

The Effects of Animation on the Socialization of 5-6 Years Old Chinese Children — *Finding Dory*

Jing Huang

School of Foreign Studies, Yangtze University, Jingzhou City, China

Abstract—Animated films undoubtedly play important roles in Children growth. Disney movie, as a typical American media product, enjoys a growing global popularity and influence the young audience particularly in family values or even in their socialization. *Finding Dory* is a popular animation among children especially aged 5-6 and it presents children of this age 1. how to face failure and 2. how to balance self-benefit and supporting friends. This paper samples Chinese kids aged from 5-6 with qualitative analysis to reveal the effects of *Finding Dory* on the socialization of particular aged children. Although the research is limited by children' language proficiency and parent's personal guidance, but it definitely set implications on how to make full advantages of those animated movies to pattern socialization for children at this particular age.

Index Terms—*Finding Dory*, socialization, animation, children

I. INTRODUCTION

At the glance of a stair, my 5-year-old daughter instantly intimated the scene in *Frozen* and rushed down singing *Let it go*. After taking her to the movie *Finding Dory*, “How do Dory do?” became the catchphrase whenever she encountered barriers. The above cases don't just happen individually, animation has played a dispensable role in children' life with the growing global popularity of this particular type media. One of the most important reasons is the different culture of a country can be attractive and even be integrated into another different culture, especially for the kids aged 5-6. As John. P. Lovell, an American scholar thinks that “people are vulnerable to the social culture, their behavior and attitude will have many culture roots. In addition, the ruling itself and foreign policies are formed under certain cultural background.” Animation movie, however, is easy to spread, which makes its development becoming more and more important in enhancing one country's cultural soft power. Although China's cartoon industry is the world third largest, both in terms of number of films produced and box office takings, US animations have occupied the most competitive place due to its vivid images as well as multi-cultural stories.

TABLE I
TOP-10 GLOBAL ANIMATION BOX-OFFICE

Film	Year	Box Office (billion)
Frozen	2013	\$1.2765
Minions	2015	\$1.1594
Toy Story 3	2010	\$1.632
Zootopia	2016	\$1.0217
Despicable me 2	2013	\$0.9708
The Lion King	1994	\$0.9685
Finding Nemo	2003	\$0.9367
Shrek 2	2004	\$0.9198
Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs	2009	\$0.8867
Ice Age: Continental Drift	2012	\$0.8772

The family value of Chinese changed dramatically these years with the development of China's social economy as well as deepening of the culture. The value is strongly influenced by many factors such as public media and foreign cultures. The traditional value is characterized as conformity which views the most popular opinions as the truth; while the modern value is characterized as individualism which respects unique ideas and critical thinking. Audience at different age is effected by traditional values on varied scale, which means the younger the audience is, the easier influenced by another culture. It is attributed to their literacy levels. According to the following research, it is not hard to find that 6-year-old kids are harder to persuade than 5-year-old ones. Care for extended family is another distinct feature of Chinese, which is proved in the reaction the moment Dory found her peers. Traditionally, Chinese kids tend to confuse extended family and immediate family, and there is subtle distinction between self-centered and independent. Filial piety enjoys the priority among all the norms and values. As the important aspect in Confucianism, filial piety attaches the prime importance to family relationships. (Chun & Iwabuchi, 2008, p.115). However, with the present varied social economic status and parenting styles, children's cognition even socialization levels achieve significantly higher than before. (Xiuli, G.,2012) Parent-child relationship enjoys the top of all the family values, and it is the

primary socialization for young kids. Another fierce discussion on children education is how to encourage them to support each other.

In such family value, most Chinese families are worried about two main issues. Children tend to be less competitive than before, they are easily frustrated by failure; many parents also complain that children seems selfish at the age 5-6 years old, they are unwilling to be helpful to the others. That's why our research took these two points from the movie to study, repairing failure and being helpful to the others, which *Finding Dory* discusses critically.

II. RELATED WORKS

The American influential social cognitive psychologist Albert Bandura is best-known for his social learning theory. According to him, human acquire knowledge by observation or imitations through reciprocal interaction, especially from the behaviors from his or her trustworthy models. Although the role of vicarious experience (observation) was stressed when people impacting people, observational learning is much more complex than simple imitation.

"Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action."(Albert Bandura, Social Learning Theory, 1977)

From his theory, it is not hard to find that people are inclined to model the good examples. Bandura's social learning theory regards observational learning, also known as modeling, as a four step process. (Bandura, 1977) They are 1) Attention- "A person cannot learn much by observation unless they attend to, and perceive accurately, the significant features of the modeled behavior". (Bandura, 1977); 2) Retention – People cannot be influenced by observation if they do not remember it. Learning can be retained through imagery models and/or verbal descriptions; 3) Reciprocation – people are able to reproduce the observed skills into actual behavior; 4) Motivation – people need to find themselves a reason to imitate particular targets so that to make observational learning effective. The theory model is shown in fig. 1.

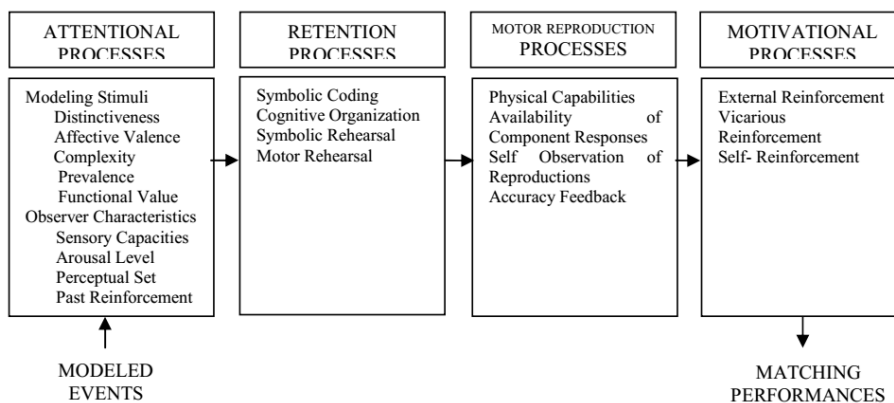


Figure 1. Component processes governing observational learning in the social learning analysis (Bandura, 1977).

The process of watching animated movies can be viewed as social learning process; it takes the advantage of emotional expression, strong color and composition, and a distorted, theatrical treatment of image to influence children's behavior in a relaxed atmosphere. Animation provides opportunities for kids to observe not only via literal education, but also via animated behaviors. Children easily observe the characters' behavior; intimate them in their daily activities. According to Piaget (1983), the understanding that objects continue to exist even when they cannot be seen, was an important element for children's cognition development which means even after go back to real life, children still apply the discourse in their daily talks and role-play the scenes in the movie. Purchasing movie derivatives also deepen the peer communication through the common interest. Children pick the symbols from the animation to form individual understandings based on their own experience through encoding and decoding so that to produce the further personal experiences. Qingguang, G. (2011) regarded symbols as the external form and material carrier of information, and even a dispensable element in information dissemination process.

According to Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1983), children cognitive development progress through a series of four critical and distinct stages (Tab. II). Each stage is marked by shifts in how kids understand the world. Piaget believed that children actively try to explore and make sense of the world around them.

TABLE II
PIAGET'S STAGES OF COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

The sensorimotor stage	Birth-Age 2	<p>Infants and toddlers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquire knowledge through sensory experiences and manipulating objects. • Start their basic motor and sensory explorations of the world. • Develop object permanence or object constancy • attach names and words to objects.
The preoperational stage	Age 2- 7	<p>Kids</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn through pretend play but still struggle with logic and take the point of view of other people. • Struggle with understanding the ideal of constancy.
The concrete operational stage	Age 7- 11	<p>Kids</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think more logically, but their thinking can also be very rigid. • Struggle with abstract and hypothetical concepts. • Understand that their thoughts are unique and that not everyone else necessarily shares their thoughts, feelings, and opinions.
The formal operational stage	Adolescence spans into adulthood	<p>People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase in logic, • are able to use deductive reasoning, • Develop an understanding of abstract ideas. • See multiple potential solutions to problems and think more scientifically about the world

There are various scholars studied the psychology of the children at 5-6 years age. As to the effect of social status on children's family values, Lucariello, Durand and Yarnell (2007) worked on the capacity for intrapersonal and interpersonal speculating among 5-6 years old kids which involving the beliefs of self and others, the understanding of emotion and perception, they found there were very little differences of the physiological test result among kids between higher social status and lower ones. But they admitted that their result was limited by the range of subjects. Garner Dunsmore & Southam-Gerrow (2008) observed preschool children's prosocial behavior, relational aggression, and physical aggression, they found that mothers' emotion explanations were correlated with children's emotion situation knowledge and relational aggression.

Here are the studies on the relationship between socialization of children and animated movies. Lu (2012) found there was little effect on children's moral development only by watching the cartoon. And in his dissertation, teachers and parents' influence are involved. The same factors were noticed in Jiang's (2013) dissertation, animations stimulate the children's socialization through the process of children watching movies, the entertainment and the characters should be filtered. He reminded that the social responsibilities for animations production industry. Kristen M. Ppeters (2002) stressed the violence influence children's behavior and aroused the attention for children educators and parents.

Fear of failure is an emotional experience much more, questions for this part is designed based on Conroy's theory of fear of failure, our study discusses the relationship between parenting style, parent-child communication and fear of failure. In our study, we take the advantage of the factors form the previous researches and take Finding Dory as example to explore the effect of animation on the socialization of 5-6 years old kid in China.

III. CASE STUDY

Finding Dory tells a warm story. In this movie, taking place six months after Nemo finds his dad; Dory suddenly recalls her childhood memories. Remembering something about "the jewel of Monterey, California", accompanied by Nemo and Marlin, she sets out to find her family. She arrives at the Monterey Marine Life Institute, where she meets a white whales Bailey, a whale shark Destiny and an octopus Hank, who become her guide. In this movie, Dory, suffering from amnesia, presents both her optimistic side and pessimist side. She inspires herself to recall details she and her parents, so that to help herself find the family. Dory is so eager to reunion with her family, however lost her way on the next corner, even forget her goal. It's her determination push herself to make the segments of the past into a complete picture. At the second stage of the story, Dory doesn't stop to stay with family but to help peers at the risk of losing again.

A. Subjects

Our experiment chooses randomly 10 5-year-old-children and 10 6-year-old-children from different kindergartens, 5 boys and 5 girls for each age group respectively. Those children are from XinCheng international kindergarten (private), Little Star bilingual kindergarten (private), Jiguan kindergarten (public), and Educational kindergarten (public). All of the children are from the senior year in Chinese kindergarten, Curriculum of Moral Education requires children 1) to get along with their friends, be considerate and help each other; 2) to be obliged to the norms and rules, not to disturb the others; 3) to undertake basic personal business and be willing to be helpful and supportive; 4) respect the National Flag. The children's average literacy rate is that they can understand Chinese mandarin but can not read a lot of Chinese characters, therefore, we pick Finding Dory with English subtitles and dubbed in Chinese to provide direct impression.

B. Instruments

Considering children’s literacy rate, our questionnaire use pictures instead of words. The questionnaire is mainly for testing what type of plots impresses children most and different attitudes of different gender and age. We take 6 typical plots from the movie to make this part (Fig.2).

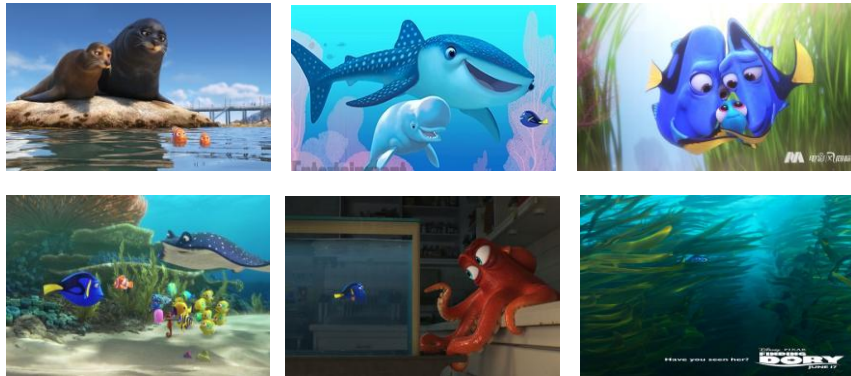


Figure 2. 6 casts from FINDING DORY for questionnaire

According to the results; children are divided into different groups to take part in the following interview. The interview is working for 1) kids reaction on similar cases; 2) effectiveness of this movie for children with different age and different gender; 3) extended affection to children’ help to others, family values, resistance to failure.

C. Procedures.

Children are divided into two groups with the same age to watch the film. Researchers observe the whole process and take note of each child’s level of concentration. After watching, researchers use flash on screen to present the pictures on screen and children are expected to depict the relate stories and freely ask questions. Researchers take down the questions and divided them into sub-group after this section. When it comes to interview, 5 questions are prepared as following: 1) Why did Dory depart her parent? What warnings your parents ask you to notice in such cases? 2) What would you do if you departed your parents? Why? 3) As to you, is Hank a bad guy or a good and reliable one? Why? 4) if your friends laugh at you, what would you do? What do you think Dory’s way? 5) Why Dory come back to the truck? Do you think it is too dangerous? If you were Dory, what would you do? For this part, researchers need to take notes very carefully for the further discussion. We make a quantitative analysis for this study.

IV. RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

A. Qualitative Analysis

Among 5-year children group, there are four boys preferring pic 2 and 4, and three boys preferring pic 1 and 3; all girls in this group picking pic 3 and three of them picking picking pic 2. As to 6-year children group, all boys like pic 2 and 4 boys like pic 1,3,5; girls in this group generally like pic 2,3,5 which is very close to the boys’ choice(Fig.3).

Although children at different age stage make the similar choice, the reasons are varied. Taking the pic 2. and pic 4 as examples, boys’ reason and girls’ are presented in the following table III.As to the other plots, children show distinct and creative thoughts. For example, when Dory dropped into the tan and instantly faced her own kinds, one 5-year-old girl asked whether they were Dory’s grandparents. And then when she found they were just their parents acquaintances, she seemed slightly disappointed .

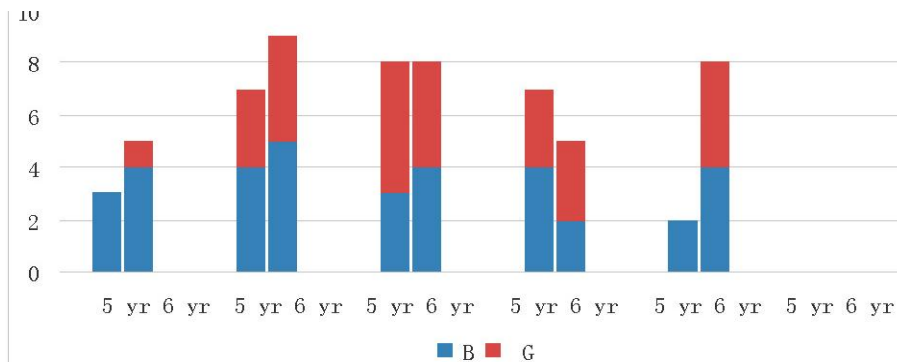


Figure 3. Preference of Children from Different Groups

The research organized correlative activities for Chinese children at the age of 5-6. From the study, 5-6 years old children moral development may be affected by cartoon, but the effect is small, its influence doesn’t completely depend on the cartoon itself. For example, as to the question 4 of interview part “if your friends laugh at you, what would you

do? *What do you think Dory's way?*”, the answers in the 6-year group is relatively consistent, four boys provided similar response “Dory is kind of silly, she has no idea of the other kid’s unkind behavior. If I were Dory, I will explain or even leave the group/ I will let the teacher know the case, she will punish them/” “Dory has some memory problems, she doesn’t know they are laughing at her.” “If Dory know the other kids laughing at her, she will get mad.”. Three girls provided the similar answer, “Dory is so unfortunate, I will help her if I were in the group.” according to the response in this group, it is not hard to find that children escape them from the key point. They prefer to believe Dory doesn’t know the point, if she gets the point, she will act as the normal kids. Therefore, Children cognition of helping behavior have different intentions, and 6-year-old children make more judgment before providing assistance, especially girls. Surprisingly, they prefer helping others for no reason when they are in urgent situations, especially for boys. Another general finding from the interview is the more entertainment animations are, the more attentions children pay to, and the more educational in animation, the easier to stimulate the socialization of children. Here we take the 5-year children response to question 3) “*As to you, is Hank a bad guy or a good and reliable one? Why?*” for example. “Hank is a thief, but he is also magician so he is a good guy.” “he can drive, like my father. Wow, he helps Dory to escape. Surely he is reliable.” “He can disguise himself into anything, like Monkey King. He is great.” “yes, he wanted to steal Dory’s brace, definitely he is a bad guy. But I like him, he is funny.” Apparently, the movie doesn’t clearly indicate whether Hank is reliable or not, it just depict Hank into a funny and sort of brilliant one, which send children messages that this sort of guys can be taken as friends. Children at this age have their own standard of value but not very clear, and they respect their own ideas. Therefore, educating children at age 5-6 with more entertainment is more effective than just with educational tools.

Specifically, our research is more focused two points in the socialization of children. As to the family value dimension, the analysis and interpretation of results reveals that

TABLE III.
DIFFERENT IDEAS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS IN DIFFERENT GROUPS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE

	Pic 2		Pic 4	
	BOYS	GIRLS	BOYS	GIRLS
5 yr Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like Destiny • It’s smart (2) • It’s strong and helps Dory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like Bailey’s name; she is smart • Bailey looks very pretty; • Destiny and Bailey’s names sounds nice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wow, so many fishes • They are having class • They don’t like Dory • I want to be on duty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So many fishes • I want to have a look at those fish. • I have been to aquarium
6 yr Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The supersonic wave is awesome • The partnership is so competitive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destiny is very strong minded and humorous • They encourage each other as our teacher tells us to • They are friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they laughing at Dory? • I don’t want to be in such class, • Wow, everyone is different 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dory is lonely • Does teacher like Dory? • I know they are friends, but why Dory don’t have siblings?

B. Implications and Suggestions

In the process of the experiment, limited by children literacy rate, we have to choose the version dubbed in Chinese which inevitably go with local elements. And the study result also shows that the importance of teachers or parents guidance which we didn’t carry out in this paper. When choosing the appropriate cartoon, many parents wonder how to explore the function of a particular animation and how long children should spend on it without addicting to it. It is also important that animated cartoon is only a possible means to help children to build their own social values and moral standard, so how to “moisturizing things in silence” is worth of further study.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My deepest gratitude goes first to my 5-year-old daughter April. Hu, she stimulates me into this amazing world to gain insight into children of the same age psychology. Without her, this paper could not have reached its present form.

Second, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Zeng, who encourages me into professional research. I am also greatly indebted to my mother and my husband, who have provided a lot of time and energy to support me work out this paper.

Finally, my thanks would go to myself for my persistence in this paper all through these days.

REFERENCES

- [1] Albert Bandura. (1977). *Social Learning Theory*. (247 pp) Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- [2] Chunshen, G. (2000). *The Road of Human Glory --- Bandua’s Social Learning Theory*. China: Hubei Education Publishing House (Chinese).
- [3] Garner, P. W., Dunsmore, J. C., & Southam-Gerrow, M. (2008). Mother-child conversations about emotions: Linkages to child aggression and prosocial behavior. *Social Development*, 17, 259-277.
- [4] Guangnan, Lu. (2012). *An approach to the influence of animated cartoons on the moral development of children at 5-6 years old*. Master dissertation, Hainan Normal University.

- [5] J. M. Lucariello, T. M. Durand, and L. Yarnell. (2007). Social versus intrapersonal ToM: social ToM is a cognitive strength for low- and middle-SES children. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, (vol. 28). 285–297.
- [6] Piaget, J. (1983). Piaget's theory. In P. Mussen (ed). *Handbook of Child Psychology*. 4th edition. Vol. 1. New York: Wiley.
- [7] Qingguang, G. (2011). *Communication Course Book*. China: China Renmin University Press. (Chinese).
- [8] Wanyu, Jiang. (2013). Effects of animations on the socialization of children. Master dissertation, Southwest University of Political Science and Law.
- [9] Xuemei, Gao., Chijun Zheng. (2010). Researches into Cognitive Development of Expression in Children Aged 3 to 5 Years. *Psychological Development and Education*.10.2.137-143.
- [10] Xiuli, G., Changcheng L. & Xiaojuan W. (2012). On the relationship between a family's social-economic status, parenting style and children's rights consciousness. *Chinese Journal of Special Education* 12.1, 85-96.

Jing Huang was born in Hubei, China in 1980. She received his Master degree in English Teaching from Wisconsin University, U.S.A in 2010.

She is currently a lecturer in the School of Foreign Studies, Yangtze University, Jingzhou, China. Her research interests include EFL teaching for all levels and cross cultural communication.

She was assigned as visiting scholar to Boston, U.S.A and Delft, Netherland in 2014 and 2015 and has made further progress in professional work.