



Self-Reliance in *Crazy Rich Asians* by Kevin Kwan (2013)

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Abstract

The purpose of this analysis is to expose the issue of self-reliance in the Novel *Crazy Rich Asian* by Kevin Kwan (2013). The issue of self-reliance refers to the way the character when the character gets bad treatment from the people but she is able to manage it. This analysis is text-based interpretation based on the concept of Self-reliance theory proposed by Elizabeth B. Hurlock. This analysis uses fictional devices such as character, plot (conflict) and setting that contribute in revealing the issue. The result of the study reveals the woman develops her self-reliance. It can be seen through behaviour and way of thinking.

Key words: Self-reliance, Behaviour, Way of Thinking, Crazy Rich Asian

A. INTRODUCTION

All human beings are endowed with self-reliance and their respective rights. They have the right to make their own choices, express their opinion, be respected and protected themselves from all threats to survive. A person's self-reliance can be seen from how they live their lives. Self-reliance will develop differently in each person depends on the child rearing (Hurlock:1987). Childrearing is the process of how to bring up a child from birth through adulthood. The child will have successful development of self-reliance when the parents have a skill in a good parenting. Such as giving some morals, character and values education. However, when the parents do not have good parenting and spoil the kids with a lot of ease, then the kids will be growing up dependent.

Self-reliance, or also defined as the quality of depending on yourself for things instead of relying on others, is one of the manners that need to be applied throughout the life. Hurlock (1980) stated that someone who has self-reliance can impact the way of thinking. They are able to make their own decision, be able to

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pursue the hopes that might make them success. Thus, people who have self-reliance will be able to communicate with others easily, control their emotions, be assertive and be wise.

Based on Hurlock's idea, the main point of "Self-Reliance" is that one should be true to oneself, making the best of one's own talents and following one's own instincts. Moreover, someone who has self-reliance will be able to stand in their own feet without anyone's help. They will have an effort to see things clearly and censorious in order to do something fairly. When people can show their self-reliance, they can make decisions and opinions with primary respect to their own experience of the world. This is because self-reliance is something that can be developed and be found within ourselves. Developing self-reliance can make people believe on their own thought or their conviction that's true for them. Furthermore, self-reliance has emerged as a key ethical concept that provides the basis for our lives. The theory of self-reliance is related to Sigmund Freud's theory of the human personality. According to Hilgard (2009), Freud discovered the human personality in three main systems that determine human behaviour: the id, the ego and the superego. The id is the most primitive part of the personality, and it is also the part that later developed the ego and the super-ego.

However, when someone fails to develop self-reliance they will rely on others for help, which means there will be when someone get stuck thus the help is not available. They will usually find it difficult to solve problems and protect themselves. They cannot think clearly and make decisions. When someone lost the self-reliance, they will be easily humiliated and insulted by others. This cannot be avoided when a person cannot defend and make themselves a shield.

The issue of self reliance that related to real life phenomenon is the case of *Star Wars* actress, Kelly Marie Tran, the actress who played 'Rose' in the film. She received many hate comments because she looked different. The actress has left the "Star Wars" bullies behind to star as Disney's first Southeast Asian princess in "*Raya and the Last Dragon*." She says, "I am not afraid anymore. I am finally asking for the things I want." Moreover, according to *The New York Times* (2020), Kelly Marie Tran is a person who is owning self-reliance. She is confident and eager to show herself as young Asian-American girl. She can assure everyone who bullied her that her ethnicity has nothing to do with her career. She wanted to show her skill in acting and her intelligence to everyone who brought her down. When Tran wrote a scathing essay in *The New York Times* in August 2018 excoriating a culture that had marginalized her for her differences, she just deleted her social media and lived a life without being annoyed. She proved to people who bullied her that she can be whatever she wants, she can choose whatever the path she wants to choose. Her intelligence shows that she owns self-reliance as someone who can protect herself. She said "their words (bullies) reinforced a narrative I had heard my whole life that I was 'other', that I did not belong to, that I was not good enough, simply because I was not like them.' Her words describe her brilliance of how she can develop her self-reliance and not getting into hard feelings of how other people try to bring her down. She can protect herself and also her mental integrity to stay in line with her

career. She never shows to be disturbed. She takes the bullies' comments as her way to evaluate herself to be better.

The issue of Self-reliance is also exposed in many literary works. One of them is the novel *Crazy Rich Asians* (2013) by Kevin Kwan. In this novel, there is a main (woman) character named Rachel Chu who shows her self-reliance well. She gets different and bad treatments and also humiliation from different people and situations. She remains calm and proposes her intelligence to show that she owns self-reliance. When people tend to bring her down, she does not bother. She keeps doing things as it should be. She strives for her goal and proves that she is capable to be respected. She thinks rationally and acts smartly when facing a lot of difficulties. She lets herself do whatever path she chose. She does not feel worthless of how people treat her, rather she becomes stronger and worth to be respected. The factor that makes her develop her self-reliance is because she was raised by a very strong mother who never spoiled her. The parenting ways that her mother gives influences her self-reliance to emerge. This case relates to Hurlock's theory about developmental psychology in self-reliance.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

Data for this research are the quotations related to character, plot, conflict, setting of the novel *Crazy Rich Asians* by Kevin Kwan. The source of data is the novel *Crazy Rich Asians* by Kevin Kwan (2013) that tells about the lives of rich Chinese people in Singapore, who have abundant wealth so that they belong to the upper class, but they also like to interfere in other people's business, find out about other people's lives. The Chinese who are in abundant wealth cannot simply accept others who want to enter their family. Moreover, if other people were not from a wealthy group like them. Upon publication, it received positive reviews, became both a national and an international bestseller, and has been translated into over 30 languages.

The analysis of the novel *Crazy Rich Asians* (2013) by Kevin Kwan is done through text based interpretation. The fictional devices such as character, plot and setting are used to analyze this novel. Character and plot are used to reveal about the act of showing self-reliance by analyzing the character's action and emotion toward the conflict. Then, the setting deals with the circumstance and atmosphere. It gives contribution in the process of analysis by giving help in revealing the meaning. In addition, these elements are analysed with the concept of Self-reliance by Elizabeth Bergner Hurlock.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Finding

The issue of self-reliance has been exposed in the novel written by Kevin Kwan *Crazy Rich Asians*. His novel shows how the woman character in this novel shows her self-reliance. The female character is Rachel. Through the character, setting, plot and conflict in this novel, the acts of self-reliance can be seen in how the character be independent and use her intelligence to be respected and honoured. The woman character gets different treatments from other people. Instead of feeling worthless, she comes up with her intellectuality to solve the problems. As a matter of fact, the woman character cannot let the people who try to bring her down. Thus, self-reliance in this study refers to the woman character's behaviour and way of thinking.

In terms of her way of thinking, she can think critically when she comes into some choices. She can choose the best option she has by considering the cause and effect that she will get. In addition she can also face her problem without feeling the valueless humiliation she gets. She cannot let people who humiliate her see her flaws by being afraid of being treated badly.

In terms of her behaviour, she can make her own choices. She is free from the influence or control of another. She lives on her own and supports herself without being helped by other people. She determines herself to be able to do or decide things on her own, rather than depending on other people for help. She has self-confidence without having to rely on another person or society for validation.

2. Discussion

This chapter analyzes the fictional devices such as character and plot to reveal the issue of self-reliance. Self-reliance is the ability to do things and make decisions by ourselves. Self-reliance in this analysis refers to the ability of the main character, Rachel Chu, who is able to make her own decision, able to pursue the hopes that makes her success. She is also able to communicate with others easily and control their emotions. In terms of behaviour, she is an assertive but wise person. She is also honest, sincere, and humble. In this analysis, her self-reliance can be seen through her way of thinking and her behaviour.

In the matter of way of thinking, she proves that she owns self-reliance through her ability to think critically when she comes into some choices. She will consider the cause and effect that she will get. In addition, she can manage her behaviour so she will not be able to be humiliated by others when facing the problem.

Meanwhile, concerning to her behaviour, she can maintain her personality without having to be influenced by others. Thus, she doesn't need to copy

everyone's style to be accepted by everyone. She is true to herself and others. She never try to force herself to be in a situation that she never feel comfortable with.

2.1 Way of Thinking

Way of Thinking is a reflection of self-reliance owned by the main character. People with good way of thinking will show their intellectual and intelligent. They are able to think critically in every condition, anticipate any risk they will have, and deliberate how to sustain their emotion. Challenging situations and obstacles are a part of their life. When they faced with one, they tend to focus on the good things no matter how small or seemingly insignificant they seem.

The way of thinking can be seen in the following quotation that convince the main character has self-reliance:

“... Being twenty-nine, she was by Chinese standards well into old-maid territory, and even though her busy body relatives were perpetually trying to set her up, she had spent the better part of her twenties focused on getting through grad school, finishing her dissertation, and jump-starting her career in academia” (p. 22)”

The quotation above reflects that the main character is a person who has self-reliance. From the sentence *“she had spent the better part of her twenties focused on getting through grad school, finishing her dissertation, and jump-starting her career in academia”*, this quotation clearly mentions that she has a competence to think critically in choosing what life path will be. She has a distinct and definite notion for her life without being influenced by another person. She is mindful with her priority and she considers being dealt with her education and career first. She believes that if someone pursue their education and make it priority, she will be savant. She will have a lot of knowledge and able to think critically and even logically. Therefore, it is comprehensible that she has a high-minded way of thinking. She never take any action without any deliberation measurement. Furthermore, it's apparent that she is someone who thinks realistically optimist. She avoids illusion or escapism to run away from reality. Thus, she is straight to what she views the best for her.

From the quotation above, there is another sentence which proves that she is someone who can decide which type of action she will give to others. From the sentence *“even though her busy body relatives were perpetually trying to set her up”* indicates that her environment doesn't really support her dream. However, she tries to proof to people that she can choose her own life path. From her firm mind, she is a person who developed self-reliance well. This way of thinking is related to what Freud that talks about anticipation in one of defence mechanisms she has. Anticipation is a realistic planning way from someone who owns critical thinking. Anticipation involves pleasure and anxiety in considering or awaiting an expected event. This is affiliated to the way of thinking that the main character has. She always tries to think further about something that will happen in the future. She anticipates the bad things that might happens later. She will get older and older,

that is why she works hard for her dream earlier so she can get what she pursued. This way of thinking will help her in developing self-reliance.

There is another proof that she has a good way of thinking from how she thinks or responds quickly and effectively that can be seen in the quotation below;

“Mom, we’ve never once talked about marriage,” Rachel said, trying to downplay it. As excited as she was about all the possibilities that hung over the trip, she wasn’t going to encourage her mom for the time being. Her mother was already far too invested in her happiness, and she didn’t want to get her hopes up... too much. (p.32).

The main character is described as someone who has a well-planned vision. She thinks about the future or advancements in an anticipative way. From the sentence “*As excited as she was about all the possibilities that hung over the trip, she wasn’t going to encourage her mom for the time being.*” It can be seen that she shows her prudent side with logical thinking about taking action or responding emotionally before it happens. She is mindful about every steps and things she is going to take. She has a prospection mind which helps her to make more careful decisions as she doesn’t want to hurt anybody’s feeling especially her mother’s feeling.

Another proof that she has a good way of thinking is in the following quotation:

“I guess that’s why I feel like I need to meet my father. I remember watching some talk show one night where adopted children finally got reunited with their birth parents...Even if they didn’t get along, even if their parents were nothing like what they expected, all of them somehow felt more whole after the experience” (p.501).

From this quotation, it can be seen that the main character has persistent characteristic. Even though she knows the possibilities she will face when meeting her father may not live up to her expectation, it does not stop her intention to meet her father. She is quite aware that anything could happen when she is there, but she assumes that it is worth a try. She doesn’t have any revengeful feeling. She does not take things personally. She manages her mind, rather than let their mind manage her. It means that she has an ability to control emotions as the form of her self-reliance.

In this novel, throughout her visit to Singapore, the main character has mostly considered a gold digger who dated a rich man for his family's wealth. However, the main character ultimately has proven that it was not her reason. She firmly decided to do the action that is related to her intelligence.

“So, you’ll have to understand that, as much as I love you, Nick, I don’t want to be your wife. I never want to be part of a family like yours. I can’t marry into a clan that thinks it’s too good to have me. And I don’t want my children to ever be connected to such people. I want them to grow up in a loving, nurturing home, surrounded by grandparents and aunts and uncles and cousins who consider them equals. Because that’s ultimately what I have, Nick. You’ve seen it yourself, when you came home with me last Thanksgiving. You see what it’s like with my cousins. We’re competitive, we tease each other mercilessly, but at the end of the day we support each other. That’s what I want for my kids. I want them to love their family, but to feel a deeper sense of pride in who they are as individuals, Nick, not in how much money they have, what their last name is, or how many generations they go back to whatever dynasty.” (p. 365)

In the quotation above, she decided that she did not want to marry him. It is a declaration of independence earned from putting aside her feelings and using her logic to decide what would be the best for her life. It can be seen that she is a rational person who is sensible and is able to make decisions based on her logic rather than emotion. The main character argued that she did not want to be part of the Young family, as she cannot *“marry into a clan that thinks it’s too good to have [her].”* It is a statement that emphasized the main character has self-reliance, as she refused to be considered dependent on her future husband's wealth or to be considered of lower status.

In addition, the main character’s confidence to break up with the man can be considered as logical thinking ability. For the main character, the man’s wealth could not buy her pride or independence. She would not give up her financially emancipated status to gain more wealth by marrying into the man’s family. She also stated that *“but to feel a deeper sense of pride in who they are as individuals [and], not in how much money they have”* which is a clear statement that she wanted their children to be financially independent. Here, the main character not only asserts her independence, but she also secures the independence of her future children.

In addition, another good way of thinking reflects from the following quotation :

“Not at all.” What was Auntie Elle getting at? Astrid knew that her aunt was prying, so she felt like she had to present Rachel in the best possible light. “She’s very smart and accomplished, Auntie Elle. I think you’ll like her.”

“Oh, so she’s the brainy type, like Nicky.”

“Yes, definitely. I’m told she’s one of the up-and-coming professors in her field.” Eleanor was nonplussed. A

professor! Nicky was dating a professor! Oh my, was this woman older than him? “Nicky didn’t tell me what her specialty was.”

“Oh, economic development.”

A cunning, calculating older woman. Alamak. This was sounding worse and worse.

“Did she go to university in New York?” Eleanor pressed on. “No, she went to Stanford, in California.”

“Yes, yes, I know Stanford,” Eleanor said, sounding unimpressed. It’s that school in California for those people who can’t get into Harvard.

“It’s a top school, Auntie Elle,” Astrid said, knowing exactly what her aunt was thinking.

“Well, I suppose if you are forced to go to an American university—”

“Come on, Auntie Elle. Stanford is a great university for anywhere. I believe she also went to Northwestern for her master’s[...].” (pp 54-55)

Further details about the main character's academic achievement as a reflection of her intellectual power are given in the quotation above. In this sentence “*Yes, definitely. I’m told she’s one of the up-and-coming professors in her field.*” It is clearly stated that many people are impressed with the main character’s education experiences and occupation. The main character went to some top universities such as Stanford and Northwestern. It can be concluded that she has a good choice in choosing which place she needs to take to get the knowledge. She can decide her best decision and think about the future goal she has to become a professor in economic development which not everyone can get an opportunity to be one. However, she can make it. She makes everyone surprised of her decision she choose.

2.2 Behavior

Self-reliance can be seen in the main character’s behaviour. This is one of the way that someone can maintain her personality without having to be influenced by others. Thus, she doesn’t need to imitate everyone’s style to be accepted by everyone. She is not only assertive but also true to herself and others. She never try to force herself to be in a situation that she never feel comfortable with and always be brave in every kind of situation.

There are some proofs that the main character shows the self-reliance through the behaviour. One of them is being assertive. Being assertive means finding the right balance between passivity and aggression. It means that she is

having a strong sense of herself and her value, and acknowledging that she deserves to get what she wants.

There is a proof about the main character's behaviour that makes her assertive. Here is the further quotation;

“I appreciate your generosity, but you just can't go around spending thousands of dollars on me. Now, I have money saved up for this trip and I will gladly pay for my own.”
(Kwan, 2013: 357)

From the quotation above, we can see that the main character is not from a wealthy family but she has an assertive behavior. She knows her value and how people can treat her. She may be an economist, but she is not materialistic. She is a girl who doesn't like her stuff to be bought by someone else. She prefers to save and buy the stuff with her own money. it is a behaviour she always maintain to have in order to be true to herself. This is related to self-reliance. According to Hurlock (1993) Being assertive means being able to stand up for your own or other people's rights in a calm and positive way, without being either aggressive, or passively accepting 'wrong'. As a result, the main character is showing that she can stand for her own without anyone's help. She is able to strive for her better life without anyone's influence.

Another proof of her behaviour in self-assertion can be seen in the following quotation:

“I spent my teenage years in California, but I've lived in twelve different states. We moved around quite a bit when I was younger.” “Yes, we lived the Gypsy life until my teenage years, when we settled down in California.” (Kwan, 2013, 129)

From the quotation above, it shows how she can manage her assertion through her behaviour along with the migration experiences. She moved to some places in several times. She might adjusted her life in new situations frequently. It shows that she knows how to behave with people or even someone she has never met before. in the sentence “ I've lived in twelve different states” means that she met a lot of people with different personalities and she is used to it. Thus, she always be true to herself always manage to be independent in her life.

The other proofs that the main character projects that she has a self-reliance behaviour is when she plays Mahjong against Eleanor to prove that she is not a fool, through Mahjong she could prove life skills such as Negotiation, Strategy, and Cooperation as teaches by Rachel Chu's mother. Rachel's mother teaches her how to play. As Rachel tells Eleanor “My mom taught me how to play,” “She told me mahjong would teach me important life skills—negotiation, strategy, cooperation.” [13] (Kwan, 2013:189)

In the quotation above it can be seen that her superego plays important role in showing her behaviour when playing mah-jong. She always use her own way in any kind of situation. She put an effort in playing the games without imitating others. She knows how to win a game with her usual tricks. she will never get intimidated by someone. However she will try her best with her own way to make someone realize that she is not a person that can be humiliated.

Being someone who develops self-reliance means they not only will be independent but also will be brave enough to conquer the problem. Thus, there is a proof that strengthen the idea that the main character is a person who is eager to manifest her idea.

Eleanor : “Why you are so confident to be my son’s lover?” Rachel : “I know what you mean. I’m not a son of a rich mother like you. But, I’m sure that i can be best woman for your son.” (Chapter 17:356)

In the following quotation, it is clear that she shows her behaviour as someone who is brave and eager to speak up her opinion. No matter what the mother says, she always be confident in whatever she wants to say and whatever she wants to do. The sentence “*I’m sure that i can be best woman for your son.*” Means that she is someone who always try to assure someone that she can do that. This is how superego works. According to Freud, Superego means the ethical component of the personality and provides the moral standards by which the ego operates. She assures his mother not without any consideration. However she passed all the measurement. It can be seen in the sentence “*I know what you mean. I’m not a son of a rich mother like you.*” It seems that she is aware with fact that she will not be accepted. Even though, she keeps trying and believing herself that she can.

The other proof that shows main character’s bravery in the quotation below:

Rachel : “I don’t understand what you mean. So, your parents have never known about me all this time?” Nick : “Not be like that. Rachel, you know how Chinese parents like to arrange their son.” Rachel : “Listen to me, Nick. You don’t think be like that. I don’t care, really! I just care about our relationship. We have to fight for all this. Ok?” (Chapter 8:67)

This quotation depicts how the main character’s behaviour that is really brave in taking any risk. She always think optimistic about something that she wants to achieve. She looks ambitious in having something and brave enough to keep something that she deserve. This case relates to an assertive behaviour. Which according to Hurlock (1993) having or showing a confident and forceful personality. She is showing her confidence by the line “*Listen to me, Nick. You don’t think be like that. I don’t care, really! I just care about our relationship. We have to fight for all this. Ok?*” she shows her forceful personality which means brave enough to get what belongs to her. Even though she knows the bitter fact

about the lineage culture in his family, she keeps believing that there must be a way to reach her goal. In a way that she tries to reach her goal, she maintains her confidence to boost up herself that she can do it.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The issue of self-reliance can be revealed in a novel *Crazy Rich Asian* (2013) by Kevin Kwan. The fictional elements such as character, plot (conflict) and setting contribute in revealing the meaning from the novel. This analysis applies the concept of Elizabeth B. Hurlock about developmental psychology in self-reliance. Self-reliance in this analysis refers to how the main character shows in her actions towards her life. Self-reliance can be seen through behaviour and way of thinking.

In terms of behavior, the main character tries to show a good manner in every activity. She is always polite or refined social behaviour to everyone she meets. Thus, whenever there some moments when she is humiliated by someone, she can manage and control her anger. She respects each other no matter what class and social they belong. she always pay attention to her appearance. Many people like her because of her behaviour. Her good behaviour would consist of being kind and genuine to others.

In terms of way of thinking, she can think clearly and rationally about what to do or what to believe. She is able to engage in reflective and independent thinking. She allows herself to analyze information and make an objective judgment. When she gets a lot of hatred from people, she never directly take everything personally. She always try to manage herself and collecting ideas to show that she can do better.

The analysis proves that the self-reliance owned by the main character is influenced by her mother way of rearing. As Elizabeth B. Hurlock said in her theory, the treatments of raising kids plays important roles in building and developing children's self-reliance and independence. It also influence children's behaviour and critical thinking. The way her mother raised her was the best one. Her mother works hard to be able to survive in the country where they don't belong. Her mother struggled to give the best education and let her choose what every choices she wants to reach. Finally, it proves that a good child-rearing will influence children's development in their self-reliance.

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