

## Narrative analysis of character Po's identity crisis in *Kung Fu Panda 3*

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** *Kung Fu Panda 3* is an animated film from the United States that collaborated with a Chinese company. The film tells the story of Po's journey in handling his identity crisis as the main antagonist threatens the village's peace. Addressing social issues such as identity crisis, this animated film, a combination of action and comedy genres, is considered interesting to research as the presence of identity crisis issues is relatively unnoticed among people of different ages. **Purpose:** This research aims to provide the process of Po's character in handling their identity crisis throughout the story of *Kung Fu Panda 3*. **Methods:** This research uses a qualitative research method using narrative analysis by Tzvetan Todorov, which is supported by the approach of Lacey and Gillespie. **Results:** This research's findings depict the process of Po's character in resolving its identity crisis whilst overcoming the menace from the villain, which is analyzed according to the five stages of narrative structure in Tzvetan Todorov's narrative analysis method with the approach of Lacey and Gillespie. Scenes are classified into five stages: equilibrium, disruption, recognition of disruption, attempt to repair disruption, and reinstatement of equilibrium. **Conclusion:** This research concludes with an overall representation of how the character Po can overcome their identity crisis through the five stages and suggests a utilitarian application of a thorough narrative analysis from a communication perspective. **Implications:** This research can theoretically serve as to how identity crises arise and are resolved in people with the role of other individuals around them in communications. Directors and scriptwriters, especially those producing animated films, can use this research to communicate issues on mental health in a way that people can perceive easily and have fun.

**Keywords:** Narrative analysis; identity crisis; significant others; reference group; *Kung Fu Panda 3*

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's era, identity crisis is a rarely recognized mental health issue, and the author is highly interested and concerned about spreading awareness regarding identity crisis. This is proved by mental-emotional issues forming an overall uptrend from 2013 towards the next decade (Agisa et al., 2021). The author believes that identity crisis is a social issue that can evolve into a more severe and harmful mental health issue, hence requiring detailed research. Moreover, the author's interest in the identity crisis issue is sparked by its frequent depiction in various films, and they aim to explore the meaning of identity crisis represented in films and assess their success in reaching a wide audience from a communication perspective. One way to achieve this analysis is to examine the presence of identity crisis itself in films that hold the power to communicate a message on identity crisis or other mental health issues simultaneously and quickly. Therefore, the author believes a communication theory is necessary to support this research regarding communication aspects of the identity crisis issue for future readers' insight. Thus, this shows that identity crisis can be studied not only from psychological or sociological aspects but also from communication perspectives by analyzing one character's journey throughout a story, specifically the process of the character of Po handling their' identity crisis in *Kung Fu Panda 3* film.

Films like *The Fault in Our Stars*,

*Whiplash*, and *500 Days of Summer* have addressed identity crisis issues and served as inspirational sources, motivating individuals through diverse character backgrounds and stories involving identity during the quarter-life crisis (Crocetti, 2017). An identity crisis is a universal mental health disorder influenced by environmental pressures that are caused by significant life changes or pressure experienced by an individual, which may lead to negative events or positively lead to breakthroughs (Côté, 2018). The author believes that understanding the worst possible outcomes of identity crises in various countries and their diverse social environments is crucial for the general public in a media-oriented society. Therefore, it should be acknowledged that an identity crisis is a mental condition that can evolve into dangerous psychological damage. Thus, its signs and coping mechanisms should be known.

Although adolescents are more vulnerable to experiencing identity crises, adults can also undergo identity crises as they go through various phases of life (Becht et al., 2016). An identity crisis occurs when individuals frequently question aspects of their identity, such as beliefs, life values, goals, experiences, and feelings. While everyone may experience identity crises, they often arise in teenagers still searching for their identity (Branje et al., 2021).

Research results indicate that identity crises generally do not lead to overly fatal outcomes. However, identity crises may also result in problematic situations that disrupt

mental health. If not addressed professionally, identity crises can lead to depression, which is already classified as a mental health disorder. The negative impacts of depression, such as self-harm, suicidal thoughts, or suicide, can occur if identity crises are left untreated (Gardner & Kleinman, 2019). On the other hand, identity crises do not always lead to negative outcomes. They can also provide opportunities for individuals to reflect positively on themselves, open up new perspectives in thinking, become more sensitive to their surroundings, and persevere through daily life challenges (Côté, 2018).

In the current developing era, the issue of identity crisis has been widely discussed on various media platforms, even becoming a trending topic on Twitter and TikTok. As a mass communication tool, film plays a significant role in deepening insights into identity crises. Indonesian films, depicting high school stories or films exploring the confusion of adults about their roles in life, often contain hidden messages related to identity crises. Therefore, films can address and raise awareness about identity crisis issues through moral stories and various film aspects that can be highlighted for the audience.

“If a million people see my movie, I hope they see a million different movies.”

This statement by director Quentin Tarantino emphasizes that each viewer can interpret films differently. Films provide a space for viewers to imagine and fantasize, allowing

them to understand and feel the message conveyed. As a mass communication medium, films have immense power in conveying thousands of messages simultaneously to the audience. In this context, films can be watched in theaters collectively or individually on personal screens, indirectly allowing simultaneous viewing.

“Movies can and do have tremendous influence in shaping young lives in the realm of entertainment towards the ideals and objectives of normal adulthood.”

Specifically referring to animated films, this statement by Walt Disney underscores the significant influence of animated films in shaping the lives of young people toward the ideals of normal adulthood, including the formation of a good identity. Even though viewers may be aware that the images in the animated world are purely fictional, the presence of each character can feel real and as if it is happening in real life. This achievement is attributed to the advancement of motion pictures, which provide highly realistic images and relatable stories in animated films.

With the background of the initial discussion on identity crises and animated films, the author chose the animated film *Kung Fu Panda 3* (2016) for its close relevance to identity crises. The film tells the story of the main character, a panda named Po, who seeks to discover the meaning behind his identity amidst various aspects of life that lead to uncertainty about his identity and destiny. Throughout the film, Po questions who he truly is and aims to overcome

the identity crisis he is experiencing. Not only in terms of the story, but the characters in *Kung Fu Panda 3*, especially the character Po, represent identity crises that can be relevant to a wide range of ages, from teenagers to adults relevant to identity crises. Thus, *Kung Fu Panda 3*, as an international film, demonstrates a strong overall universality. The film seamlessly combines Chinese history, American English accents, and other aspects while producing an accessible and understandable film for audiences from diverse cultures and regions.

*Kung Fu Panda 3* was released on March 8, 2016, as a production of Dreamworks Animation. The film, directed by Jennifer Yuh Nelson and Alessandro Carloni, showcased its box office success with a premiere revenue of \$41 million through 3.955 theaters worldwide. The total revenue from *Kung Fu Panda 3* amounted to \$521 million worldwide, and it was ranked the second-highest-grossing film in January 2016 (IMDb, 2016).

Director Jennifer Yuh Nelson, in her interview, stated that the main feature of *Kung Fu Panda 3* is its universality because of its moral message. The film conveys the message that people often think they are already good or strong enough, but there is always room for growth in life. Nelson also emphasizes the wise message said by the character Master Shifu in the film, which is universally understandable: exploring one's shortcomings can lead to further personal growth. In conclusion, Nelson proposes that individuals must conquer their

fears and surpass what they have achieved to manifest their true identity (ScreenSlam, 2016). The voice actor for the character Tigress, Angelina Jolie, also mentioned that despite the film's approach for young children, *Kung Fu Panda 3* is relatable for all age groups to embrace themselves and find their identities in today's contemporary society (Today, 2016). Audience responses and fan reviews on various platforms also point to the successful delivery of moral messages related to identity crises in *Kung Fu Panda 3*, which vary from teenagers to adults. The author believes that *Kung Fu Panda 3* is the right film to discuss the handling of identity crises due to its friendly and straightforward approach to audiences of a wide range of ages. Additionally, the film's light delivery of messages often goes unnoticed by viewers, communicating broader meanings. Therefore, the author believes that presenting the results of this research can demonstrate that *Kung Fu Panda 3* can offer a representation of handling identity crises in the character Po that is acceptable and understandable for a wide range of ages through its simple dialogue and non-subtle meaning, creating well-digestible moral of the film story.

The film's success is widely known to consist of two main aspects: cinematic and narrative. However, according to the author, the narrative aspect of *Kung Fu Panda 3* opens the door to the true content and meaning of the film through wise messages and conversations between characters. The narrative in the

script has become highlighted quotes on social media due to the profound definitions contained, which can touch the hearts of many viewers and fans. The author believes that handling Po's identity crisis can be dissected and revealed through narrative analysis and interpersonal communication between Po and other characters. It shows the importance of communication composition, such as dialogue in films, especially when addressing mental health issues among specified cultural societies (Hernandez et al., 2016).

However, despite the growing recognition of identity crisis as a significant mental health issue as a general issue present among different cultures and societies across the global media, there remains a gap in research connecting the concept across different academic disciplines (Harman, 2016). While psychology and sociology have explored identity crises in-depth, communication perspectives have not been fully applied to understanding how identity crises are portrayed in mass media (Kente et al., 2021). Films, as a form of mass communication, can serve as effective platforms for addressing identity crises and mental health issues, which can be utilized to analyze how specifically identity crisis issues are communicated to audiences from different cultural backgrounds through film narratives and the media (Putri et al., 2023). This study seeks to bridge that gap by applying communication theory to analyze how identity crises are depicted in films and their impact on audiences. It will address how the

communication elements of film contribute to the understanding and seamless normalization of these issues, especially through animated films (Fedorovich & Ilyich, 2016). For instance, how do character development, dialogue, and narrative structure help convey the complexities of identity crises, especially in a way that resonates with diverse audiences?

Additionally, how can communication theory help reveal the effectiveness of films in raising awareness about identity crises and their impacts across various age groups? This study aims to answer several key research questions. How does *Kung Fu Panda 3* depict Po's identity crisis construction, and what communication strategies are used to convey this crisis to the audience (Zheltukhina et al., 2023)? By analyzing Po's journey of self-discovery, this question seeks to understand the narrative techniques and character interactions that communicate the internal struggle of identity crises. The theoretical relevance of this research lies in its use of communication theory to examine how films, particularly animated ones with jolly-coated approaches like *Kung Fu Panda 3*, communicate complex mental health issues. This approach allows for a deeper exploration of how identity crises in films can influence audiences' perceptions and behaviors.

The research will explore how films like *Kung Fu Panda 3* contribute to normalizing mental health issues, particularly identity crises, from a communication perspective. This research gap and theoretical relevance



of communications against psychology and society will investigate whether the film's portrayal of personal growth and self-discovery helps to put forward communication as an important key aspect of mental health and fosters open discussions about identity crises in contemporary society. This study will demonstrate the relevance of communication theory in analyzing films and highlight the importance of mass media in raising awareness of communication before and after while delving deeper into mental health issues like identity crises.

Therefore, this research seeks to fill the gap in understanding how films, particularly *Kung Fu Panda 3* as an animated film, communicate complex mental health issues such as identity crises. By applying communication theory, the study will offer valuable insights into how films like *Kung Fu Panda 3* impact audiences, shaping their perceptions of mental health and identity and contributing to broader societal conversations about mental well-being in today's media-oriented society (Merle et al., 2019).

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative descriptive analysis method to determine the representation of Po's character handling an identity crisis in the *Kung Fu Panda 3* film. The narrative analysis theory by Tzvetan Todorov with the Lacey and Gillespie approach is utilized for scene selection for analysis through five stages,

which are as follows: equilibrium, disruption, recognition of disruption, attempt to repair disruption, and reinstatement of equilibrium. Table 1 shows the compared criterion under each stage.

This narrative analysis theory plays a crucial role in scene selections. These are made based on the high relevance of each respective scene against the means of each stage, as addressed by Lacey and Gillespie. Each selected scene must depict a significance of narrative clarity within dialogues and other character interactions. From the bigger picture, explicit verbal communication must be distinguished for the results to reflect thoroughly towards the narrative structure along the character Po's journey in the *Kung Fu Panda 3* film.

It leads to the study also involving the study of interpersonal communication through George Herbert Mead's self-theory, which includes the role of significant others, which are individuals in one's life that hold valuable positions in their life, and reference group, which is a group of individuals in one's life that involves emotional attachment to an individual, thus influencing the formation of self-concept, through the mind, the self, the society, and the culture (Mead, 2015).

The subject of this study is Po's character in the *Kung Fu Panda 3* film itself, and the object of this study is the film's narrative script. The unit of analysis in this study is five scenes classified into the five stages of narrative analysis theory by Tzvetan Todorov with the Lacey and Gillespie approach, which showcases how Po handles the

**Table 1 Lacey and Gillespie Narrative Structure Comparison**

No.	Lacey	Gillespie
1.	Equilibrium and Orderliness	Exposition, early condition
2.	Disruption against equilibrium	Disruption, chaos
3.	Recognition of Disruption	Complications, soaring chaos
4.	Attempt to Repair Disruption	Climax, the peak of the conflict
5.	Reinstatement of Equilibrium	Finishing and ending

Source: (Eriyanto, 2013)

identity crisis he experiences throughout the story. The data analysis in this study utilizes the intertextuality analysis technique, which shows that the relationship between different texts is a crucial aspect of his concept of dialogism for creating meaning (Zengin, 2016).

Three types of data collection techniques were carried out, which are the non-participant observations (Marietto, 2018), the study of literature (Janssens et al., 2020), and the study of documentation (Tobiasz et al., 2019). It involves primary information that the author can obtain directly from its source and secondary data, which is derived indirectly from records, such as those found within a company and from other document sources (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2017). The data analyzed in this research must be validated using appropriate data validation techniques. In this study, the managed narrative text data contains multiple meanings, necessitating various supporting sources to elaborate on the meaning in detail from various perspectives and complement the main theoretical foundation. Therefore, data source triangulation is needed. Triangulation is a technique for checking the authenticity of data that utilizes external elements for data verification or as a comparison with that


data (Jentoft & Olsen, 2019). This study was conducted between March and December of 2023, beginning from the provision of research materials up to the defense of the author's bachelor's thesis, which this article has adapted.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first stage of the narrative structure is the equilibrium, which is a part of the initial stage of a story that indicates order and tranquility. However, in action-animated genre films, narratives are often initiated with chaos, such as dark pasts or troubled pasts. Scenes classified within the equilibrium narrative structure can depict situations that serve as the starting point for handling the character's identity crisis process, as represented in the case of the character of Po. Table 2 provides a scene representing Po's character handling his identity crisis in the equilibrium stage.

In this scene, Shifu instructs Po to begin leading kung fu training with his friends, The Five, as his students. Initially, Po thinks that Shifu has aged and fallen ill, but Shifu has another purpose in handing over his position as the teacher. Po appears confused, feeling unworthy and doubting his abilities. Here, there

**Table 2 Script of the “Po Appointed as Teacher” Scene**

Character Name/ Scene Description	Script
	
Po	Whoa, nice dramatic entrance! What is the occasion?
Shifu	Today will be my final class.
Scene Description	[Po and the Five become worried.]
Po	Your final?... Wait, I did not know you were sick. [looks at Shifu's eyes] Although you have been looking a little-
Shifu	[pushes Po away with his staff] I am not sick.
Po	Healthy. Healthy. A lot.
Shifu	[facepalms] My final class because from now on, your training will be in the hands of the Dragon Warrior. [He brings his staff forward, and it comes to rest on Po's stomach]
Scene Description	[The Five look at each other in confusion. Po nods and smiles as he looks behind the Five. Eventually, his face turns frightful in realization.]
Po	WHAT?! [Po knocks Shifu back with his voice and steps close to Shifu's ear.] Me? Teach? I mean, why not Tigress? She is always telling everyone what to do.
Tigress	[upset] Be quiet, Po.
Po	See what I mean?
Shifu	Tigress is not the Dragon Warrior. You are.
Po	Come on, they are the Five! What can I teach them?
Shifu	[Suddenly reappearing behind Po] There is always something more to learn, even for a master.

Source: Kung Fu Panda 3, 2016

is a hint of potential internal struggle within Po, foreshadowing the continuation of Po's identity crisis throughout the film. However, there is no external disturbance yet that could make Po feel the presence of an identity crisis within him.

This scene is chosen to be within the equilibrium stage because it is an early-stage scene that can give rise to an event related to Po's identity crisis in the future. The internal struggle of Po's identity crisis is still hidden, and no external disturbance can further stimulate it. The challenge Po faces as a teacher is with his

friends, who have been part of Po's comfort zone since the first sequel of the Kung Fu Panda film, and there is no involvement of issues from an antagonist character that aims to worsen the condition of Po's identity crisis. Therefore, this scene falls within the narrative structure of the equilibrium stage.

Interpersonal communication is present between Po and Shifu in this scene. As soon as Po is appointed as the teacher by Shifu, Po immediately rejects and passes the responsibility to Tigress. It is evident through Po's narration:



“Me? Teach? I mean, why not Tigress? She’s always telling everyone what to do.”

It indicates that Po’s doubt is part of his identity crisis. Moreover, Po doubts himself even more, expressing that he is not worthy to lead The Five. Here, the significant others play a role, portrayed by The Five, who are Po’s close friends and kung fu colleagues in The Valley. The significant others in this scene act as a development for Po through interactions with close people and the surrounding environment (Hall et al., 2018). Thus, significant others impact interpersonal communication in handling Po’s identity crisis. However, Po feels that he has limitations as a teacher and does not feel qualified to lead his peers who are equally skilled compared to him. It is evident through Po’s narration:

“Come on, they are The Five! What can I teach them?”

It indicates his continued belief that he cannot lead The Five as their teacher. The Five indirectly impose pressure and burden on Po, who lacks confidence, thus triggering the identity crisis that will unfold later in the story. In this context, interpersonal communication is present through the social behavior of the mind, self, society, and culture in the scene where Po is appointed as a teacher (Mead, 2015).

The second stage of the narrative structure is disruption, which is a part of the middle stage of a story that indicates the presence of problems where order and tranquility are disrupted by the antagonist character. This character is typically known as the villain or the main enemy of the story, whose goals are opposed to those of

the protagonist. Scenes classified within the disruption narrative structure depict situations where the main antagonist, Kai, emerges as a threat, playing a role in Po handling his identity crisis. Table 3 is a scene that represents the character of Po handling his identity crisis in the disruption stage.

In this scene, Po and the others have become aware of the arrival of the main antagonist, Kai, in the real world. Shifu hurriedly searches for a scroll in the Jade Palace’s storage detailing the history of Oogway and Kai. The scroll states that Kai turned evil due to greed for the chi power he desired from the ancestral pandas in the secret village. The narrative reveals that Li can teach Po the technique of using chi if Po is willing to follow him to the secret village to master it. Here, the internal struggle within Po has been triggered by the presence of Kai, leading to the continuation of Po’s identity crisis throughout the film. The narrative structure has begun to experience disruption, allowing Po to feel his identity crisis.

This scene is chosen to be within the disruption stage because it is a middle-stage scene that indicates a problem that has given rise to an event related to Po’s identity crisis. Kai’s arrival in the real world signifies the beginning of the disturbance, making this scene part of the disruption narrative structure. Here, conflicting goals have occurred between the main protagonist, Po, and the main antagonist, Kai. With the disturbance caused by Kai known to Po, he begins his journey to the secret village



“Dad, you heard what Shifu said Oogway said. This guy can only be stopped by a master of chi, and I can only master chi by knowing who I really am. Well... I’m a panda.”

It shows Po’s strong desire to address his identity crisis. Hence, Po boldly decides to begin his journey to the secret panda village after discussing and receiving feedback from others regarding his decision. In this context, interpersonal communication is present through social behaviors of the mind, self, society, and culture in the scene of Po’s departure to the secret village (Mead, 2015).

The narrative structure of recognition of disruption is a part of the middle stage of a story that indicates a larger problem in the plot where the damage caused by the antagonist has escalated into chaos, and the detrimental effects are keenly felt. Scenes falling under the recognition of disruption narrative structure depict situations where the main antagonist, Kai, has successfully created panic among the inhabitants of the secret panda village, reaching the climax of disruption and becoming a crucial part of handling Po’s identity crisis. Table 4 is a scene that represents the character of Po handling his identity crisis in the recognition of the disruption stage.


In this scene, Li, with the help of the secret panda village, attempts to uplift Po, who is desperate due to his frustration of not feeling ready to go against Kai. Even more, prior to this, Li lied about being able to teach Po the chi technique, which caused Po’s identity crisis

to soar. The narration states that Po doubts his ability to teach, and Li instantly asks him to instruct kung fu to the entire village and prepare them to confront Kai. Here, the intensified identity crisis within Po is easily triggered as he converses with Li, revealing that Po’s identity crisis has reached a critical point. Po’s identity crisis is at its peak, and he strongly feels the rapidly growing crisis within himself.

This scene is chosen to be within the recognition of disruption stage because it is a middle-stage scene indicating the prevalence of a significant problem that has led to a detrimental event related to Po’s identity crisis. The narration shows that Po receives answers from Shifu’s words about his identity in the scene within the equilibrium narrative structure, making this scene a transitional moment for the narrative structure to move to the next stage. Although the identity crisis is heading toward improvement, further efforts to combat this crisis have not occurred in this scene. Therefore, this scene still falls within the recognition of the disruption narrative structure stage.

This scene presents Interpersonal communication between Po, Li, Mr. Ping, and others. After Po finishes talking with Tigress and has seemingly lost hope, Li and Mr. Ping, as significant others and the entire secret panda village as a reference group, appear to provide encouragement and offer assistance to Po in facing Kai. Significant others in this scene play a dominant role in shaping one’s self-meaning and maintaining an individual’s existing

**Table 4 Script of the “Li’s Effort to Encourage Po” Scene**

Character Name/ Scene Description	Script
	
Li	Unless you had an army of your own.
Scene Description	[Li appears from the fog behind Po.]
Po	You?
Li	Not just me.
Mr. Ping	Us.
Li	All of us. [reveals everyone behind him] I finally found my son after all these years. It will take much more than the world's end to keep us apart.
Po	However, you do not even know kung fu.
Li	Then you will teach us.
Po	What? I cannot teach you kung fu! I could not even teach Tigress, and she already knows kung fu!
Li	Po, I know I am the last guy you want to trust. However, you have to believe me. We can do this. We can learn kung fu. We can be just like you.
Po	[pauses] What did you just say?
Li	Can we do this?
Po	No.
Li	We can learn kung fu?
Po	After that.
Li	Uhh, we can be just like you?
Po	Yes.
Li	We can?
Po	No! You cannot. However, you do not have to be. That is what Shifu meant. I do not have to turn you into me. I have to turn you into you.
Mr. Ping	That does not make any sense.
Po	I know! [Hugs to both Li and Mr. Ping] Thanks, dads.
Mr. Ping	You are welcome
Po	I am going to do something I never thought I could do. I'm gonna teach kung fu. [The scene cuts to Po watching different groups of villagers train for different battle skills.]

Source: Kung Fu Panda 3, 2016

reality (Jakoby, 2015). The reference group in this scene functions as other individuals with influential perspectives that impact how a specific individual thinks and behaves (Smith & Chae, 2017).

Delving deeper into the conversation, Po is consistently pessimistic and even feels that nothing can help until Li’s words provide Po with an answer to his identity crisis. The presence of Mr. Ping and others also makes

Po aware that he is not alone, demonstrating the impact of interpersonal communication on handling Po's identity crisis. This is evident in the following narration from Li:

"We can do this. We can learn kung fu. We can be just like you."

Moreover, the subsequent narration, which is Po's response to Li's narration:

"I do not have to turn you into me. I have to turn you into you."


Indicating that Po has found an answer amid his rampant identity crisis. In this context, interpersonal communication is present through the social behavior of the mind, self, society, and culture in the scene of Li's effort to encourage

Po (Mead, 2015).

The fourth stage of the narrative structure is the attempt to repair disruption. This stage is part of the middle stage of a story that depicts the protagonist putting forth all their efforts to counteract the damage that has occurred. Table 5 provides scenes falling under the attempt to repair the disrupted narrative structure, showing various situations where Po emerges as a heroic figure leading the entire village to confront and defeat the antagonist, Kai, as part of addressing Po's identity crisis.

In this scene, Po has gained extraordinary chi power after receiving assistance from others

**Table 5 Script of the "Po Receives Chi Power" Scene**

Character Name/ Scene Description	Script
	
Kai	Who are you?
Po	I have been asking the same question. [performs multiple stances] Am I the son of a panda? The son of a goose? A student? A teacher? Turns out, I am all of them. [Behind Po, a chi-infused image of a dragon lingers.] I am the Dragon Warrior. [chuckles] Get it? See the giant dragon? Get ready to feel the thunder. [flies] This is awesome! [Kai flings his blades at him.] Uh oh. [Po grabs one of his blades and swings him around.] Belly gong. Butt slap. [throws Kai] Perhaps a small quantity of lunch because I am starvin'. [dissolves one of Kai's blades] Let us do this! [grabs Kai's other blade] Heads up. [crashes Kai into multiple rocks]
Kai	It took me five hundred years to take Oogway's chi. I will have yours if it takes me five hundred more!
Po	Chitty, chitty chat chat, chitchat. [The dragon curls into a yin-yang symbol.] You want my chi so bad? Then take it. [redirects Chi dragon to Kai]
Kai	[absorbs] Yes... the power is mine. [The jade pendants loosen from Kai.] Wait, no. It is too much. That is too much! No. No!
Scene Description	[A yellow shockwave of chi is released from Kai. The scene cuts to the physical realm, where the enslaved masters are released from the pendants and transformed back into their original selves.]

Source: Kung Fu Panda 3, 2016



in the real world. The narration states that Kai poses the question, “Who are you?” to stimulate Po to answer the question related to his identity. Here, Po is no longer anxious but confident, presenting that one’s identity is not necessarily confined to a specific aspect but can be more than just one identity. In this context, Po exerts all his energy and strength to win the battle against the main antagonist, Kai, to address his identity crisis.

This scene is chosen to be within the attempt to repair disruption stage because it is a middle-stage scene that showcases Po’s determination to resolve the identity crisis he has been facing. Ultimately, Po finds an answer to his identity crisis and is determined to eliminate the disruptive threat posed by the main antagonist, Kai, who has been causing chaos since the beginning of the story. Even though the narration indicates that Po has found an answer to his identity crisis, his actions and efforts to combat the identity crisis are still ongoing, demonstrating Po’s continued and real effort. Therefore, this scene still falls within the narrative structure of attempting to repair disruption.

In this scene, Po and Kai communicate in a personal way. Kai is surprised by Po’s chi power and questions Po’s identity, prompting Po to make his final effort to address the ongoing identity crisis. In this scene, significant others play the role of an individual who contributes to rehabilitating one’s life (Bergström et al., 2023). This is evident in the following narration

from Po:


“I’ve been wondering about the same thing. [performs some gestures] Am I a panda? A goose? A student? A teacher? Turns out, I’m all of them,”

where Po successfully identifies multiple identities, he has discovered throughout the story. In the end, Po defeats Kai by unleashing all his chi power, overwhelming Kai, who cannot contain it, thus eliminating the threat that triggered his identity crisis. Prior to this, Po received an immense power of chi with the help of the denizens of the panda secret village, which plays the role of a reference group. In that scene, the reference group acts as a group of individuals capable of upholding understanding through the motivation of one’s behavior (Fernandes & Panda, 2019). In this context, interpersonal communication is present through the social behavior of the mind, self, society, and culture in the scene where Po receives assistance from others (Mead, 2015).

The fifth and last stage of the narrative structure is the reinstatement of equilibrium, which is part of the final stage of a story that signifies the protagonist’s success in repairing the damage and restoring peace. Po successfully defeats Kai in this narrative structure, eliminating all the evil threats. Table 6 provides scenes under the reinstatement of the equilibrium narrative structure, indicating that Po has successfully found answers to his identity as part of addressing his identity crisis.

In this scene, Shifu acknowledges that Po has successfully found his identity as a teacher

**Table 6 Script of the “Po Teaches Chi to Denizens of The Valley” Scene**

Character Name/ Scene Description	Script
	
Po	Master Shifu!
Shifu	The student has truly become the tea... [looks at Po's staff] Wait, where did you get that?
Po	Oh, this. Oogway gave it to me in the spirit realm.
Shifu	[sighs] Of course he did.
Po	[meekly] I think I mastered chi.
Shifu	[facepalms] Of course you did. Can you... teach me?
Scene Description	[The scene transitions to everyone training at the Jade Palace arena. Po and the Five train from the top of the stairs, while the panda villagers train from below.]
Po	Ready!
Scene Description	[The Jade Palace servants play music and shoot fireworks. Other villagers from the valley come to watch. Bao kicks a ball into the air and accidentally knocks Grandma Panda unconscious. Po orders more fireworks to be shot as a distraction.]
Scene Description	[Po looks all around the arena. He sees Shifu bowing before him. Po bows back. He then does a chi stance. Everyone else then does the same. A yellow shockwave of chi is released from the valley. Flowers bloom in the distance.]

Source: Kung Fu Panda 3, 2016

and a chi master. The narration states that Shifu even asks Po to teach him chi. Here, Po gains confidence in his identity as the Dragon Warrior, a teacher, and a chi master. Furthermore, Po can positively impact the entire Valley by teaching them how to use chi, meaning that he also guides everyone to recognize their own identities. The blooming flowers symbolize the powerful and beautiful chi and the recognition of one's identity that has emerged within the community of the Valley. With this, Po has successfully overcome the disruption that occurred and is on his way to harmony along with his true identity, marking the end of handling the identity crisis.

This scene is chosen to be within the

reinstatement of equilibrium stage because it is a final scene that demonstrates Po's continued manifestation of the identity already within him. In the end, Po can live with his newfound identity, fulfilling the meaning held and embracing the natural responsibilities of each identity mentioned in the narration. Here, not only has the disruption been conquered, but Po can now live his life according to the identity he has discovered. Therefore, this scene falls within the narrative structure of reinstatement of equilibrium.

This scene presents Interpersonal communication between Po and the entire Valley, especially with Shifu. Po returns to

the real world carrying the Yin and Yang staff, surprising Shifu. Moreover, Shifu, as Po's teacher and significant other, acknowledges Po's success as a teacher and mastery of chi, reinforcing the strength of the identity already present in Po. Significant others in this scene play a role that can impact responses from moment to moment through mental representation (Andersen et al., 2016). All the Valley residents create a collective response to Po, forming a united mental support for Po's self-confidence and demonstrating the benefits of interpersonal communication in handling Po's identity crisis. This is evident in the following narration from Shifu:

“Of course, you've mastered it. Can you... teach me?”

Shifu's humility gives Po respect for claiming his identity as a teacher and, overall, as the Dragon Warrior. In the final part of the scene, there is interaction between Po and Shifu, indicating recognition from Shifu to Po and mutual respect between the two characters. It is evident in the scene description:

“Po looks around the arena. He sees Shifu bowing before him. Po bows back.”

Furthermore, there is also interpersonal communication between Po and all the residents of the Valley attending kung fu training and chi technique usage. The enthusiasm and presence of others, as significant others and a reference group, give Po tremendous self-confidence. The reference group in this scene acts as individuals, providing a perspective to understand how a

group influences the behavior or attitudes of a particular person (Rothenbusch et al., 2016). Po realizes that anyone can master chi and practice kung fu according to their preferences by knowing their own identity, opening Po's perspective in continuing the future of kung fu. Po aims to complete the process and handle his identity crisis, taking on the responsibilities of each identity he possesses for the upcoming story. It demonstrates the impact of interpersonal communication in handling Po's identity crisis. In this context, interpersonal communication is present through the social behavior of the mind, self, society, and culture in the scene where Po teaches chi to the Valley residents (Mead, 2015).

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion drawn from this research is derived through analyzing the identity crisis handling of the character Po in the *Kung Fu Panda 3* film using Tzvetan Todorov's narrative structure analysis method with the Lacey and Gillespie approach. The results are obtained through five stages of narrative structure: equilibrium, disruption, recognition of disruption, attempt to repair disruption, and reinstatement of equilibrium. Five scenes have been selected to represent each of the five stages, each illustrating the process of Po's identity crisis throughout the story of *Kung Fu Panda 3* film. With the assistance of the theoretical study of interpersonal communication, this study involves the role of significant others and

reference groups, along with the four social behaviors—mind, self, society, and culture.

In the equilibrium stage and the disruption stage, only the role of significant others is present to support Po in handling his identity crisis, whereas after the first two stages, both the role of significant others and reference group are present in the recognition of disruption stage, the attempt to repair disruption stage, and the reinstatement of equilibrium stage to further support Po in handling his identity crisis, through interpersonal communication along with social behavior of the mind, self, society, and culture.

This research serves as a commencement towards narrative analysis that aims to strive for more communication perspective-related analysis in future research and study. This research also serves practical implications for narrative structure reference, especially for animated films, which tend to emphasize the significance of the film's moral to the audience

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