

Analysis of symbolism in zootopia movie

Lambok Hermanto Sihombing^{1*}, Deby Shinta², Eglantino Remmy³, Rivaldo Christian⁴

¹⁻⁴Department of Communication, President University, Jababeka, Indonesia

Correspondence: lambok.president@gmail.com

Abstract

Movies permeate every aspect of people's life. Movies are typically viewed as a kind of entertainment or an escape from reality. However, certain films include hidden messages. This study examines the animal symbolism in the movie Zootopia. The film exemplifies how the animal characters are symbolically utilized throughout the film and how it reflects on contemporary situations. Animal qualities described in the movie Zootopia indicate a cultural custom already accepted by civilization. After comparing how the animals in the movie are portrayed to how they are depicted in real life through the culture used by the movie, the authors see that the animals in the movies are portrayed similarly to how they are portrayed in the culture of the United States.

Keywords: animal, culture, movie, symbolism

Introduction

Animal symbolism reflects how humans define and recognize the features of animals they have encountered. The purpose of the symbolism is to distinguish animal-like features that are relatable and recognizable in humans. Numerous cultures employ animals as symbols for something. Doves are frequently associated with love and passion, but lions are commonly portrayed as fierce, strong, and fearless. Animal symbolism is frequently employed to define the behavior and progression of a movie character. Even though different persons may have created them, it is not uncommon to see the same animal behavior portrayed in the film. Zootopia is one of the examples of animal symbolism that displays a diverse character with recognizable and distinguishable behavior.

The use of symbols in value cocreation to better understand how actors communicate, engage, and reconcile perspectives as they integrate and exchange resources to create value for themselves and others (Akaka et al., 2014). Based on a service ecosystems approach to value cocreation, we provide a conceptual framework that highlights diverse perceptions of value and explains how to value cocreation occurs from the integration of resources and interactions between numerous actors. We claim that symbols direct actors to adopt particular behaviors that enable the cocreation of shared meanings, which

aid actors in determining the worth of future encounters. Thus, symbols facilitate the coordination of interaction, exchange of information, integration of resources, and assessment of value among players. As supporting evidence for the significance of symbols in value cocreation, we present an empirical illustration of our conceptual framework and suggest future research topics.

The history of symbolism began as a movement at the start of the 1980s. According to Robert Goldwater's 2018 reissue of his book *Symbolism*, symbolism can be viewed as part of philosophical idealism in opposition to positivist, scientific attitudes that infected artwork and literature. With time, however, symbolism has come to be seen as a literary device that employs symbols such as marks, locations, animals, phrases, characters, and abstract concepts to reflect a deeper meaning than the literal one. The idea of symbolism is not limited to literature; it permeates all aspects of our lives. For instance, red and white in the Indonesian national flag, where red denotes valor and white represents holiness, also reflect the human body and soul, complementing and completing one another. Numerous examples of symbolism include logos, symbols, movie animals, and many others. Thus, the sights and texts employed as symbolism correspond to the concepts, companies, or feelings intended to be communicated (Goldwater, 2018). There have been significant advancements in the animation sector of the film business due to the development of technology over time. The cartoon is a kind of movie that both adults and children alike. Cartoons provide pleasure and instruction through the moral lessons or actions of the characters. *Zootopia* is one of the currently popular animated films. Walt Disney Animation Studios produces and Walt Disney Pictures distributes this picture. *Zootopia* is the 55th animated feature film produced by Disney and was directed by Byron Howard and Rich Moore.

Zootopia is about animal life in which their ancestors have resolved a dichotomous problem by applying natural rules, notably equality, specifically the equality between a predator and prey. In other words, the Republic of *Zootopia* no longer uses the food chain concept for animals. Everyone is tranquil, secure, content, and highly educated (The Walt Disney Company, n.d.).

In *Zootopia*, predators and prey (carnivores and herbivores) live in perfect peace in a huge city. The goal is to establish a safe paradise where all animals can coexist and live, not as food and nourishment but as creatures who can aid one another in building a magnificent society. All the characters in *Zootopia* are anthropomorphic, meaning that all animals have qualities, emotions, and goals that closely resemble those of humans. The qualities are also extended to their daily activities and occupations, as seen in the film, in which even herbivores might transform into something different.

Zootopia depicts a civilization in which it is thought that animal instincts have been suppressed. In instances, animals engage in unusual vocations

depending on their instincts and features. Judy Hopps, the primary character, is a bunny who aspires to become a police officer. Given that she is a rabbit, the function of a police officer may seem odd. However, Zootopia demonstrates that it may operate regardless of animal species. Judy Hopps eventually became a police officer via pure drive and perseverance. She desires to contribute to society and rejects the thought of being a farmer and assisting her parents (Brian Truitt, 2016).

The authors view that the utopia of Zootopia will not exist forever after Judy Hopps gets elected to the police office force. Herbivores are disappearing, while predators are getting more vicious and aggressive. It could result in complications, as there may be confrontations, and their actions may cause difficulties. These activities may generate a rift amongst species, leading to the demise of Zootopia as a utopia. As a member of the police force, Judy Hopps is tasked with investigating and preventing societal fractures. Nick Wilde, a cunning fox and con artist assisted Officer Judy in solving the case and aiding her in her mission. Nick's past was horrible, as he was bullied and beaten for being the only predator and fox in his class. Fox has been rated the vilest and untrustworthy mammal species in the Zootopia universe. Nick and Judy become closest friends as their investigation into Zootopia and what happened on the opposite side of the earth from where they currently reside leads them to a new question.

Religious, honest, tolerance, disciplined, hard work, creative, independent, democratic, curiosity, national spirit, love for the country, respect for achievement, friendly or communicative, love to read, care for the environment, social care, and responsibility are among the 18 character values found in the film Zootopia. Judy, the primary character of the film Zootopia, is a rabbit with great perseverance and a strong desire to realize her ambition of becoming a police officer in the urban area of Zootopia, but others frequently underestimate her. Judy Hopps has an unyielding nature, is tenacious, confident, always passionate, helpful, compassionate, loving, and responsible, and she strives to perform each task to the best of her ability. Nick Wilde Nick was initially a crafty, self-centered fox and a skilled con artist who never paid taxes. After handling the matter with Judy, Nick reveals his genuine care, intelligence, and resourcefulness. Bellwether initially appears gentle and innocent, and he always supports Judy. However, he also seems to have played a significant role in the disappearance of fourteen animals in Zootopia. He is vindictive and contradictory. The chairman of Bogo is aggressive and forceful. Initially, he doubts Judy's ability as a police officer, but he has a nice character and consistently offers Judy a second chance. As a child, Gideon Gray was impolite and enjoyed bullying Judy. But as he matured, he became a diligent, friendly fox. He expressed regret to Judy for all the errors he had committed as a child.

The film's values can be divided into three categories. First, the virtues that Judy Hopps already possesses and develops well in her films including hard work, discipline, responsibility, creativity, respect for achievement, democracy, patriotism, curiosity, honesty, social concern, reading enjoyment, and sociability. Second, the virtues that Judy Hopps already possessed, like as independence and peace, did not grow effectively in the films. Thirdly, Judy Hopps lacks value at the beginning of the film. She learned tolerance, compassion, environmental stewardship, and cooperation as she matured. The values mentioned in Judy Hopps's categorization emphasize soft skills because they are generated and developed via experiences, circumstances, and wills.

Even though "Zootopia" is merely an animated fable or cartoon film that depicts animal creatures acting and behaving like people, it teaches a great deal about the significance of character qualities through conversation lines and sequences showcasing the characters. The animated film Zootopia can be used as an example, particularly about the significance of teamwork, responsibility, hard effort, and the necessity of avoiding discrimination.

Even though Zootopia is a Disney film intended for children, real-world themes, such as political issues, are depicted throughout the film. Zootopia also includes statements widely used in our society to deflect blame in conversations about racism and other biases, such as "well, I didn't mean to," "don't be too sensitive," and others. This film portrays how some groups of people are treated, such as how Judy, the main character, is handled despite graduating at the top of her class: she is deemed unfit for the post of police officer because she is a rabbit. Bunnies are only believed to be good at farming.

Little Chicken is another film with animal characters. Little Chicken is a 3D computer-animated science fiction comedy film starring Little Chicken, who believes the sky is falling after being struck by a "piece of the sky." However, because he cannot locate the piece of sky that struck him, he is embarrassed by the townspeople and bullied by the school bullies. A year later, Little attempts to make amends by joining the baseball club, contributing to the team's victory in a vital game. After the game, he is again struck on the head by "a piece of the sky" at night, and he eventually discovers that the "piece of the sky" is a UFO panel.

After discovering the panel from the UFO, Little Chicken tries to warn the town's citizens about the aliens. However, the aliens manage to escape, but they leave behind an orange alien child named Kirby. After a while, the aliens return, and it appears they are attempting to invade the town, but they are searching for Kirby. It turns out that the aliens were merely visiting earth and happened across the settlement in search of acorns. It also discloses that the alien family's ship has a cracked camouflage panel that "might fall on someone's head." After explaining everything, the regretful aliens return everything to normal, and everyone is grateful to Little Chicken for his efforts to save the town.

When compared to Zootopia, Little Chicken also uses animal symbolism. However, whereas Zootopia uses symbolisms such as the lion is the leader of the city and the fox being a thief, Little Chicken focuses more on portraying the people's personalities and the town's normal environment, which can be seen as a parallel to our society, especially in the Indonesian context. This research focused on the stereotypes and symbolism depicted throughout the film. Hence, the authors formulated one research question into:

How do animals function as symbols throughout the film? How does this relate to the challenges that are occurring today?

To analyse the symbolism in Zootopia movie, the authors applied Charles Sanders Peirce's theory and Symbolism concept from any supporting sources. Charles Sanders Peirce described three primary components of semiosis:

- a. *A sign can be interpreted as giving information about something else. A sign is not always symbolic, linguistic, or artificial.*
- b. *An Object is the topic of both a sign and an interpreter. It can become anything imaginable or debatable, such as an object, event, or connection. Accurately, the object is the universe of discourse to which the partial or particular object belongs.*
- c. *An Interpretant is the sign's specific meaning, a type of concept that the sign's truthfulness implies. The interpretant is a sign of the object and the "predecessor" of the interpretant (5).*

The definitions of animal characteristics in the film Zootopia indicate a cultural heritage already accepted by society. We can associate preconceptions and different qualities with certain animal species.

Meanwhile, Gilman (1985) states that humans can create an image of things based on fear and pride. People label others to distinguish them from themselves; this is why they form stereotypes. Two issues may result from stereotyping, including inaccurate generalizations about particular groups and incorrect evaluations of individuals based on the inferences (Robinson & Grilman, 1986).

Why are animals used so frequently as symbols? Anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss stated in his 1963 work on totemism that animals are selected as totems not because they are edible but because they are "excellent to contemplate (with)." In other words, animals have a tremendous deal of symbolic potential. According to Lévi-Strauss, they are particularly suitable for symbolizing social classifications such as clans and other features of kinship networks. Ancient and traditional civilizations viewed animals as closely related to humans. Therefore it was natural for them to be included in human symbolic hierarchies and used to symbolize human behaviors, wants, and dreams. But can we choose specific animals to represent certain concepts? Symbols, on the one hand, are arbitrary. Nothing in the stars and stripes of the American flag

represents liberty or democracy. However, the flag's history has been imbued with these symbolic meanings, making them appear natural today. In the case of animals, there is typically a kernel of truth at the heart of the animal's symbolic connection, some component of its biology or behavior that leads people to interpret it in a certain way. In Western traditions, cats represent bad luck, evil, or witchcraft. Why was the cat picked instead of, say, the dog? Tells us something about cats (they are notoriously nocturnal, solitary, and make a bloodcurdling scream when fighting) and the people in cultures that utilize cats in this manner. Frequently, what we observe in a private animal is evident: Ants often represent teamwork and discipline, deer grace and sensitivity, snakes because of their capacity to shed and regrow skin, and rabbits speed. Some animals, such as bulls, goats, and apes, are believed to symbolize sexuality due to their behavior or the size of their genitalia; bunnies and hares represent female sexuality (because of their well-known fertility).

Based on the research, many Native American tribes, bears are believed to most closely resemble humans due to their bipedal gait and rumored uncontrollable emotions. Native American tribes utilize bears to represent contemplation since they are lonely and hibernate alone during the winter. Due to their economic significance, other creatures significant to Native peoples have acquired symbolic value. For instance, Plains Indians utilized bison for food, housing, clothing, trading items, and other purposes, so bison represented life. Sociologist Colin Jerolmack, in a comprehensive examination of the symbolic properties of the pigeon (2007), adds that pigeons tend to mate forever. It makes pigeons a good emblem of fidelity and eternal love; thus, they're a preferred animal to be utilized in fertility magic. Pigeons or doves (the same species) once symbolized Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, and Kamadeva, the Hindu goddess. Pigeons and doves have been used for thousands of years to deliver messages. Because of this use, the biblical tale of the flood described within the Book of Genesis features a dove carrying the news to Noah (in the shape of an olive branch) that the deluge is over, which implies that the dry ground has appeared. Since then, Christians have associated the dove with deliverance and God's pardon. Due to their peaceful natures and white plumage, they represent peace. Ironically, Jerolmack notes that doves have inherited the positive connotations indicated here.

In contrast, pigeons now symbolize dirt due to their propensity to thrive in urban areas and feed on human waste. Another bird, the sparrow, has been subject to many metaphorical connections. The English sparrow was transported to the vicinity of the United States in the mid-to-late nineteenth century to regulate a variety of worms that had begun infesting American trees. The sparrows were so successful that they began to outcompete native species. Some experts viewed them as a threat, while bird lovers supported them.

Based on the research, numerous jurisdictions enacted legislation encouraging the killing of sparrows and even instituted bounty schemes that urged children to kill them in large quantities. Sociologists Gary Alan Fine and Lazaros Christoforides (1991) assert in their article on the so-called "great sparrow wars" that one reason for the issue's significance was that it arose at a time when Americans were growing increasingly concerned about high rates of immigration from southern and eastern Europe and Asia. These new immigrants posed a threat to native-born Americans. Therefore the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the time was used to stoke anti-sparrow fervor, with sparrows standing in for foreign and rowdy criminals. Like pigeons and doves, rabbits (and hares) are accustomed to signifying fertility and libido, certainly not at monogamy. In the rites, myths, and symbols of ancient Greece and Rome, rabbits were associated with sexuality, particularly female sexuality and fertility, as well as the goddess of childbirth, Diana. Frequently, rabbits were used in love spells, as aphrodisiacs, and to treat infertility. In Eastern civilizations, Mesoamerica, ancient Europe, the Arab cultures, and Africa, the rabbit is also associated with the moon, which is itself associated with fertility and childbearing; lunar deities are sometimes depicted as or attired as a rabbit or hare. Due to their fertility, rabbits are also featured in myths and ceremonies to signify rebirth, which explains the rabbit's significance within the Easter symbols.

Methods

This study utilized the analysis of Peirce's semiotic theory to examine the meaning and depiction of symbolism in Zootopia's animal characters. The hypothesis aids the research in identifying indicators that the animals exhibit throughout the film's sequences. The sign can be described as the subjugating parts of the object. There will be signals if action or reaction is emanating from the thing. Objects are closely related to signs because they are the source of the behaviors that lead to the signs used to identify the objects. Based on the premise, we used the sequences from the 2016 film "Zootopia" as the basis for our research. We researched foxes and rabbits. These animals play the most crucial role, which can be expressed by numerous indicators depending on their natural animal behavior. Therefore, we advise researching these two species as a source of information regarding the symbolism and representation processes.

This investigation applied analysis to action. The data sources included, first and foremost, the activities, reactions, and behaviors of the animals in the film. Second, the symbolic representation of the animal throughout the world's cultures. We analyzed why animals behave in certain ways and from which cultures these habits originate. In the study, we gathered observational data to depict the symbolism of Zootopia's animals in the investigated film. We began

by seeing the movie and attempting to identify the eight animals based on the sequences in which they appear. Then, we identified the signs made by the animals and drew a connection between their actions and behavior and the animal symbolism reflected in numerous civilizations.

Results and Discussion

The Zootopia films feature numerous species of animals. The creation of these creatures is based on a society's comprehension of a particular culture and knowledge. The conversation will begin by discussing Nick Wilde (Fox) and Judy Hopps (Disney) sequences from the film Zootopia (Rabbit). The researcher will examine a scene, dialogue, or speech featuring Nick Wilde and Judy Hoppys from the movie "Zootopia," released on February 17, 2016. Nick Wilde (fox) will come first, followed by Judy Hopps (rabbit).

Mikos (2013) defines representation as "the construction of meaning through language." The procedure could be personal. However, some aspects contribute to the meaning. Representation is how individuals of a culture construct meaning through communication. The fox has been used as a symbol in cultures, art, and literature (Mikos, 2013). Through countless depictions, society acknowledges foxes as intelligent animals; the fox has represented the following:



1. Cleverness

Kristen M. Stanton (2021) argued that foxes are considered intelligent creatures. One of the reasons for this perception is the foxes' ability to evade hunters who pursue them for their fur. In the film, Nick Wilde is portrayed as a sly fox who takes advantage of others for financial gains, such as when he conned Judy Hopps into buying him a jumbo pop for his "son," who is later revealed to be his accomplice. The jumbo pop was later melted down and made into smaller "pawpsicles" that he sells to lemming businessmen, and the sticks are sold to a mouse construction crew in little Rodentia (Stanton, 2021).

(A dialogue of Nick Wilde and Finnick deceiving individuals into believing they are a real father and son combination to get materials for their hustling business).

00:18:45,680 --> 00:18:47,220

I'm not looking for any trouble either, Sir.

00:18:47,320 --> 00:18:50,449

I simply want to buy a Jumbo Pop...

00:18:50,600 --> 00:18:52,090

for my little boy.

00:18:56,520 --> 00:18:58,887

You want the red or the blue, pal?

00:19:11,840 --> 00:19:15,606

*There are. It's just, my boy,
this goofy little stinker...*

00:19:15,800 --> 00:19:18,770

He loves all things elephant.

Wants to be one when he grows up.

00:19:19,560 --> 00:19:20,846

Is that adorable?

00:19:22,480 --> 00:19:25,563

*Who the heck am I to crush
his little dreams? Right?*

This scene illustrates how clever and cunning foxes can be when "hunting" for their "victim," and the parallel between the cinematic adaptation of the fox and the genuine animal is evident.

2. Independence

Foxes are solitary species who prefer to hunt alone, whereas wolves and coyotes hunt in packs, according to Elaine Selna (2021). However, they are not entirely solitary; they remain with their mates while rearing their young. In the film, the fox is not a completely solitary animal. Yes, he spends most of his time alone, but when it's time to "hustle" people, he has a partner in crime in the form of Finnick the fennec fox, who usually roleplays as a toddler or baby to "hustle" people. Later in the film, Finnick spends his time assisting Judy in solving the case of missing animals. Foxes have a well-deserved reputation for being naughty and lively. In the scene where he irritates Judy while helping her track a license plate, he tells a joke about a sloth, which slows down the tracking process because of how sloths are depicted in the film (moving very slowly and also talking very slowly).

3. *Beauty*

There is no doubt that the fox is a magnificent creature. There was a time when "foxy" was commonly used to describe handsome individuals in the English language.

4. *Protection*

Foxes are extremely territorial animals; they may be fun and mischievous with other foxes, but they are incredibly territorial with their hunting grounds and particularly protective of their dens when rearing young. Nick can be seen attempting to aid and protect Judy when the jaguar limousine driver goes berserk and begins following and attacking them. Nick can also stand up for Judy when chief Bogo insults her in front of him.

5. *Good luck*

The fox is connected with good luck because it employs all of its inherent abilities, such as night vision and the earth's magnetic field, to maximize its chances of a successful hunt. Foxes use everything around them to outmaneuver and outsmart their predator/prey. The authors see that Nick Wilde's act is compelling, and his accomplice Finnick has an elephant costume to help fool people into believing they are a real father and son duo. He also uses his surroundings very well, as seen in the scene where he begins making Pawpsicles by melting ice cubes on the roof of a building and pouring the melted ice cubes into a jar through the roof water drain.

Foxes are perceived to be intelligent and cunning due to this image projected by cultures around the world. Nick is characterized as a wise, opportunistic, and smart individual because he is a red fox throughout the Zootopia films. Nick Wilde plays a vital part as the protagonist's sidekick.

The last observation is the rabbit. The rabbit has served as a symbol in several works of literature, art, and popular culture. The following are well-known rabbit symbols. The authors see that rabbits symbolize Fertility. Rabbits' ability to give birth is one of their most common symbols. Rabbits are capable of producing over a hundred offspring per year. This skill enables them to survive despite being a frail and feeble species. Rabbits also live in colonies to protect their safety as a pack (Bradford, 2017).



Furthermore, in numerous works of literature, rabbits are frequently portrayed as likable protagonists; hence, rabbits are more likely to be embraced by all age groups. As innocent creatures, their adorable look elicits the viewer's pity.

In the film Zootopia, the rabbit is portrayed by an animal named Judy Hopps. The first rabbit was selected for entry into the Zootopia Police. To demonstrate her powers, he joined forces with a fox who enjoyed deceiving the citizens of Zootopia. In contrast to the characteristics of a genuine rabbit, the rabbit in the story has a radically different personality. Although he is occasionally sloppy in pursuing his goals, his tenacity truly motivates young people to realize their ambitions.

In a closer observation, the authors see that Judy is highly hopeful and autonomous. Since boyhood, he has desired to become a police officer to aid those in need and improve the world. He cares profoundly about the well-being of others; this includes her family, friends, Mrs. Otterton's husband, Nick, and Mrs. Otterton's pals. During the pursuit in Little Rodentia, Judy constantly threatened the local populace. Even while capturing the thief Duke Weaselton was the objective. She has a large heart, and even though she keeps her emotions under control - and even buried - most of the time, she can express her true feelings sincerely and passionately. This is most evident in Nick Wilde, whose feelings and friendship motivate him to protect others from his aspirations. Aside from it, Jusy's tummy, muzzle, and paws are a lighter shade of gray than the rest of his body. He has wide purple eyes, a short pink nose, long ears with black tips, and a teardrop-shaped tail with gray fur on top and lighter skin underneath. Judy's attire upon arrival in Zootopia was a purple short-sleeved T-shirt with lavender on the lower arms and bottom, a black tank top underneath, and black leggings. This could be his non-clerk attire.

In our overview, we also see that Judy is an anthropomorphic bunny. Judy is swift and graceful. He utilized his own physical might solely. Judy is capable of thriving or innovating and is fast to respond and move. Judy overcame obstacles during her tenure at the Zootopia Police Academy by utilizing her environment, including the assistance of fellow cadets, and once used the rhino

cadet's abilities against her. As a parking attendant, he utilized road signs as a foothold to place parking fines on giraffes. He has a high sense of hearing thanks to her long ears. While working as a parking attendant, he can listen to every parking meter on the street. Due to anthropomorphism, he evolved to walk on her hind legs, utilize human resources such as technology, and engage in human-related activities. Judy's intelligence is his most significant attribute, as he is brilliant, intelligent, and resourceful. Due to Judy's lack of physical power and a slight advantage in physical combat, he is smart and able to solve a variety of scenarios. Judy's months of training at the Zootopia Police Academy have made his tactical and perceptive. Nick, a con man, was duped by Judy into confessing to tax evasion. He can also concoct a scheme to deceive Bellwether into believing he is the brains behind turning the predators feral by stating a vicious Nick bit him.

The film attempts to dispel the stigma associated with most bunnies. In Zootopia, rabbits are portrayed as weak and timid creatures that are not designed to stand out, except Judy. Even if hurdles prevent her from pursuing her dream of being a police officer, she continues to try the impossible and ultimately accomplishes what a rabbit would be unable to do. Zootopia's initial scene, in which Judy's parents try to persuade her not to become a police officer but rather a carrot farmer, depicts rabbits in general.

Conclusion

To conclude, the authors view that the animals portrayed in the film represent Western civilization. This is evidenced by the fact that the filmmaker is from a western culture and employs stereotypes typical of western traditional culture. Then, Judy Hopkins (Rabbit) is portrayed differently due to the desire to create a unique and remarkable character. In western culture and mainstream society, rabbits are perceived as weak and helpless animals. Nevertheless, Judy is a character who transcended the stereotype and became an exceptional individual despite how society has labeled her.

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