Stereotypical or Non-Stereotypical Emotions Expressed by Male and Female Characters in Children's Novel *Matilda*

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ABSTRACT

Stereotypes are considered to be the false images in our head about people or they are also said to be the overgeneralization about people or judging the people on the basis of some defined characteristics of people applying to all who fall under the same category by their race, religion, society, sex, country and so on. These stereotypes are existed not only in people but also found in children's literature. There are certain things which male characters and female characters are found to display in children's literature. Usually, female characters are seen as docile victims who are found to express the tender or mild emotions like love, sympathy, care, calmness. On the other hand, male characters are seen to express anger, hatred, aggression and so on. This research paper intends to analyze the emotions expressed by male and female characters in the novel *Matilda*.

Keywords: stereotypes, gender roles, emotion expression.

Lippmann viewed stereotypes as 'distortions', 'caricatures', 'institutionalized misinformation' and also referred them as 'pictures in our head' in his book *Public Opinion* published in 1922 (Silvert). It is opined that Lippmann used the term 'stereotype' which refers to the typical image that comes in mind when thinking about a certain social group (John F. Dovidio). It is also observed that stereotyping was conceptualized as faulty thought process in earlier research done on stereotypes whereas recent research highlights he functional and dynamics aspects of stereotypes. As stated by Hilton and von Hippel, stereotypes are cognitive schemas used by social perceivers to process information about others (John F. Dovidio). As stated in the study done by Forrest LaViolette and K.H. Silvert that Psychologists have presented that people have clear cut notions of how a burglar, a bootlegger, a banker, a doctor and so on look like. During 1920, the empiricists viewed stereotypes in relation to attitudes and thus debunked the association of stereotypes with individuals and their dispositions (Silvert). According to Sherif and Cantril, stereotypes are considered as "attitudes composed bodily and uncritically without any basis in experience or knowledge" (Silvert). Thus, Sherif's emphasis is similar to Lippmann's point of view that stereotypes do not have any basis in experience or knowledge of the person. It might mean that people form the ideas about others without knowing them personally or actually. They form the notions about other people before knowing them, it means they judge the people on the basis of some overgeneralize conceptions defined by putting them in certain categories such as their sex, religion, country, age and so on. Thus,

> Stereotyping is a particular form of social typing involving rigidly held beliefs that are frequently based on incomplete or erroneous information. Stereotyping involves generalizing the identifying characteristics of groups (such as Latinos, African Americans, women, gay people, or obese people) and applying those generalizations to individual members of the group. Common examples of stereotyping include such widespread notions, held at various points in time, that Italian people are passionate, Irish people fight and drink, women are very emotional, and obese people are jolly (Stereotyping and the self-fulfilling prophecy).

Gender schema theory (Bern and Martin and Halverson quoted in Romatowskf) (Romatowskf) social cognitive theory (Bussy and Bandura quoted in Romatowskf) (Romatowskf) advocated that children develop their thinking and understand about difference between male and female during their early childhood. It should be noted that during their early childhood, children construct their gender schema which is considered to be an organized pattern of behavior. This gender schema helps children to sort information about world with regard to gender (Romatowskf). Additionally, children begin to understand a concept about what it means to be a male or a female and they analyze how society classifies people and defines the role they require to play according to their gender. Romatowskf further highlights that children also develop gender appropriate attitude which is reflected in their choices of toys, activities and their selection of occupational roles. Thus, this gender stereotypic attitudes of children limit their choices, interests and abilities (Romatowskf). The role of children's literature in forming and framing children's mindsets with regard to gender may also impact children's thinking adversely. According to Peterson and Lach, Children's literature offers girls and boys the principles of masculinity and femininity (Mykol C. Hamilton). This is linked to St. Peter's idea that children's literature offers socially sanctioned behavioral models to children which they may imitate (Mykol C. Hamilton). It is to be noted that the research done on gender biases presented in children's literature have focused on picture books meant for younger children. the reason behind this is that children start to distinguish sexes and form gender stereotypes between three to five years (Powlishta, Sebrin and Moller quoted in Mykil C. Hamilton) (Mykol C. Hamilton). The gender roles and numbers of male and female characters portrayed in books probably have adverse effects on children's gender role development and self-image (Mykol C. Hamilton). Thus, it may be correct to say that children's literature not only generates stereotypes in it but also instill these stereotypes in children. However, these stereotypes may be the representative of limited roles women have to play in children's literature in relation to feminine tasks assigned for women. Not only that, these stereotypes may also represent the limited occupational roles assigned for females. Moreover, these stereotypes may also lead female characters to acquire the secondary roles by being passive and letting male characters to take action in their hands. The research made on stereotypes has also shown that the female characters are also limited to express certain tender emotions in children's literature whereas male characters are supposed to express harsh emotions like anger, disgust, guilt and contempt more as compared with females (Marquez). In addition to that, a study by Plant, et. al reflected that women are seen to experience and express more emotions which include sadness, fear and sympathy; while men experience and express the emotions like pride and anger more often (Plant et. al quoted in Marquez) (Marquez). This research paper tries to see if the female characters and male characters are bound to express their emotions stereotypically in children's novel *Matilda*. In order to check the stereotypical emotions presented in the novel *Matilda*, the content of the text is analyzed. Some of the words and phrases which indicate certain emotions or linked with certain emotions are employed to check the emotions expressed by some of the major male and female characters presented in the novel *Matilda*. This research papers tries to find if female characters or any female character is bound to express the stereotypical emotions i.e., tender emotions like love, sympathy, shyness and so on. Moreover, this research paper also attempts to see if male characters are also limited to express the emotions like anger, envy etc.

Before analyzing the emotions expressed by male and female characters in the novel *Matilda*, it is important to throw the light on the storyline of the novel *Matilda*. The novel *Matilda* was penned by the famous British writer Roald Dahl in 1988 (McKnight). The story of the novel revolves around the leading female character Matilda Wormwood- a five-year-old girl. Matilda Wormwood is an extra ordinary child possessing tremendous intelligence. She is capable of reading, writing, solving difficult sums, multiplying long amounts without the help of a calculator at the age of five. Her intelligence is intensified in her reading of enormous children's books available in public library. She also reads the books meant for adults. This intelligent and extra ordinary child is not encouraged or appreciated by her parents- Mr Wormwood and Mrs Wormwood. The ignorant parents humiliate Matilda and her intelligence just because she is a girl child. Matilda is a sort of girl who does not sit back crying in a corner. She retaliates her father every time he insults and humiliates Matilda. Matilda teaches a lesson to her father when he tears up her book. Her father humiliates her when Matilda does long sum of her father's total earning of a day without the help of a pen and paper. The gender biased father thinks that little girls should be seen and not heard. He also thinks that girls should not take interest in business matters. On the other hand, Matilda's mother Mrs Wormwood does not stand by Matilda as she takes the side of her husband whenever

he underestimates and humiliates Matilda. Mrs Wormwood thinks that being a girl Matilda should focus on her looks and should not read books. The only person who identifies extraordinary features of Matilda is her teacher Miss Honey. Miss Honey makes efforts to do something for this intelligent child. She tries to convince the headmistress of the school- Miss Trunchbull to promote Matilda into higher grades with older children. Miss Trunchbull is a very oppressive headmistress who is not only gender biased but also hates children so she gives them bizarre punishment. Miss Trunchbull does not allow Matilda to study with older children in higher grade. Miss Trunchbull is also an aunt of Miss Honey. Miss Trunchbull has been exploiting her niece from her childhood. The extra ordinary child Matilda takes the action in her hands and she not only saves her loving teacher Miss Honey from her oppressive aunt- Miss Trunchbull but also saves herself from her parents who become hurdle in her growth by their gender biased attitude.

From the above mentioned storyline, it is indicated that Matilda falls under the struggle with her parents and her headmistress. It means the major emotions which might be reflected either by male or female characters might be 'anger', 'disgust', 'pride', 'sadness', 'guilt' etc. According to personality and infant research, there are basic twelve emotions such as interest, joy, surprise, sadness, anger, disgust, contempt, fear, shame, shyness, awe and guilt whereas the other complex emotions are formed on the basis of the combination of these twelve emotions (Marquez). The study done by Marquez has shown that males and females adhere to or limited to express stereotypical emotions. In particular, Marquez found that there is a male cluster of emotions which includes anger, disgust, contempt and guilt (Marquez). It means that male characters are likely to express these emotions in children's books more as compared with female characters. On the other hand, female characters are likely to express sadness, fear, shame and shyness more as compared with male characters (Marquez). Furthermore, the emotions like joy, surprise, awe and interests are considered to be gender neutral emotions which means that these are expressed by male and female equally across gender (Marquez). This paper is an attempt to see if the male and female characters in *Matilda* are also bound to express emotions based on their gender or if the male and female characters express gender stereotypical emotions or not. However, all twelve basic emotions are not analyzed for this research paper. This paper analyzes some of the emotions which are enormously expressed by a particular male or female character. Or this paper will only highlight the emotion which expresses the personality of a certain character portrayed in the novel *Matilda*. The language is a vital tool to find the emotion expressed by a particular character with the help of words or a group of words. The character who expresses certain emotions are analyzed one by one as under:

1. EMOTIONS EXPRESSED BY A MALE CHARACTER MR WORMWOOD/ MATILDA'S FATHER ALONG WITH THE PAGE NUMBERS

1.1 Anger

'red spots appeared' (pg.19), 'shouted' (pg.19,54), 'who the heck' (pg.19), 'dangerous' (pg.19), 'a rakish daring look' (pg.24), 'glare' (pg.27), 'face was as dark as thunder' (pg.32), 'scare' pg.32), 'infuriated' (pg.32), 'anger was intensified' (pg.32), 'frightening suddenness' (pg.35), 'how dare she' (pg.35), 'flare up' (pg.44), 'shut up' (pg.48,51), 'seemed to stiffen' (pg.48), 'face was beginning to go dark red' (pg.48), 'shouted' (pg.48, 49,93), snapped (pg.51), yelled (pg.56).

1.2 Disgust

(call his daughter) 'a noisy chatterbox' (pg.4), (call his daughter) 'ignorant little twit' (pg.16), 'his speech was never delicate' (pg.16), (call his daughter) 'stupid' (pg.16), 'dishonest' (pg.17,19), 'cheating' (pg. 17,19), 'disgusting' (pg.19), 'dirty money' (pg.19), 'ignorant little squirt' (pg. 19), 'beastly to her' (pg.23), 'like gangsters' (pg.24), 'bullying' (pg.32), 'filth' (pg.34), 'ripping the pages out' (pg.35), 'poisonous parent' (pg. 35),

'beastly' (pg. 42), 'cocky and unbearable' (pg.43), 'ignoring Matilda' (pg.44), 'tricks to diddle the customer' (Pg.46), 'a real wreck' (pg.46), 'don't butt in' (pg.47), 'you little cheat' (pg.48), 'a cheat and a liar' (pg.49), 'foulness' (pg.49), 'a bunch of crooks' (pg.228), 'receiver of stolen cars' (pg.228).

1.3 Contempt

'relieved' (pg. 41), 'a most successful day' (pg.44), 'a lot richer' (pg.44), 'a tidy profit' (pg.44).

1.4 Fear

'lose my hair?' (pg.58), 'wailed' (pg.58).

2. EMOTIONS EXPRESSED BY A FEMALE CHARACTER- MATILDA WORMWOOD

2.1 Interest

'interesting' (pg.5), 'demands a book' (pg.6), 'read my book' (pg.21).

2..2 Sadness

'sadly' (pg.10).

2.3 Anger

'feel anger boiling up' (pg.22), 'resented' (pg.23), 'anger inside her went on boiling' (pg.23), 'shut up you nut' (pg. 39), 'beginning to see red' (pg.156), 'screamed' (pg.157), 'shouted' (pg.158), 'getting angrier' (pg.158), 'unbearably angry' (pg.158), 'bound to explode' (pg.158), 'glared' (pg.158), 'got so angry' (pg.166).

2.4 Guilt

'wrong to hate parents' (pg.22).

2.5 Shyness

'Reluctantly' (pg.73), 'slowly' (pg.73), 'nervously' (pg.73).

2.6 Kindness

'quiet' (pg.84,95), 'gentle' (pg.84), 'sensible' (pg.95), 'please' (pg.164,201,229).

2.7 Surprise

'mesmerized' (pg.110), 'fascinated' (pg.122), 'Am I really?' (pg.174), 'wondered' (pg.176), 'wonder' (pg.176), 'bemused' (pg.181), 'unbelievable' (pg.184), 'very strange' (pg.184), 'open-mouthed' (pg.228).

2.8 Calmness

'still' (pg.162), 'total calmness' (pg.162), 'quiet' (pg.164), 'quietly' (pg.170), 'kept silent' (pg.190).

3. EMOTIONS EXPRESSED BY A FEMALE CHARACTER- MRS WORMWOOD

3.1 Disgust

(calls her daughter) 'a noisy chatterbox' (pg.4), 'doesn't really care' (pg.10), 'nasty mouth shut' (pg.20), 'beastly to her (daughter)' (pg.23), 'beastly to her/ daughter' (pg.43).

3.2 Fear

'clutching her husband' (pg. 42), 'save us! The mother screamed' (pg. 42), 'let out a scream' (pg.54), 'shrieking' (pg.55), 'quivering' (pg.55), 'shrieked' (pg.56).

3.3 Anger

'glare' (pg.88).

4. EMOTIONS EXPRESSED BY A FEMALE CHARACTER MISS TRUNCHBULL

4.1 Disgust

'little stinkers' (pg.77), 'little brat' (pg.79,121), 'a real wart' (pg.79), 'little brute' (pg.80), 'little beast' (pg.81), 'a little viper' (pg.83), 'absolute torture' (pg.103), 'picked him up by one arm' (pg.104), 'filthy pigtails' (pg.108), 'foul carbuncle' (pg.114), 'poisonous pustule' (pg.114), 'little gumboil' (pg.114), 'little blister' (pg.114), 'nauseating little warts' (pg.135), 'you blister' (pg.136), 'filthy' (pg.136), 'a piece of filth' (pg.138), 'ignorant little slug' (pg.142), ' witless weed' (pg.142), 'an ass' (pg.145), 'hatred' (pg.155), 'filthy little maggot' (pg.155), 'clotted carbuncle' (pg.162), 'blithering idiot' (pg.211), 'festering gumboil' (pg.211), 'bursting blister' (pg.212), 'moth- eaten maggot' (pg.212).

4.2 Anger

'a gigantic holy terror' (pg.61), 'a fierce tyrannical monster' (pg.61), 'aura of menace' (pg.61), 'dangerous' (pg.61), 'snorting' (pg.61), 'enraged rhinoceros' (pg.61), 'boomed' (pg.76,83,114,117,210), 'dangerous voice' (pg.76), 'an obstinate chin' (pg.77), 'a cruel mouth' (pg.77), 'barked' (pg.79,108,112,135,136,142,144,146,155), 'shouted' (pg.79,81,82,112,114,121,122,123,145,148,150,152,157,196,210,211,212), 'snorted'

(pg.80,82,135,140,141,144), 'red-necked giant' (pg.83), 'menacing strides' (pg.106), 'shouting' (pg.106,149,156), 'bellowed' (pg.108,136,137,138,142,144,160), 'very dangerous' (pg.112), 'screamed' (pg.114,126), 'banging her thigh' (pg. 121), 'yelling' (pg.122), 'glaring' (pg.123), 'yelled' (pg.124,158,214), 'turning redder' (pg.124), 'going to kill him' (pg.124), 'color of molten lava' (pg.127), 'fury' (pg.127,160), 'glared' (pg.127,163), 'marched off' (pg.127), 'danger' (pg.140), 'dangerous glittering eyes' (pg.140), 'thundered' (pg.141), 'snapped' (pg.145,227), 'furious' (pg.155), 'fires of fury' (pg.155), 'a rage' (pg.155), 'flecks of froth' (pg.156), 'losing her cool' (pg.156), 'roared back' (pg.157), 'roared' (pg.158,161,162,163), 'a yell' (pg.160), 'marched' (pg.163), 'exploded' (pg.196).

4.3 Pride

'proud of' (pg.104).

4.4 Fear

'face had turned white' (pg.216), 'fallen down' (pg.217).

5. EMOTIONS EXPRESSED BY A FEMALE CHARACTER MISS HONEY

5.1 Sympathy/ love/ kindness

'mild' (pg.60), 'quiet' (pg.60), 'never raised her voice' (pg.60), 'being adored' (pg.61), 'please' (pg.64,86,143,147,148,201), 'quietly' (pg.66), 'politely' (pg.66,67), 'said softly' (pg.68), 'smiled' (pg.73,202), 'said softly' (pg.83,199,229), 'begged' (pg.148), 'said quietly' (pg.150), 'smiling' (pg.195,198,224), 'silent' (pg.210).

5.2 Fear

'quivery' (pg.69), 'afraid' (pg.71,183,192,229), 'lack the courage' (pg.189), 'cowed' (pg.193), 'dominated' (pg.193,194), 'become her slave' (pg.193), 'too terrified' (pg.193), 'lived in fear' (pg.193), 'hadn't the courage' (pg.195), 'terrified' (pg.200).

5.3 Surprise

'startled' (pg.72), 'astounded' (pg. 75), 'mouth dropped open' (pg.169), 'eyes stretched so wide' (pg.169), 'shock' (pg.169), 'don't believe' (pg.170), 'fascinating' (pg.186), 'surprisingly' (pg.200).

5.4 Shyness/ shame

'blushed' (pg. 73), 'a brilliant scarlet' (pg.73), 'embarrassed' (pg.191), 'hesitating' (pg.191), 'shy' (pg.192), 'retiring' (pg.192).

5.5 Anger

'began to lose patience' (pg.88), 'lose her temper' (pg.93).

5.6 Guilt

'very sorry' (pg.188).

CONCLUSION

The results found that firstly, the male character Mr Wormwood expresses the emotions like anger and disgust more which means that he follows the stereotypical canon of emotions that being a male he has to express anger and disgust more rather than expressing tender emotions like love, sympathy, kindness, fear, guilt and so on. Secondly, a female character Matilda Wormwood expresses either male gender emotions or gender neutral emotions more rather than adhering to stereotypical expression of emotions relevant to female gender. Matilda is seen to express anger and surprise abundantly. The third character Mrs Wormwood expresses disgust and fear equally which means she falls under the category of expressing male- female emotions expressions equally. The next character Miss Trunchbull is prolific is expressing male gender emotions enormously. She expresses the emotions like anger and disgust extensively. Lastly, Miss Honey is the only character who is bound to express the emotions based on her gender. She expresses the stereotypical emotions like kindness, love, sympathy, fear, shyness, shame and so on. It is to be noted that where it comes to express emotions out of four female characters such as Matilda Wormwood, Mrs Wormwood, Miss Trunchbull and Miss Honey, two females such as Matilda and Miss Trunchbull do not conform with female gender in expressing stereotypical emotions. On the other hand, Mrs Wormwood is seen to express male and female gender emotions equally. Lastly, Miss Honey is the only female character who conforms with her gender in expressing emotions like love, fear, guilt, sympathy and shyness. Similar is the case with male gender. Mr Wormwood cannot come out from the stereotypical image of a male character expressing male gender emotions more. Overall, it is to be noted that the female like Matilda and Miss Trunchbull break the boundaries of expressing the emotions and open new horizons to express male dominated emotions usually or widely presented in children's books.

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