

The Superiority Complex of Eleanor in *Crazy Rich Asians*

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ABSTRACT

Crazy Rich Asians is one of the movies that is adapted from literature. In this thesis I am analyzing this movie because of the depiction of a rich person, Eleanor Young, who has an underlying inferiority. However, she shows that she has a superiority over others to cover inferiority. Therefore, in this thesis I am interested in analyzing the superiority complex that was portrayed by Eleanor in the movie and the impact for other characters. In the analysis I use Alfred Adler's theory of superiority complex. The findings show that Eleanor's superiority complex is shown through her action and behavior, her speech, and her characteristic traits. Her superiority complex affects other characters, who are Nick and Rachel. As a result, Eleanor does not have a good relationship with Nick and Rachel and she portrays her superiority complex.

Keywords: Complexes; Overcompensation; Impact for Other Characters.

INTRODUCTION

These days there are a lot of literary works that are being adapted either to be a movie, a stage plays, or even a game. Since the early study of adaptation, there have been a lot of opinions about screen adaptation among scholars. The meaning of adaptation is an interpretation that includes decisions about at least one person reading the text, deciding what elements to send, and how to implement those elements in visual and audio media. There are so many movies that are adapted from novels. *Harry Potter*, a famous fantasy movie, was adapted from the *Harry Potter* novel series written by J. K. Rowling. With their popularity, one of the films that attract my attention is *Crazy Rich Asians*.

Crazy Rich Asians the movie is based on a bestselling romance comedy novel written by Kevin Kwan. *Crazy Rich Asians* is not only taking the eyes of the Asian market but also worldwide. Their gross worldwide sale for the movie is \$238,843,729. The gross sales made this movie have a successful reputation in the eyes of the audience. Other than that, this movie is the first modern story with an all-Asian cast and an Asian-American lead in 25 years. With the hype back in 2018, it made *Crazy Rich Asians*, became the Best Comedy movie in the Broadcast Film Critics Association Award. With all the achievements, this movie attracts me to discuss more. *Crazy Rich Asians* is directed by Jon M. Chu, and he graduated from the USC School of Cinema-Television. There, he won the Princess Grace Award, the Dore Schary Award presented by the Anti-Defamation League, the Jack Nicholson directing award, and was recognized as an honoree for the IFP/West program (IMDb, 1991-2021). *Crazy Rich Asians* tells a story about the behavior of crazy rich people who came from Asia, which not every person can relate with the situations. This movie intrigued my curiosity about Eleanor Young, on how she portrays a person who was rich; however, she still has underlying inferiority. She covers her inferiority by pretending that she is superior to others

The novel is set in Singapore, In the film, Eleanor first sees Nick and Rachel in the film at Ah Ma's party at Tyersall Park. Nick introduces her to Rachel while she is supervising dinner preparations in the kitchen, and she calmly interrogates Rachel while speaking with the kitchen

staff. Rachel, understandably, regards this as disrespectful and informs Nick that Eleanor despises her. Later, in Nick's old room, she assures him that Rachel is nice while reminding him of his familial obligations. Eleanor is concerned when Rachel meets Ah Ma later that evening because Ah Ma appears to approve of her.

Eleanor sees Rachel again when the family gathers at Ah Ma's house to make dumplings for Colin and Araminta's rehearsal dinner. Rachel mentions Eleanor's ring, which seems to strike a chord. Eleanor scolds her in front of everyone for not understanding, as an American, the sacrifices and dedication required to build and maintain a strong family and something that lasts. Rachel excuses herself to use the restroom shortly after Ah Ma arrives and informs Eleanor that she has lost her touch for making dumplings but is stopped by Eleanor. Eleanor apologizes to her, saying she believes she was rude and offers to tell her the story about her ring. She describes how Nick's father was forced to, because Ah Ma refused to give him the family ring he had made when he proposed to her. Ah Ma did not believe she was worthy of Phillip or the family. Rachel believes Ah Ma eventually changed her mind, but Eleanor claims it took her many years and hard work to get to where she is and show that she is enough. She takes a step forward, causing Rachel to go down the stairs putting Eleanor in a dominant stance and telling her that Rachel will never be enough.

At Colin Khoo's wedding reception, Eleanor and Ah Ma call Nick and Rachel over. Ah Ma tells Rachel that she will not let Rachel's ambition destroy their family. Eleanor explains that she hired a private investigator, who discovered that Rachel's mother cheated on her husband and became pregnant by another man before fleeing to America before he discovered. They advise Nick to stop seeing Rachel because her "lies" will reflect poorly on their family. Nick selects Rachel and pursues her, leaving Ah Ma to blame Eleanor for her failure as a mother.

One character that triggered my curiosity is Eleanor. In the movie, she is depicted as having a strict view of how Asian culture emphasizes class status. This can be seen in her interactions with other characters. Her interactions with other characters seem to show that she suffers from a superiority complex. According to healthline.com, superiority complex is a behavior that suggests a person believes they're somehow superior to others. With the description of the superiority complex, it makes Eleanor really interesting to be analyzed. The fact that we have, if Eleanor is rich and already superior, it made her have the right to be superior. However, in the movie, she still wanted to show her superiority complex in the way she emphasizes her class status by using British English in her daily speech. The way she uses a British name for herself and also talks in a British accent is one of the things that shows how she has a higher class. The way she acts shows a personality where she wants to be superior rather than other people because in the movie, most of her relatives talk in a Singaporean accent which can be seen as a lower accent rather than a British accent. The way she acts, it makes me choose to discuss the topic of the superiority complex of Eleanor Young.

To analyze Eleanor's superiority complex, I will use the theory from Alfred Adler about superiority complex. For this study, I will use and focus on four of five Adlerian characteristics about superiority complexes. There are underlying low self-esteem, appear greater than others, self-image of supremacy and authority, and overcompensation for specific elements of life. I will use this characteristic to analyze the superiority complex that Eleanor portrayed in the movie and how it impacts on the other characters.

Thus, I will briefly explain what a superiority complex is. Superiority complex is a behavior that suggests a person believes they are somehow superior to others. Their goals are usually personal ones and their strivings are largely exaggerated by feelings of personal inferiority (Feist. J. & Feist. G., p.72). I will briefly explain the characteristics that I use. The first characteristic of the superiority complex is an underlying low self-esteem Adler said people

who suffer from a superiority complex tend to have an inferiority complex. However they try to hide their inferiority with their superiority. The second one is that people with a superiority complex want to appear greater than others. It made people with a superiority complex tend to put more attention on their physical and non-physical appearance or vanity in connection with personal appearance, whether in the way of elegance or neglect (Ansbacher. H, Ansbacher. R, p.261). The third characteristic is a self-image of supremacy and authority. A person with these characteristics wants to achieve their feeling of superiority. They wanted to get the feelings of authority towards others in order to show that they have more power. The fifth one is overcompensation for specific elements of life. Overcompensation is when someone makes an effort to overcome their imperfection, however their efforts are only focused in one direction. In order to achieve their achievement, the people will try to hide their inferiority by overcompensating for their inferiority. On the other hand overcompensation is also a development of an individual that is initiated by the maladjustment of their inferiority, which not only leads to a negative and imperfection but also an overcompensation (Adamović V., et al, 2016). Overcompensation is the result of the coping mechanism of their inferiority, people who suffer with this characteristic tend to show their superiority by showing off, being snobbish, and usually they bad mouth others because of their belief.

ANALYSIS

The Portrayal of Eleanor's Superiority Complex in *Crazy Rich Asians*

I will analyze Eleanor's superiority complex through the four characteristics of the superiority complex. There are three components that will help me analyze Eleanor's superiority complex. The first one is through the creation of Eleanor's actions and behavior, the second one is through Eleanor's speech, and the last one is through Eleanor's character traits.

Through her action, Eleanor acts as she overcompensates for some specific elements in her life. According to Adamović V., et al (2016), overcompensation is when someone makes an effort to overcome their imperfection. To overcome their inferiority, people with a superiority complex tend to exaggerate their beliefs. It shows that Eleanor's dislike towards Rachel is due to her opinion that Americans are ambitious people, and thus, they prioritize their ambitions at the expense of their families. That is why she is unhappy with Rachel. She does not want Nick to marry Rachel due to her cultural background, in which her parents give her much freedom. Besides that, Rachel's family background, which she does not come from a reputable family, creates a problem. Eleanor does not want Nick to marry a woman who does not come from a rich family like Young's family. Eleanor does have underlying inferiority, which is the rejection from Young's family, which made her have a submissive behavior in front of Ah-Ma. The second one is overcompensation for specific elements of life. The rejection made her overcompensate for the situation. In order to be accepted and appear like a good daughter-in-law in front of Ah-Ma, she tries to reject Rachel because she knows that Ah-Ma does not like a person who does not prioritize the family.

The next one is on how Eleanor acts as an upper-class person by using a British name and also acts as a British aristocrat. In the movie, Eleanor Young actually has a mandarin family name which is Sung. After she got married, she chose to change her family surname to her husband's family name, which is Young's. After the marriage, she chose to change her name to Eleanor, which is a classic British name. The name of Eleanor itself is a common name that is being used by aristocrats in England. According to Today.com, the name Eleanor was the royal name extraordinaire back in the Middle Ages, borne by three Queens of England and numerous royal princesses. (Nickerson, 2017) This means her name can be counted as a Britain aristocrat's name. She chose this name because the name Eleanor is one of the classic names and is also being used by aristocrats in England. Other than that, in order to compensate for her husband's family name, which is known as an aristocrat in Singapore, she chose to use the name Eleanor

in order to keep the classic looks of her husband's family and to emphasize her position in the society.

On the other hand, the name that she chose in exchange for her Chinese name showed how she wanted to appear greater than others. Alfred mentions in his book that people want to appear greater because they want to show their pride and superiority (Adler A, p.86). She wanted to be known as a noble by using Eleanor as her name. Other than the last name of her husband's family, it showed how she wanted to be known as a wife of a noble family in Singapore because, in the movie, the surname of Young's family is a really well-known and wealthy family in Singapore. Not only with her name, but she also shows the characteristics of superiority in her appearance and vanity. In order to appear greater than others, she paid more attention to her appearance.

The other way Eleanor portrays her superiority complex is by showing it through her speech. In order to appear greater than others, Eleanor shows her superiority complex by using a British accent in her daily conversation. The movie *Crazy Rich Asians* takes place in Singapore. According to Babel.com, four official languages are spoken in Singapore. The first one is Malay, followed by Mandarin, Tamil, and English. However, as people know, Singaporeans have their own English accent, which is called Singaporean English. According to Visa.co.id, Singlish evolved out of Singapore's multiethnic society, with the intonation and sentence structure of Singlish influenced by Chinese dialects primarily spoken in Singapore, such as Mandarin, Taiwanese Hokkien, Cantonese, and Teochew. The local language is also peppered with vocabulary and phrases borrowed from the Malay and Indonesian languages. This language is informal and used in daily conversation among Singaporeans. However, in the movie *Crazy Rich Asians*, Eleanor uses a British accent in her daily conversation. In the movie, they showed how using proper English and a British accent is not common in daily conversation, as we can see from the example above, during her conversation with her friends. According to the movie, a person who can go into a British boarding school is a person who came from a wealthy background. It shows how the culture of the British is known as a part of the high class in Singapore. Eleanor uses a British accent to show her superiority, and she puts more attention on her accent to appear greater than other people around her. It shows how she tries to be superior in how she brings her accent to her daily conversation.

The portrayal of her superiority complex of Eleanor is also shown through her character traits. In the movie, we can see that Eleanor actually has judgmental characteristics. In the scene where she first meets with Rachel, she makes a judgment of Rachel's culture. She thinks Rachel, who was born and raised in the US, has a culture of prioritizing personal interests instead of the family's interests. However, Eleanor thinks that Asian culture puts the family first before their own happiness is better than American culture. Thus, the fact that Rachel has the freedom to pursue her passion makes Eleanor think that Rachel is not a good partner for Nick. That is why she wanted to show her superiority toward Rachel by showing that she prioritizes the family. It can be seen in the scene where she shows Rachel how she organizes the dinner. She helps the staff in the kitchen rather than joining the family gathering. She shows her belief in putting family first before her happiness toward Rachel.

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The second character trait is controlling. Throughout the movie, we can see that Eleanor Young acts as if she was the one who is dominating Young's family. She controls all the actions of each Young's family. It is clearly seen in the scene during Collin Khoo and Arminta Lee's wedding reception. There was a scene where Alstair Cheng and Kitty Pong danced inappropriately in the middle of the crowd. She told Oliver to manage the situation. Eleanor thinks that actually, the action of Kitty and Alistair is wrong. She tells Oliver to take care of them. However, people around them think their actions are not disturbing. People around them did not give a judgment toward the couple. However, Eleanor thinks that the actions of Kitty and Alistair are inappropriate. She thinks that their action is wrong; it makes her want to fix their action. It shows how she wanted to control the party, even though, as we know, the party is Collin Khoo and Arminta Lee's wedding reception which does not have any correlation with her.

Besides that, she also takes control of her son. We can see how Eleanor acts towards Rachel due to her cultural background. It made her reject Rachel because she thinks Rachel is not a good partner for Nick. She tries to control Nick's life by hiring a private investigator to research Rachel's background. She shows her superiority over Nick as his mother, and she thinks that she has the right to do a background investigation on Rachel. She controls Nick's relationship with Rachel because she thinks that Rachel is not the best choice for the family. She wanted to make Nick leave Rachel with the fact that she had. Her actions show how she wanted to shape her son as what she wanted Nick to be. She tries to separate them in order to make Nick have a better partner than Rachel.

The Impact of Eleanor's Superiority Complex on Other Character

Eleanor's superiority complex does leave an impact for the other two characters in the movie. Her superiority complex affects the character significantly, which made some characters choose to make big changes on their decision. Two of the characters that significantly gets the most impact are Rachel Chu and Nick Young.

Throughout the movie, we can see how Eleanor shows her superiority complex toward Rachel. With the background of Rachel, who came from a family that does not have a clear origin and an American background, Eleanor thinks that Rachel is not suitable for Nick. Eleanor tends to talk sarcastically toward Rachel, and her answers always lead to the rejection of Rachel and Nick's relationship. Her action of overcompensating her belief in Asian culture made Rachel, who has a background in American culture, feel oppressed. Her action of superiority complex impacted the relationship between Rachel and Nick. Her action made Rachel question her decision to marry Nick. It is because Eleanor triggers the inferiority of Rachel. She tried to make Rachel feel that she was rejected by the Young's due to her background. Eleanor told Rachel about her past because she thought it could make Rachel realize that she was not a great person to be accepted as Young's. Because of Eleanor's belief, a good partner for Nick is the one that can put their family first rather than pursue a dream.

Eleanor's superiority complex has a big impact on Rachel's decision-making. Rachel went to Singapore with Nick to attend Collin and Arminta's wedding. However, because of the pressure from Eleanor, Rachel feels that her existence is unwanted by Eleanor. She makes a sudden decision to leave Collin and Arminta's wedding. That is not the only impact on Rachel; after the peak accident where she gets to know the real truth, it breaks her up. It makes her come into the decision not to get married to Nick.

The other impact is on Nick, Eleanor tries to control and use Nick's life. She tries to make Nick Ah-ma's favorite grandson so that she can be accepted as the daughter-in-law. Eleanor's behavior makes Nick become a person who does not have any control over his life. Eleanor tries to make Nick break up with Rachel because she thinks that Rachel is not good for him. The action of Eleanor shaping and controlling Nick's life made Nick feel like he was being restrained from choosing his life path. It made Nick feel that he is like a scapegoat in his family, because Eleanor tries to use Nick as bait to please Ah-ma. Other than that, Nick also wanted to be free from Eleanor's superior side. He wanted to be able to choose his own life path. The superiority complex of Eleanor made Nick think that he is only a puppet. He chose the decision to leave Eleanor because, during his life in New York, he was free without any pressure from Eleanor. However, when he returned to Singapore, he realized that Eleanor's superiority complex was taking control of his life, and he could not take his life path. He thinks that his mom does not support every life path he chooses. Eleanor's superiority complex made him take action to leave her and his family behind to settle with Rachel in New York.

The relationship between mother and son is also destroyed. Nick distancing himself with Eleanor after the night when Eleanor spills out the facts about Rachel. Eleanor's superiority complex makes Nick feel he has to distance himself from his own mother. His disappointment shows clearly in the picture. Nick always appears cheerful and supports his mom's decision on the usual time. However, after the accident where Eleanor uses her controlling character to show her superiority, Nick starts to give a cold shoulder towards her. It shows how Eleanor's superiority complex greatly impacts Nick's personality towards her.

Eleanor's superiority complex action does impact Nick and Rachel. The impact on Rachel, made her question her decision to marry Nick. The authority of Eleanor made Rachel have a breakdown, and it made her think that she would not be accepted into the family. That is what Rachel starts to re-thinking about her decision to marry Nick. On the other hand, the impact on Nick, makes him think that Eleanor does not support his decision to choose his own life path. It makes him want to leave his family behind, and it also destroys the relationship between Eleanor and Nick.

CONCLUSION

To sum up the findings of my analysis and provide some suggestions for further research. From my analysis, I have discovered that Eleanor portrays her superiority complex through her action and behavior, speech, and characteristic traits. Eleanor's superiority complex also affects the character, and it has some impact on some characters' lives, two of which are Rachel Chu and Nick Young.

Eleanor does suffer from a superiority complex. She portrays four out of five characteristics of the superiority complex. The first one is her underlying feeling of inferiority complex, she has her inferiority triggered when Young's family rejected her. It makes her want to be superior in order to hide her inferiority. The second one, she wants to appear greater than others, it shows in her appearance on using the most prestigious phone and also on her language, that she chooses British as her accent for her daily speech. The third one is the self-image of supremacy and authority. It shows how she thinks that she has more authority over Nick's life, which makes her control his life under her hand. The last one is the overcompensation for specific elements of life. It shows how she tries to be the daughter-in-law that Ah-Ma wants by trying to make Rachel feel unaccepted in the family. She tries to push Rachel away because she thinks that Rachel is not the one that Ah-ma wants. The underlying reason is that Rachel does not come from an Asian background and prioritizes her ambition over her family. The culture that Rachel holds is something that Ah-Ma does not like, she tries to make sure Rachel is

rejected, so she can be accepted by Ah-Ma. The proof shows how she actually has four out of five characteristics, and it made her suffer from a superiority complex.

Eleanor's superiority complex does have an impact on other characters. The first one is on Rachel. Eleanor clearly shows her superiority complex towards Rachel. She always shows her rejection towards Rachel, to the point where she says that Rachel will never be enough for Nick. The judgment and the oppression from Eleanor made Rachel feel that she could not be the one for Nick. She feels belittled and rejected by Eleanor's statement. However, she can gain her confidence again, but once again, Eleanor does crush her confidence by showing her self-image of authority towards Rachel. It made Rachel think she was not enough for Nick. Eleanor's superiority complex makes Rachel question her decision to marry Nick. The impact also affected the relationship between Nick and Eleanor. Eleanor's superiority complex made Nick draw a line between him and Eleanor. It affected the relationship between Eleanor and Nick. He thinks that Eleanor never supports the decision he chose for his life. He thinks that by living with Eleanor, he always gets controlled by her. It made Nick decide that he would leave Eleanor and Young's family in order to be with Rachel.

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