Name: Winifrey Chan, Ka Lai

Student no: S00658291

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M,W,F –1:00-2:50pm

A Review of a Sociological movie

The movie that I watched is ‘Happy Feet’. It is a computer-animated film with music.

Although it is an animated film, it does incorporate live action humans in certain scenes.

It talks about a group of penguin (the Emperor Penguins). The main character of the film

is called Mumble, who cannot sing well but can dance very well (tap dancing). However,

in the Emperor Penguin’s world, singing is extremely important. They even think that if a

penguin cannot sing well, it will not be regarded as a penguin. Because of this, Mumble

is discriminated by the others.

Besides this, the elder penguins see their lack of fish as a punishment from the god (the

Great 'Guin) for Mumble's dancing. Mumble tries to explain about the mysterious

‘aliens’, which means the human, and that they are the cause of the scarceness of fish,

but only his mother and Gloria believe him. Noah exiles Mumble from the colony.

Mumble vows that he will find the real cause of the famine. Finally he succeeds and

Antarctic fishing is banned, and the fish population recovers.

First, I’d like to talk about the culture of the Emperor Penguins. The value of singing to

the Emperor Penguins is extraordinarily high, and fishes are very important to them too.

Their ideology is that ‘Unity is strength’, and they think all things they get are given by

the god (the Great ‘Guin), so they honor the god very much. They believe if they pray

the god sincerely, they can have fish. They have a norm that using a unique song to

attract a mate. Every penguin sings a unique song called a ‘heart song’ to attract a mate.

If the female likes the male and his song, and if it completes the female's song, the two

penguins mate. The symbols they use is the ‘penguin language’, and also by singing in

order to express their feelings. Hence, to the penguin, a ‘heart song’ symbolizes true

love. Also, ‘aliens’ symbolizes the human. The penguins have different roles. For the

females, their role is to fish while for the males, their role is to struggle through the

harsh winter and protect the eggs, the babies. For the kids, their role is to go to school

and learn singing.

Secondly, I’d like to talk about how was the group of the penguins formed. Their

hierarchy is clear. The leader is Noah as he is the oldest. The other penguins are ranked

by age, and by how well they can sing (the quality of singing). Their main goal is to be

alive and to catch as many fishes as possible. Their punishment is that if a penguin

cannot sing well or do something against the god, he will be exiled from the colony.

They have a rule that when the males are hatching, they must not move their foot in

order to avoid the eggs drop away. The division of labor is that the males are

responsible to protect the babies while the females are responsible to fish.

Moreover, while the males are struggling through the harsh winter, they have to take

turns to go to the outside in order to block the strong wind. Their argot is that the

‘heart song’ symbolizes true love and ‘aliens’ symbolizes the human.

The third sociological concept I found from the film is the theory of deviance within the

individual. Mumble becomes a deviant because his deviating personalities: having blue

eyes, ever-lasting down feathers, a terrible singing voice, and always dance the ‘tap

dancing’. He is ostracized by most of the other penguins except his mother and Gloria.

Furthermore, the concept of ‘ethnocentrism’ can be found in the film. All the penguins

believe that the cause of the scarceness of fish is due to Mumble’s dancing makes the

god angry. When Mumble tries to explain about the mysterious ’aliens’ and says they

are the real cause of famine, all other penguins do not trust him and regard him as

abnormal.

Apart from the above concepts, direct controls are found from the film too. The first

one is: Memphis (the father of Mumble) and Noah restrict Mumble cannot dance. They

command him cannot dance directly. And because Mumble does not follow, he is exiled

from the colony. Another direct control is the government bans Antarctic fishing.

Other than direct control, there is indirect control as well. That is, the marine park (named

Marine World) can teach people the principal or the value of life when the visitors visit the park.

They can tell the visitors the problem that the penguins are facing. So the visitors will pay more

attentions to the over fishing issue and learn not to do so.