assigned to black females. Therefore, there has also been the lack of black female representation in putting themselves into leadership positions. This circumstance in the children's picture book conveys that all human beings have their rights to take participation in every aspect of life as no one has to grow up in the world where they feel less worthy than other people based on the gender and the color of their skin.

4.1.2 Character

The main characters in *Grace for President* are Grace Campbell and Thomas Cobb. Each child character owns different backgrounds and qualities, yet, still represents the typical characteristics of children.

4.1.2.1 Protagonist

The protagonist character in the children's picture book is Grace Campbell who becomes a presidential candidate for her school's election contest.

Grace Campbell is a young girl in elementary school years illustrated with dark skin color. Fluffy black hairs in tightly curled strands grow on her head. She is often seen wearing bright-colored bandanas which, somehow, become her signature piece in style making her look even more nice and attractive.

Grace enters Woodrow Wilson Elementary attending the class of Mrs. Barrington. In most of parts of the story, she depicts herself as brave, active, and goal driven student which is in line with her decision to participate in school's election. Unlike the other kids at class, Grace seems to be curious and aware of herself and the world around her. This characteristic can be seen at the beginning of the story that she gets very upset after taking notice of the female invisibility in the history of US Presidents.

Despite being young and unsure of herself, Grace has a strong desire to become president in the future without considering her sex and race. Prompted by her awareness on the society who throws sexist perspectives towards girls and women, Grace feels the necessity for changing this situation to be more equal. In other words, she has a strong sense of justice as she attempts to make equal women's rights a reality by taking part in the election simulation at her school. She defies her

traditional standards of being women who have always been associated with domestic responsibilities. Even though there are some challenges she worries about to fail in the school's election, she determines on working hard that sends her to succeed in accomplishing her goal as US female president. Such situation indicates that to be in leadership positions is considered as undeniably hard goal for female to reach, nevertheless, Grace, with her persistence and boldness, has shown that girls and women are also completely reliable in confronting the social expectations regarding the status and the roles of female. Grace's achievement is the proof how she exemplifies self-reliance by staying true to her belief when her friends discourage her due to the fact that United States has not elected a female to run its nation which, somehow, shapes their perception of certain gender that there is no possibility for female to be in charge in high positions.

4.1.2.2 Antagonist

The antagonist character in this story is Thomas Cobb. He is Grace's schoolmate from the class of Mr. Waller illustrated in white skin color that matches with his light golden-brown hair. He loves playing soccer, doing science experiments, and studying spelling words. In the story, Thomas does not experience change and grow to the very the end of the book. He, however, is considered to be the important character as a means to drive the story as a whole.

Standing as another presidential candidate competing against Grace, Thomas clearly also wants to be the winner in the school's election. His attitudes throughout the story are the embodiment of gender-related stereotypes concerning men's predominance in society. He has a cynical view that boys and men are the best individuals to be in the leadership roles. This can be seen on the campaign periods when Grace continues to campaign, while Thomas does not seem worried at all. He just keeps doing his favorite activities at school's break times. From the following quotation, "*he had cleverly calculated that the boys held slightly more electoral votes than the girls.*" (DiPucchio, 2008: 513), it can be considered that the competition is not quite challenging for Thomas as he does not take Grace as his female opponent seriously. Living in the men-dominated world, Thomas receives the benefits for being a boy. Over the course of the story, in contrast to Grace's experience, Thomas does not encounter the significant judgment from his friends by the time he joins the election. Moreover, he feels that he has a lot of power to control or to influence people since he has already assessed that people at school will give their votes for him which leads himself to a decision not to do the campaign constantly.

Thomas also acts in self-centered ways which is illustrated in the following excerpt, "*Grace listened to what issues were important to the students, and she made a list of campaign promises. Thomas made up his own list of promises.*" (DiPucchio, 2008: 511). His campaign promises only contains the things he cares most about himself by organizing free soccer lessons and free tutoring, and providing free fish-

stick tacos every week as lunch time special menu. This can be implied that Thomas is unwilling to see others' perspectives by putting his own needs and wants first.

4.1.3 Plot

In children's picture book, the plot has a common structure which must be inspiring and interesting, and must be within younger children's understanding. As *Grace for President* which the setting of story centers at Woodrow Wilson Elementary, the exposition introduces the black elementary school girl named Grace Campbell. The whole story establishes as Grace notices that there are no female figures as the US presidents in the poster that Mrs. Barrington shows to the class.

The complication of story is that Grace tells the class she has a dream to be the president of the United States, but she only brings laughter to her classmates. They doubt she can go after her dream since girls and women throughout the history have been belittled for being leaders.

The rising action begins when Grace comes to nominate herself as one of the candidates in her school's presidential election simulation which the idea proposed by Mrs. Barrington. Grace feels threatened by the presence of her opponent, Thomas Cobb, in the presidential election simulation at school. The responsibility she has to deal with in order to win the election that the candidate must get 270 or more votes,

additionally, is haunting in her mind, but even so Grace keeps fighting to win the election. The two competing sides campaign in their own ways to engage voters.

The story of *Grace for President* reaches a climax when the day of voting demonstration comes to the scene. Thomas, in the first place, holds one-point lead at top in terms of the total votes. Grace wins the election with 270 votes, after all, for the reason that Sam the representative for Wyoming casts its vote for Grace.

Sam gives Grace an explanation of his decision to vote for her. He thinks that Grace is the right person for the job. This part of story is considered to be falling action which can be inferred that Grace has proved to the people in her school that girls and women are just as capable as boys and men to be leaders.

The final part of *Grace for President* ends with Grace's friends have confidence in her that she can achieve her aspiration to be president when she grows up despite her sex and race.

There are 3 types of conflict that the writer will analyze in this paper: person against self, person against person, and person against society.

4.1.3.1 Person against Self

The conflict of person against self highlights on the internal battle experienced by Grace Campbell in the matter of her own worth and abilities.

Grace, in the beginning, feels very sure of herself that the election is going to be easy since her friends do not raise their hands as a form of participation at the moment Mrs. Barrington asks the class who would like to run for president besides Grace.

Throughout the story, however, the feeling of distress hits Grace as Thomas Cobb becomes the one who opposes her in the election suggested by Mr. Walker. This can be seen in the quotation below,

“The next day, Mrs. Barrington made an announcement.
“In the name of democracy, I have invited Mr. Waller’s class to join our election. Their class has nominated Thomas Cobb to be their presidential candidate!”
Grace’s heart sank.” (DiPucchio, 2008: 508)

Grace experiences uneasiness that she is going to put up a fight against Thomas. In response to this case, she starts to assume that she has smaller chance compared to Thomas, the golden boy from the other class who has great competency and receives numerous accomplishments. From her own monologue after learning the truth about Thomas, “*becoming President wasn't going to be easy, after all, Grace thought.*” (DiPucchio, 2008: 509), it can be perceived that Thomas’ presence evokes her fears and insecurities. She judges herself as being worthless individual given that she does not feel good about herself.

Grace's struggle gets even more frustrating which can be seen from Grace's repeated thought in the following excerpt, “*becoming President really wasn't going to be easy, Grace thought.*” (DiPucchio, 2008: 510). The anxious thought echoes in

her mind because of the information regarding the total number of votes that is required by candidate to win the election. It can be implied that Grace views it as another hurdle she has to face. Such situation provokes her to throw doubt on her own capability to accomplish her aspiration to be president.

4.1.3.2 Person against Person

The conflict regarding person against person in the story is the competitive relationship between Grace and Thomas. The rivalry happens because Grace is challenged by Thomas who also attempts to achieve success in the election.

There are two phases of Grace and Thomas compete against each other shown in the children picture's book. First, on campaign periods, both candidates create campaign posters, buttons, and slogans. They even come up with campaign promises listed in their own preferred styles and approaches. Grace seems working hard on this period of time to get support and to influence her friends at school, meanwhile, Thomas is quite relax managing the situation.

Another phase can be seen on Election Day when each representative for fifty states and the District of Columbia give vote for both candidates.

“The voting demonstration was quickly coming to an end. Clara approached the podium.

“The Badger State of Wisconsin casts its 10 votes for my best friend,

Grace Campbell!”

Grace looked at the scoreboard. Thomas had 268 electoral votes. She had 267. There was only one state still unaccounted for: Wyoming. Thomas grinned. Grace felt sick.” (DiPucchio, 2008: 516)

As stated in the quotation above, Thomas feels confident in himself for getting a higher vote even though the vote counting has not come to an end yet. The higher vote will bring Thomas one step closer to victory which can be implied that Grace is under intense pressure for thinking that she must have received more votes in order to overcome Thomas. The fierce competition between Grace and Thomas still continues as the last representative from the state of Wyoming has not casted its votes yet. Shortly after, the election can reach the end until they find the real winner.

4.1.3.3 Person against Society

The main conflict of person against society in the children's picture book is the underrepresentation of female in leadership roles.

Grace Campbell announces with complete confidence that she wants to be president, but her friends respond in a way that is not supportive. The conflict exists between them occurs when Grace sits alone in her desk at the class with her own thoughts feeling bothered by the fact that the United States has never had a woman president which can be seen from the quotation below,

“Grace sat at her desk and stewed. No girls? Who’d ever heard of such a crazy thing? Finally, she raised her hand.

“Yes, Grace?”

“I’ve been thinking it over, and I’d like to be president!”

Several students in the class laughed.

“Well, I think that’s a star-spangled idea, Grace!” said Mrs. Barrington.” (DiPucchio, 2008: 507)

This underestimation towards Grace Campbell indicates that the surroundings in which Grace goes to see and interacts with other kids almost every day perceives traditional values and knowledge in regard to gender roles. Despite the fact that Mrs. Barrington fully supports her, Grace's friends are uncertain regarding her dream.

Some of her friends also greet Grace with boos for winning the school's election because Sam, the representative for the state of Wyoming who is the last to cast the votes, picks to be on Grace's side. The disapproval of Grace's victory can be seen in the following excerpt,

“Finally, Sam cleared his throat.

“The Equality State of Wyoming casts its 3 electoral votes for
GRACE CAMPBELL!!!”

The gymnasium erupted in loud cheers (and a few boos). Mrs. Barrington approached the podium.

“With 270 electoral votes, the winner is Grace Campbell!””
(DiPucchio, 2008: 517–518)

Instead of celebrating with her, they show their contempt for her winning since it is not very common for girls and women to be in positions relating to power, leadership, and authority. It is clear that gender blindness clouds society which creates a lack of understanding on women and men in terms of their roles and responsibilities.

4.2 Extrinsic Aspects

4.2.1 Gender Role-Stereotypes

Children's picture books frequently present boys and girls in the frame of socially defined gender norms. In this study, a discussion of gender role-stereotypes will be presented through three categories: traits, domestic role behaviors, and occupations.

4.2.1.1 Gender Differences in Traits

The typical gender traits between female and male can be found in the children's picture book. It emphasizes the different expectations for female and male that female must perform feminine qualities and men must be masculine.

Grace Campbell is the character in the children's picture book who is associated with several feminine traits. The characterization of Grace in the story reveals that she possesses the following traits: emotional, nurturing, compassionate, patience, and affectionate.

Girls and women in children's literature are often described as individuals who feel and react to emotions more intensely than boys and men. Grace shows her emotions throughout the story. On one occasion, Grace asks her teacher, Mrs. Barrington, about the existence of female in the poster for being the U.S. President which can be seen from the dialogue between Grace and Mrs. Barrington below,

“One morning in September, Mrs. Barrington rolled out a big poster with all of the Presidents' picture on it. Grace Campbell could not believe her eyes.

“Where are the GIRLS?”
“That is a very good question!” said Mrs. Barrington, “The truth is, our country has never had a woman president.”
“NO girl president? EVER?” Grace asked.
“No, I’m afraid not,” said Mrs. Barrington.” (DiPucchio, 2008: 506)

Grace's words convey indignation over the gender inequality in leadership suffered by girls and women. The response of Mrs. Barrington, as she explains the unpleasant reality that there is no woman running as president in their nation, causes Grace to feel more agitated. Through Grace's outburst of strong emotions presented in the conversation above, it can be assumed that she does not accept the undervaluation towards females which arouses her aspiration to become the President of United States when she grows up.

As stated in the previous discussion regarding conflict of person against self, it is shown that the writer exposes Grace to vulnerability that leads her into the feeling of unworthiness. Grace clearly expresses a couple of times that she realizes her ambition of becoming president will not be so easily achieved just as she already has imagined in her own thoughts. After sending herself to the school's election contest, Grace is portrayed being uncomfortable and worried when she deals with the difficulties in opposing the belief of women's inferiority she has not anticipated before as in having to compete against Thomas Cobb and collecting the total number of votes required to win.

The way of Grace fulfilling her dream to be president reflects the nurturing side that focuses on the values of her own personal growth, relationship, and involvement. Carrying the burden of society's expectations, she tries to confront the viewpoint of being female by organizing and operating her campaign strategies in neat and thorough ways. In the children's picture book, Grace is seen setting aside her time to meet with their friends with the intention of acknowledging the problems at school and generating the solutions. Her attempt can be seen in the following excerpt,

“Grace listened to what issues were important to the students, and she made a list of campaign promises:

A Peaceful School. NO BULLIES!

A Cleaner School. NO LITTERING!

Better Hot Lunches. NO MORE FISH-STICK TACOS!”

(DiPucchio, 2008: 511)

Grace seems to understand that building relationship with friends at school is essential as their roles have an influence on her success in the election. From her list of campaign promises, it can be considered that she cares about her environment and others in finding comfort. Another attempt is when she joins school's organizations and becomes a volunteer in the school cafeteria before the election begins. Referring to how Grace listens and offers help to other, kindness shines through her acts. It is the part of herself that makes her feel more love by doing empathetic and compassionate things for other people. This depiction also shows that Grace has gone through all the phases of school's election with so much patience despite the difficulties.

As to Grace's affectionate nature, it can easily be recognized at the end of the story. The following quotation is a proof that she radiates love and warmth to people around her.

“All eyes were on Wyoming. Finally, Sam cleared his throat.
“The Equality State of Wyoming casts its 3 electoral votes for
GRACE CAMPBELL!!!”
Mrs. Barrington approached the podium.
“With 270 electoral votes, the winner is Grace Campbell!”
Thomas looked stunned. Grace hugged Sam.
“Why did you do it?” she asked.
Sam handed Grace his flag.
“Because,” he said, “I thought you were the best person for the
job.”” (DiPucchio, 2008: 517–519)

Sam appears to be the one of her friends in the story who condemns sexist attitudes and behaviors. He casts the vote for Grace because he sees Grace, as the girl with great efforts and abilities, can also make a great leader. Grace's reaction to Sam's decision by hugging him reveals how she openly communicates her feeling of affection to others.

Thomas Cobb, on the other hand, plays a role of what society defines to be masculine. Boys and men are appeared many times in children's picture books to be related to higher levels of intelligence. This quality can also be found in Thomas through the following excerpt, “*Thomas was the school spelling bee champion. His experiments always took a blue ribbon at the science fair. And he was captain of the soccer team.*” (DiPucchio, 2008: 508). The story depicts Thomas as an elementary school boy who has brilliant achievements in spelling bee contest and science fair,

and is the soccer team captain. Being popular for his great knowledge and skills, he receives praise, respect, and admiration from people at school. From the Mrs. Barrington's dialogue which says, "*I have invited Mr. Waller's class to join our election. Their class has nominated Thomas Cobb to be their presidential candidate!*" (DiPucchio, 2008: 508), it can be implied that Mr. Waller's class has high hope for Thomas as they select him to be their presidential candidate due to the fact that his intelligence and popularity will grant him the bigger opportunity in winning the school's election.

Thomas' fearlessness may be reflected in his act at the first time Mrs. Barrington introduces him to be the opposing candidate. This part of the story is illustrated with Thomas standing next to Mrs. Barrington with hands on his hips surrounded by the twinkling stars. He gives the impression that he is daring to challenge Grace in the school's election contest as he builds an aura of aggression by placing the both hands on hips which resembles masculine gesture.

As a boy who has an outstanding reputation, Thomas brims with confidence. The following quotation illustrates Thomas feeling certain of himself since he prefers to spend the time with his friends rather than continue to campaign for the election.

"Meanwhile, Thomas wasn't worried. He had cleverly calculated that the boys held slightly more electoral votes than the girls. At recess, Thomas studied his spelling words. During lunch, he worked on his latest science experiment. After school, he played soccer." (DiPucchio, 2008: 513)

Thomas is fully conscious of his gender identities as a male that he has famously considerable power with people at school. He has already made an assumption that the outcome of school's election will be favorable for him since boys and men are always dominating and winning. For this reason, he does not need to be afraid and pessimistic towards his journey to running as a presidential candidate in the school's election. Thomas, who seems to be entirely emotionless since he shows no signs of fear and worry in facing the election, can also be inferred that boys and men are taught to repress their emotions. Experiencing and expressing how they feel, as a consequence, are not in accordance with the traditionally accepted male personalities. Rather than rely on his emotions, Thomas accentuates his intellectual capabilities. Based on what Thomas does just when he evaluates how much votes he will get is the proof of how rational and analytical he is.

As stated before, there is also a moment when Thomas creates his own campaign promises. He is seen taking charge of the situation by himself as he comes up with a list of proposals for his school that correlate with him. This reveals Thomas' true personality that he lacks of empathy. He concerns with himself and his own needs and interests without really caring about other people's thoughts and aspirations to the issues existing in school.

Other Thomas' masculine traits depicts on the day of voting demonstration. Some of the votes begin falling between boys assigned as state representatives supporting Thomas and girls assigned as state representatives supporting Grace.

Regardless of that, Sam, the representative from Wyoming, is caught in the middle which can be seen in the quotation below,

“Sam walked up to the microphone. He looked at Thomas. He looked at Grace. He looked down at Grace’s handmade flag. Sam didn’t say a word.
“What are you waiting for?” Thomas whispered.
The band stopped playing. All eyes were on Wyoming.” (DiPucchio, 2008: 517)

Thomas seems to be impatient bearing the situation at the moment Sam stands on a podium in front of the microphone contemplating his decision of the presidential candidates he gets to choose. This may reflect Thomas' state of mind that Sam should be on his side as they are friends of the same gender. He demands Sam to make up his mind quickly to cast its electoral votes for him.

4.2.1.2 Gender Differences in Domestic Role Behaviors

According to Weitzman et al., girls and boys in the world of children's picture books are represented in different activities. Most of the boys perform more diverse, exciting, and adventuresome roles, but girls are more often found indoors engaging themselves in the service activities that limit their roles and potential adventures (Weitzman et al., 1972: 1131–1133). This contradistinction results in gender role beliefs in terms of traditional domestic responsibilities. In *Grace for President*, Grace Campbell and Thomas Cobb are representative case of the contrasting lives to the girls' world and the boys' world.

In the story, it is mentioned that Grace devotes most of her time and energy to participate in several student clubs and organizations which can be seen in the following quotation, “*Even before the election, Grace made good on her promises. She joined the safety squad. She organized a school beautification committee, and she volunteered her time in the school cafeteria.*” (DiPucchio, 2008: 514). Engaging in these service projects within the communities, Grace is shown gaining awareness and understanding of others that she wants to create positive changes with her help. As a member of the safety squad, she is responsible for keeping everyone in her school safe and helping her school to be a safe and caring place. She even helps in her school as a cafeteria volunteer that requires her to prepare and serve meals, to wash the dishes, and to clean the tables, the kitchen, and the eating area. Moreover, from the illustration in the children’s picture book, Grace also appears to spend her time in the student club that has focus on learning about the cares and needs of young children. Aside from being part in the communities, she forms a beautification committee in school which has a goal to make school clean in order to maintain beautiful and healthy environments.

During the election campaign, Grace works hard to get support by offering free cupcakes which is portrayed in the following excerpt, “*Grace continued to campaign. At recess, she gave speeches. During lunch, she handed out free cupcakes. After school, she held rallies.*” (DiPucchio, 2008: 512). It can be indicated that Grace

bakes her own cupcakes since, through the illustration, she is seen wearing her apron and hat cook while giving a speech in front of her friends.

In contrast to Grace who performs service functions, Thomas engages in more dashing and energetic activities that he spends much of his time in the real world outdoors with other boys. As mentioned earlier, at the moment Grace keeps on persisting with her campaign, Thomas rather be with his friends studying spelling words, working on science experiment, and playing soccer. These boys' activities embodied in his campaign promises.

By acknowledging the activities of Grace and Thomas in the children's picture book, it is obvious that both characters reinforce traditional gender stereotypes by virtue of their roles and activities. Society plays a big part in shaping how the roles of women and men are divided up. The portrayal of Grace's activities prior to and during the school's election shows that the responsibilities of girls and women are confined to the feminine roles. Girls and women were and are still supposed to stay at home cutting them off from the outside world which causes them to deal with the roles of nurturers, caretakers and caregivers, cooks, and cleaners. Weitzman has also stated that girls and women are excluded from the sphere of political, sports, and science (Weitzman et al., 1972: 1125). This can be proved with Thomas since he is pictured as a boy who is good at sports and has an excellent achievement in education.

4.2.1.3 Gender Differences in Occupations

Gender role-stereotypes discourage women from performing public duties, in particular, leadership positions. As men possess more powerful and stronger traits to deal with conflicts, they have assigned in most leadership roles in society for so long. This stereotypical belief has been influenced the concept of leadership that women, consequently, get to involve themselves in domestic and caring responsibilities. Women's underrepresentation in political leadership is depicted in the children's picture book.

Grace with her iconic expression, “*Where are the GIRLS?*” (DiPucchio, 2008: 506) after studying the big poster of US Presidents which Mrs. Barrington shows to the class, opens up a short discussion regarding US has never had women presidents. This situation presents an obstacle related to the subtle bias experienced by Grace because she receives offensive attitudes from her friends for pursuing her dream to be president in the school's election. Their perception of girls and women could not be leaders may be affected by the dominating presence of men as US Presidents.

Grace and Thomas also share their manifesto through election posters in order to assure people to vote for them in the school's election. Thomas presents himself in the poster with, “*Vote for Thomas Cobb. The Best Man for the Job*” (DiPucchio, 2008: 510). As for Grace, she comes up with the idea of building a bridge of equality for girls and women since her poster says, “*Make History! Vote Grace Campbell for President!*” (DiPucchio, 2008: 510). The two election posters indicate that the

occupations of men and women are being performed differently. Boys and men are perceived as individuals who have the potential for accomplishing their goals to hold occupations that involve in positions of power, therefore, seeking leadership opportunities is considered challenging for girls and women since they have been over identified with family life.

According to Hill et al. from the American Association of University Women, women have involved in many different leadership roles in political life of the United States. Through the long struggle women encountered in the women's suffrage movement, they succeed in obtaining the right to vote in election. In recent years, women are supported by women's organizations in the matter of running for office and participating as voters. As regards the presidency, women have also been leading efforts, however, they are still seen as less capable than men to hold powerful roles as in elective office (Hill et al., 2016: 11). Center for American Women and Politics also adds that a number of women have nominated to run for the president of the United States from the year 1872 to 2019 (Women and the Presidency: History & Facts). They have been making headway in the highest position of the executive power, but gender gap in political leadership remain exists due to the absence of women in a list of presidents of the United States since they do not receive considerable support from society.

4.2.2 Representation of Female Character in Children's Literature

Female role models representation in children's literature will be examined using four characteristics from the theory of Heine and Inkster: how personal traits of the character, how the character departs from traditional stereotypes, how the character resolves problems, and whether the character provides voice to those rarely heard in children's literature.

4.2.2.1 Female Character's Struggle to Define Herself

Grace in the children's picture book is described as dynamic character who undergoes a huge change of self-definition throughout the story. At the beginning, Grace is an ordinary young girl dreaming to be US President after she learns that her nation still has not elected female presidents for so many years. As she tries to close the barriers for girls and women in leadership roles, she gets the opportunity for pursuing her dream to be president by nominating herself in the school's election.

Being in the thorny world of competition, Grace, as a girl who is neither famous nor admirable, shows a spectrum of emotions and abilities. She is full of energy and enthusiasm, and courageous at times, however, she also reveals her vulnerable side since to be president is a seemingly impossible dream for girls and women to achieve. She, nevertheless, keeps holding onto her belief which is evidently proved at the moment she accepts the difficult situation by willing to persevere with her new adventure in the election.

Her decision to continue the election campaign confirms the personal growth with regard to her new power and maturity so as to reach her full potential. It cultivates her inner power to make peace with her fears and to grow in knowledge that she has the ability to change the circumstances which limit her to do the best for herself and other girls and women. In her maturity, she realizes that to be president is not something easily achieved just like the first time she thought it would be.

After all the struggle for gender issues Grace has been through, she feels the beauty of perseverance by the end of story. She grows into her new role as a feisty heroine in her world for the reason that she fulfills her dream to become president in the school's election.

4.2.2.2 Female Character's Struggle to Depart from Traditional Stereotypes

Referring to the previous point of gender-role stereotypes, Grace depicts traditional stereotypes of girls in form of attitudes and activities. She, however, rises above those stereotypical images since she breaks more assumptions about female.

Flawless light skin, nice long hair, and thin body type are the physical features that people glorify. This conception has been deeply rooted in society which devaluates girls and women with different forms of beauty, but in recent years, there has been a shift in the standards of beauty that people celebrate more healthy perception making a room for girls and women in all shades, shapes, and sizes. *Grace for President* presents different young female lead character with different race and

body image. It is recognizable that the book illustrates its main character, Grace, as a black girl that goes against the ideals of feminine beauty. As part of black people, she has a darker skin tone and grows natural afro hair. Even though her physical appearance is far from the perfect standards that girls and women are always associated with, she seems comfortable with who she is by embracing her brown skin and big bold curly hair as her prominent features.

Grace challenges the concept of patriarchal that women are considered as inferior beings. Over the course of story, she shows more strength of herself since she is eager to win the election in becoming the female president even though her friends hold an opinion that female does not take part in positions of power. She makes it clear that she values herself to fight for what she strongly believes as she does not let her friends' perception on girls and women to stop her from embracing her aspiration. She takes the responsibility of her own choice to be on the election by doing her campaign with complete sincerity and commitment. Her action shows how she refuses to conform to the female stereotypes as she is intent on breaking the fate of girls and women who often end up at home doing family responsibilities. Through her efforts, she acquires the title as female president in her school's election. Her accomplishment indicates that, as a girl, she has the power to go beyond social expectation that limits her potential and competency to get what she aspires to which dismantles the notion about boys and men who can only achieve high-power positions.

From the statement above, it can also be inferred that girl can be fierce, capable, and rebellious since Grace lets her future dream to be determined for her. She does not abide to the traditional female stereotypes for the reason that she displays a self-determination by making her own choice to participate as presidential candidate and to manage her own election campaign rather than allowing herself to be controlled by her friends' belief.

4.2.2.3 Female Character's Struggle to Solve Problems

Joining in the school's election presents a number of obstacles for Grace since she steps out from the female boundaries into the new world in order to become president for the betterment of girls and women representation. Instead of expecting someone else to do the rescuing, she takes an active role as she tries to cope with her own strategies which help her become more self-reliant.

Girls and women are faced with disrespectful behaviors in the daily life. Some of Grace's friends undervalue her worth and capability as regards her aspiration to become president is the proof since she defies stereotypical view of gender that females should know their place. She insists on doing her attempts by choosing bravery to make her dream come true, although, her friends find her does not fit into male's world. Her motivation shows her willingness to prove her worth and to gain approval from other that regardless of her sex identity, she can also perform more diverse roles and activities.

As she engages in the school's election competing against Thomas, she faces another obstacle in the election campaign. Society expects girls and women to be passive, but, in the children's picture book, expectations about gender do not hold Grace back to behave as she pleases. In an attempt to overcome the obstacle, she uses her creativity and cleverness to attract voters by creating buttons, posters, and slogan. She also takes initiative in terms of seeing other people's point of views regarding school problems by taking her time to listen to them which guides her in making a list of campaign promises as the solutions. Through her ways of solving the problems in reaching her dream, Grace finds strength and independency because she stays true to herself and her belief.

4.2.2.4 Female Character's Struggle to Provide the Voices of the Unheard

In *Grace for President*, Grace, as the main character, provides a voice for those who are infrequently found in children's literature.

People of color, in particular black community, are underrepresented since children's literature explores the cultures of white people with their infinite possibilities in most of the stories. This has prompted the lack of inclusivity as children's literature does not reflect characters with different lives, cultures, and identities which influence how they see themselves and shapes others' perception towards them. *Grace for President* celebrates the complexity of race and gender through its main character, Grace Campbell, for the reason that the story represents her experiences as a young black girl who wants to be president. Women have long

been associated with unrealistic vision of femininity distorted their images and abilities, however, Grace displays strong personalities which can be implied that she does not meet the society's expectation of what it means to be a girl by doing several actions in challenging beauty standards and making an equal culture for girls and women in leadership roles. As DiPucchio features Grace to be the role of the protagonist in her book, besides giving insight into minority backgrounds in a world where there are not many children's literature that embrace inclusivity, it can also be considered that Grace is meant to inspire and to empower young girls in setting new standards for gender equality by embracing what makes them unique and standing up for what they believe in.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In the world of children's literature, girls and women have been identified as the characters who are underrepresented compared to boys and men. Both female and male characters are portrayed in stereotypical images which society has set of standards for both two sexes with regard to feminine and masculine qualities. Male characters with their masculine nature have most often been associated with powerful roles as they tend to be more dominant and assertive. This oversimplified conception brings females to be perceived as unimportant and worthless individuals. Over the past decade of children's publishing world, there have been progressive changes for female characters because a variety of children's literature has come out starring strong, feisty female role models and celebrating all of its diversity which give power and validation to the young girls. The representation of positive female role models in children's literature embraces how the character displays admirable personal traits, how the character challenges traditional stereotypes, how the character initiates problem solving strategies, and how the character provides a voice for those who frequently unheard in children's literature.

Kelly DiPucchio's *Grace for President* portrays the experience of young black female named Grace Campbell in the school's election as she participates herself to be presidential candidate competing against Thomas Cobb. She dreams to be

president when she grows up due to the fact Mrs. Barrington tells her that female has never held position in United States presidency. The story features two competing sides, Grace and Thomas, in stereotypically ways in terms of traits, roles, and occupations. Grace appears in traditional feminine traits and has been more frequently involved in service roles and activities at school. Thomas, on the contrary, plays an authoritative role as he gets to perform masculine traits. Being a girl in a boys' world, Grace encounters inconsiderate attitudes from her friends regarding the perception towards gender that girls and women do not have the capabilities to hold position in leadership roles. She, however, responds them with courage, strength, and determination as she is willing to break female tradition and fight against gender inequality.

Grace for President puts the spotlight on Grace who embraces her unique physical features as a black young girl and creates her own path in the school's election to become president. In spite of the stereotypical images she has on, Grace dominates with positive and strong qualities as she grows to value her own worth, to rely on her own belief and power, and to keep pushing forward on her dream. This leads her to reach her aspiration for becoming the president even if it is considered as rare opportunity for girls and women to involve in high level leadership positions.

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