

AFTER FOUR YEARS

Murti, J. A.¹ and Basuki, R.²

^{1,2} English Department, Faculty of Letters, Petra Christian University, Siwalankerto 121-131, Surabaya 60236, East Java, INDONESIA

E-mails: joannamurti5@gmail.com; rbasuki@peter.petra.ac.id

ABSTRACT

In this creative work, I would like to highlight marriage problems in Indonesia that is faced by people from two different generation through a theatre play. In my script, there is a mother and a daughter as representatives of two different generation. The marriage problem is faced by the daughter, and the mother tries to give solutions based on her own knowledge and values. This creative work focuses on the difference of how the mother and the daughter respond to the marriage problem. I would also point out about how generational gap problem affects the way the mother and the daughter respond to the marriage problems. To put this issue into a form of entertainment, I decided to make a drama play which type of genre is almost similar to our real life.

Keywords: Drama, Generational gap, Marriage problems, Mother-daughter relationship

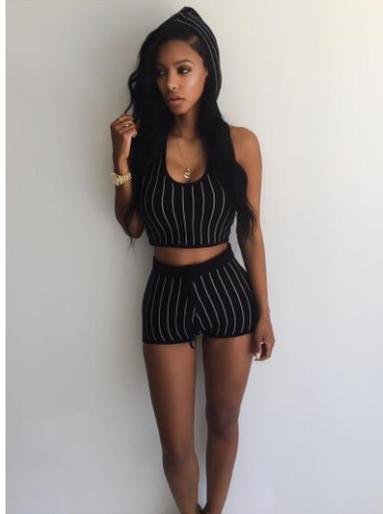
INTRODUCTION

Getting married is surely what most women dream of. To me, marriage is like a lifetime contract where two people commit to stick together and love each other no matter what. Some people agree that marriage is a sacred thing that should only happen once in a lifetime, while some other people believe that marriage can happen more than once depends on the circumstances. I found out that different perspective about marriage often happens between mothers and daughters. I wonder why parents and children, in this case a mother and a daughter, often have different principles or values.

The different principles and values that a mother and a daughter have is actually natural. To me, the most reasonable cause is because there is a generational gap between a mother and a daughter. Generational gap is usually a period of about ten years in difference in age. (Engeman) The different ideas between a mother and a daughter happens because every generation reacts against the one that comes before. (Gordon & Saunders, 2013) For instance, in *Evita*, a play by Francisca Vinybelinda, there is a generational gap between Evita and Mama. In the story, Mama believes that it is not really good for Evita if she is in a relationship with a non-chinese man. However, Evita believes that as long as there is love between Samudra and her, racial problem does not matter. In short, the gap between Evita and Mama is because Evita believes in interracial relationship, but Mama does not. Another point of generational gap between a mother and a daughter can be exposed by seeing the way they grew up. Within approximately ten years or more of age difference between a mother and a daughter, the world has changed quite vastly. In 1960s, for example, women were barely allowed to lead or to have higher education. Hence at that time, women's life is mostly at home, taking care of the house and children. After two decades, in 1980s, women started to have higher education, gender equality was admitted, and wives started to be working mothers instead of stay-at-home mothers. Last but not least, generational gap between a mother and a daughter happens because they live in different environments and society. In a Canadian magazine, an article says that mothers who grew up in the 70s were fighting for respect and equality, so they weren't treated like sex symbols, and young women today feel empowered by their heightened sexuality and barely-there clothing. (Maclean's, 2010) See the fashion trends in 70s and compare them to fashion trends nowadays:



1970s



2016

(source: Google Images)

Society and environment can affect a woman as much as fashion does. As a matter of fact, women's fashion style can change with the help of society. Now, if we replace the fashion with values and principles, generational gap becomes sense.

Generational gap in mother-daughter relationship usually happens in marriage. Generation gap refers to differences in actions, beliefs, interests, and opinions that exist between individuals from different generations. (Williams) For instance, mothers often tell their daughters to have cooking skills, and to be able to take care of the house. It happens because most mothers believe that women have to be excellent in doing their roles as a wife. However, nowadays we can find many working wives, and there are even wives who become the breadwinners of their families. The problem is, mothers believe that a marriage is healthy when the husband becomes the breadwinner, and the wife becomes the house and children's caretaker. However, young women nowadays are fed up with the idea of emancipation and feminism, and also believe in gender equality. To be able to put this problem into an entertaining story, I decided to make a theatre performance. I would like to tickle the audience's awareness while entertaining them.

Theatre is one possible way to trigger people's awareness through the story played on a stage. When it comes to watching a theatre play, we tend to take position in certain characters, and start to compare whatever the characters encounter in the play with any similar situations in our real life. "Theatre is a sophisticated expression of a basic human need – one might call it an instinct – to mimic, to project stories onto ourselves and others, and to create meaning through narrative and metaphor." (Shalwitz, 2011). According to Shalwitz, theatre portrays human life through its story. The characters, who represent people of certain personalities, deliver the messages through their conversations, acts, and appearances. For example, in Murray Schisgal's *The Chinese*, a Chinese-born man named Chester is too embarrassed to admit his true race to the society. Chester's parents are original Chinese, while Chester lives in a Jewish society. Therefore, he feels accepted if he has the same race with the others. Chester's parents, who are Chinese, always speak in Chinese whenever they have conversations, but Chester always forces them to use English. Through Chester's conversations and quarrels with his parents, we can see that Chester suffers from an identity crisis.

The genre of the theatre play would be drama. "Drama" itself comes from a Greek word meaning "a thing that is done." (Gwynn, 2005) based on what Gwynn has stated, I safely assume that drama is the closest portrait of what happens in people's daily lives. We must admit that it is easier for us to watch and judge rather than to do something and evaluate ourselves. Therefore, when people watch a dramatic entertainment, they can see and automatically relate the story with their experiences in real life. Drama works as a carrier of message that the writer wants to deliver to the audience. A large part of morals,

besides, lies in the perception of the fact that every human action is the result of some motive or other; that people differ, but that there are reasons for that difference. Drama (no matter how rudimentary) is a presentation of that fact of actuating motive, is character study, is elementary psychology – a guide to one’s own behavior and to sympathetic understanding of one’s fellows. (Parker, 1912) According to Francis W. Parker, a drama works as a presentation, a character study, and an elementary psychology of human’s morals and actions. Drama means showing people the truth about human’s life in a form of fictional story written by people who want to deliver certain message to the audience.

The story of my creative work is about a 32-year-old woman, Olivia, who enjoys her career as an actress. Four years ago, there was a misunderstanding between Olivia and Mami, her mother, that led her to marrying the son of Mami’s late bestfriend, Andre, with no spark of love at all. Therefore, four years of Olivia’s marriage has been a burden to her. Worse, Mami keeps on asking for grandchildren and also for Olivia to consider about quitting her job, while Andre turns out to be a jobless with huge debt and made Olivia becomes the breadwinner. Olivia’s decision to divorce Andre is disagreed by Mami. Olivia and Mami are involved in a long debate about marriage and divorce. Through the creative work, I would like to find out about how generational gap in mother-daughter relationship affects the way they treat a marriage and what happens when a mother tries to give the best to her daughter but it is seen as the worst thing by the daughter and vice versa.

The purpose of this creative work is to expose generational gap problem that often creates conflict in mother-daughter relationship. Also, this creative work is made to show that generational gap problems happen not because of any generation’s false perspective, but because of the unwillingness to appreciate each other’s views. Significantly, through this creative work, I hope mothers and daughters realize that generational gap is an obscure problem that gives big impact to their relationships. I also hope that mothers are willing to see from their daughters’ perspectives and learn to open their mind to respect their daughters, and that daughters are willing to understand and respect their mothers although their mothers’ perspectives might be against their values.

GENERATION GAP THEORY

For this creative work, I will use Rachel Gall’s developed explanation about Strauss-Howe’s theory of generation. According to Strauss-Howe, people who were born from 1961-1981 belong to the group called Generation X (or Gen X), and people who were born from 1982-2004 belong to a group called Millennial Generation (Millennials). Gall stated that gen X is more independent and self-reliant than Millennials, while Millennials are more optimistic and group-focused. (Gall, 2013) These are the differences between Gen X and Millennials in a table:

GEN X (born 1961-1981)	MILLENNIALS (born 1982-2004)
<p>Independent and self-reliant People who were born in this era do not depend on what others say as long as they know that they are in the right track. They believe that every decision they make have to be based on their own wants and needs, not on what people say.</p>	<p>Optimistic and group-focused People who were born in this era are more optimistic in life. However, the more they live in the society, the more they depend on what people say. Therefore, their decisions are made based on what is seen as “ideal” in the society.</p>
<p>Reactive People born in this era usually respond to a situation or a problem individually based on what they have experienced.</p>	<p>Civic People born in this era respond to a situation or a problem based on what most people like them would do. They need advices from several people who share the same thoughts with them.</p>
<p>Raised with self-discovery People born in this era encountered trials and errors</p>	<p>Raised with strong values</p>

before they finally found certain values to hold.	Because the Gen X people discovered certain values that are held as an ideal, Millennials were born and raised with those values.
Pragmatic solutions and survival People born in this era focus on how they survive through a problem by finding effective and useful solutions	Accomplishment-driven People born in this era usually focus on the result. They are more eager to make the problem ends no matter what.
Sorting the values People born in this era tend to sort the values that has been passed through. They hold the values that are considered right and continue passing them to the next generations.	Building new values Because of the vast development of technology and the globalization, people born in this era tend to build new values.

(Gall, Why are the Generation X and Millennial birth years so muddled?, 2013)

Hereby I provide a breakdown of the theory in Mami's and Olivia's characters:

MAMI	OLIVIA
Independent and self-reliant Mami can carry on her life after Papi passed away. She seldom asks for anyone's advice because she thinks that no one knows how it really feels to walk in her shoes.	Optimistic and group-focused Olivia wants to pursue her career lika what most of her friends do before having children and stuck in the house. She often does what most women in her society normally do.
Reactive Mami read an article about the increasing health risk of women who give birth when they are above 30 years old. She just want Olivia to be like her, having children in a young age.	Civic Olivia learned that women who have children in a young age have more difficulties in pursuing their career and have less opportunity to explore several chances. It does not matter for her eventhough she will not have children.
Raised with self-discovery Mami was raised with unreasonable values given by her parents, so she grew up deciding what is good and bad for herself, even until now.	Raised with strong values Olivia grew up with Mami's values, so she holds it as her values as well. However, after she learnt what most of her friends do and what the nowadays society is like, she began to change her mindset.
Pragmatic solutions and survival In her marriage with Papi, Mami and Papi were always trying to find a solution together whenever they have any disagreement. Mami also tries to find some possible solutions for Olivia's problem.	Accomplishment-driven Olivia disrespects Andre because he cannot do his responsibility to be the breadwinner of the family. Moreover, Andre has a quite huge debt. Olivia does not want to help Andre paying his debts, so she wants to divorce and live freely by herself.
Sorting the values	Building new values

Mami continues passing the values that her parents gave which she hold as true. For example: believing that divorce is a sin and a shame.	Olivia tends to follow what the modern society does, where divorce is a normal thing to do when a marriage is seen as failed.
---	---

CONCEPT OF THE CREATIVE WORK

When I was in the first semester, I did not know anything about writing a play. Then I began to be involved in *Petra Little Theatre* (PLT)'s play productions. I read several scripts, and I also had a chance to watch the rehearsals of the plays, so I finally understood what a play is. I also joined a playwriting class and studied several famous scripts. That was the first time I read Marsha Norman's *Night, Mother* (1983) script. After reading Marsha Norman's *Night, Mother*, I learnt that there is a bit of generation gap problem in it. In Marsha Norman's *Night, Mother*, Jessie Cates, the daughter, wants to commit suicide because her marriage became miserable, her son became a loser, and her career life is failed. Her mother, Thelma Cates, tries to stop her by changing her mind, but Jessie is too desperate to listen to her mother. In the end, Jessie commits suicide and her mother cannot do anything anymore to stop her.

Thoughts about marriage came up when I was having an evening chat with my mother. It turned out that the way I think about marriage is quite different from my mother's way of thinking. My mother sees marriage as a once-in-a-lifetime commitment in which the husband becomes the breadwinner, while the wife is at home nurturing the children and taking care of the house. When I told her that I still want to improve my career even after I get married later, she warned me not to do so. She said that it will make my marriage beomes unhealthy and can cause conflicts between my husband and me or between parents-in-law and me.

Those examples I mentioned above are related to the difference I have mentioned earlier between the Gen X and Millennials. Gen X people focus on pragmatic solutions and survival, so they try to figure out about how to get through a problem. Meanwhile, Millennials focus on the result, which is to finish the problem. Thelma Cates, Jessie's mother, represents the Gen X, so she tries to offer some possibilities to Jessie. Jessie represents the Millennials, so she tries to "finish" her problems by committing suicide. This story inspires me to pay attention at the environment where I live. I realize that I can find similar situation among my friends. Young people nowadays tend to find the easiest solution for their problems and neglect their parents' suggestions. Therefore, this creative work is made from the thoughts and facts about generational gap issue.

The subject of this creative work is: Marriage. I choose this subject because I want to focus on the issue that married couples usually face. The theme of this creative work is: Generational gap in mother-daughter relationship that affects their responses to marriage problems. I choose this theme because I would like to expose about how different generations respond to marriage problems and why there are conflicts between people from different generations.

Synopsis

The story is about a young actress named Olivia who lives separately from Mami, her mother, after she got married 4 years ago. Olivia works as an actress for small roles and lives in Jakarta, while Mami lives in Surabaya. When Mami is preparing some fruit pies to sell, Olivia suddenly visits her and says that she wants to stay in Mami's house a bit longer. When Mami starts to talk about having grandchildren, Olivia feels annoyed because she still wants to be a successful actress. Conflicts starts to grow between Mami and Olivia. Moreover, when Mami asks Olivia to quit her job as an actress, Olivia gets even more upset. It turns out that Andre is actually jobless since last year, and Olivia becomes the breadwinner of the family, and has to help Andre paying his debts. Olivia admits to Mami that she intends to divorce Andre. Mami convinces Olivia not to divorce Andre. She encourages Olivia to accept and walk in her own choice no matter what.

All of a sudden, Joshua comes for the fruit pies. Joshua was Olivia's boyfriend in the highschool. They talk about how each other's life has been. Olivia tries to hide her marriage problem from Joshua while secretly admires Joshua and starts to compare Andre to Joshua in her mind.

Mami tries to clear Olivia's mind and reminds Olivia to stick with her commitment and fulfill her wedding vow. When Olivia finally decides not to divorce with Andre and accepts Mami's suggestion to fix her marriage, Olivia calls Andre only to find that Andre got an accident. Olivia, feeling guilty, quickly buys two tickets to Jakarta. Olivia and Mami rushes to the airport.

CONCLUSION

Through the final project, I came to a conclusion that generational gap between mother-daughter relationships can be solved by being open-minded and willing to understand each other's perspective. If we see Olivia and Mami, their main problem is because they both are trying to convince each other that their points are the rightest. Mami tries to convince Olivia that her decision to divorce Andre is wrong, while Olivia tries to convince Mami that divorce is the only way because her marriage is a mistake. Both of them act like they understand each other, but they do not realize that they are actually judging each other's perspectives.

We cannot avoid generational gap problems, but we can safely sort the good sides from both generation types. Mami has to understand that young women nowadays are not like young women in her era who gets married in young age. Mami supposed to let Olivia decide when to get married and wait for Olivia to prepare herself to step into a long-term commitment. Olivia also has to understand that parents often worry about their children's life. The main solution is to think of what is right rather than believing to what is ideal. No woman should be forced to marry someone and to have children before certain age. What we have to understand and be sure of is whether a woman is ready or not to built a commitment and put her heart into it. In that case, there will be less conflicts although generational gap still exist between mother-daughter relationships.

REFERENCES

- Engeman, S. (n.d.). *Blurtit*. Retrieved June 1, 2016, from relationships.blurtit.com: relationships.blurtit.com/280439/what-is-the-generation-gap-in-marriage
- Gall, R. (2013, February 21). *The Bubble: Gen X Meets Millennial*. Retrieved April 3, 2016, from Socalledmillennial.com: <https://socalledmillennial.com/2013/02/21/the-bubble-genx-meets-millennial/>
- Gall, R. (2013, November 5). *Why are the Generation X and Millennial birth years so muddled?* Retrieved April 3, 2016, from Socalledmillennial.com: <https://socalledmillennial.com/2013/11/05/why-are-the-generation-x-and-millennial-birth-years-so-muddled/>
- Gordon, O., & Saunders, A. (2013, April 15). *Mind the Generation Gap 3: Mother-Daughter Pairs Discuss Their Career Paths*. Retrieved June 1, 2016, from www.telegraph.co.uk/women/mother-tongue/9987603/Mind-the-generation-gap-3-mother-daughter-pairs-discuss-their-career-paths.html
- Gwynn, R. S. (2005). *Drama, A Pocket Anthology*. New York: Longman Publishers.
- Maclean's. (2010, August 16). Outraged Moms, Trashy Daughters. How Did Feminism Come to This? *Maclean's*, p. 51.
- Parker, F. W. (1912). The Social Motive in School Work. In K. C. Jennie Hall, *Drama* (pp. 54-76). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Shalwitz, H. (2011, October 27). *Theatre Washington*. Retrieved August 25, 2015, from [theatrewashington.org: http://theatrewashington.org/content/7-reasons-why-theatre-makes-our-lives-better](http://theatrewashington.org/content/7-reasons-why-theatre-makes-our-lives-better)