

### **Moral Values in Jerry Spinelli's *Stargirl***

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study is to depict the moral values of Susan Caraway that turns into the name of Stargirl in Jerry Spinelli's *Stargirl*. Susan Caraway is a school student who wants to get popularity by the name of Stargirl. Though she gets her dream of being popular, yet, she shows her moral values to her friends. Using a qualitative descriptive method and descriptive and dramatic method as well as Robert Audi's theory of moral values, and by explaining the main character's moral values, quoting the related quotation in the novel about the moral values, and analysing the quotation related to the theory, then the researcher herself as the instrument of the study finds that Susan Caraway shows her moral values such as beneficence, honesty, and gratitude. Beneficence, then, is separated into having positive thinking, being responsible, and having self-control. Honesty is performed in the form of not being a liar, whilst, gratitude is performed in the form of appreciation other's goodness.

**Key words:** Moral Value; Beneficence; Honesty; Gratitude

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Moral values seem to play very important roles in any field of study; Gary L. Francione (2020), Joel Marks (2021), Jason Hickel, et. al (2019), Batya Friedman, et. al, (2019), Jeffrey T. Young (2024), Jim Baxter (2021), R. Scott Smith (2014), D. Ralph Ellis (2018), Robert Audi (2023), and Steven C. Heuvel (2018), all of whom come up with different understanding of moral value since they are people with different expertise. According to Francione, the term human refers to the DNA, whilst, person to morality. Marks states that morality is real in human since moral judgments, moral language, and moralistic ways of thinking are attached to human.

Hickel states that people can be free from all orientations but not moral orientation. Friedman, et. al, state that morality determines a quality in life, in society, in human's condition, and in other living creatures' condition.

Young states that Adam Smith explains about natural phenomena caused by moral that the respect is forwarded to the human not to the things produced by human. Baxter states that from morality view point, psychopath exists due to the fact that he does not see others as having value. Smith states that morality only belongs to human being. Ellis states that moral psychology can lead people to ethics. Audi classifies major moral principles as follows: harm that people are not to do any harm, lying that people are not to tell a lie, promising that people are to keep their promise, justice that people are to treat others fairly, beneficence that people are to do good deeds to others, reparation that people are to make amends to their mistakes to others, gratitude that people are to be grateful to others' kindness. Heuvel at. al, state that human's moral values are connected to moral reasons, principles as well as hopes whose sources refer to moral self and God.

It seems that the discussion of moral value cannot be avoided of the existence of human, on one hand. On the other hand, human being's depiction can be seen in literary work as Philip Tew states that novels that play important roles by explaining and participating dialectically with human beings' historical presence, play their part in human beings' understanding of and reflection upon human beings' lives (Prokrivcak, 2010). Therefore, the researcher comes to the understanding that moral values are attached to two-legged animals with senses called human being or referring to Francione's term persons. As the existence of a person can be seen in two worlds, world of reality and world of fiction, therefore, the researcher here refers to Jerry Spinelli's *Stargirl*. Indeed, in *Stargirl*, there are three characters having moral values: Susan, Leo, and Kevin. However, since the role of Leo and Kevin is not played so importantly in the story, the researcher, then chooses Susan Caraway to analyze in spite of the fact that Susan Caraway that turns her name into Stargirl for a popularity purpose, the main character of the novel, has the moral values mentioned by Robert Audi: beneficence, honesty, and gratitude. The researcher, then, gets interested in raising moral values as the topic. Beside of Susan Caraway's moral values towards her friends, which are worth a discussion, the researcher's other reason is that people with moral values give others pieces since moral values spread kindness to others. In addition, the prophet Muhammad states that the most perfect man in his faith among the believers is the one whose behaviour is the most excellent. Then, how Susan's moral values are depicted in this study becomes the researcher's mainly focus.

To get the novelty of the study, the researcher refers to the previous studies conducted by Maysarah Mitsla, et. al (2021), Andrian Nasser, et. al (2022), and Fitri Marini, et. al (2022), none of whom uses the theory of moral values from Robert Audi: beneficence, honesty, and gratitude. From the viewpoint of the theory, the researcher's theory has the novelty. Likewise, the researcher's finding has the novelty since Mitsla's finding of moral values: good attitude, justice, responsible,

courageous, Marini's: courageous, honest, patient, responsible, humble, and Nasser's: honest, responsible, modest, and brave are excluded from the researcher's finding. Though there is one similarity that is honesty, still, the researcher's study has the novelty.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Previous Related Study

Recently, there has been studies on moral values; the first study refers to Maisyarah Mitsla, et. al (2021). In an article *Moral Values in Jodi Picoult's My Sister's Keeper*, Mitsla et. al analyze basic moral principles and moral personality attitudes of the characters. Using moral values theory by Suseno, the study shows that there are two elements of moral values: basic moral principles and moral personality attitudes with the former referring to good attitude and justice, whilst, the latter referring to willingness to take responsibility and moral courage.

The second study refers to Fitri Marini, et. al (2022) analyzing the moral values of Edward Cole and Carter Chambers in an article *Moral Values in Justin Zackham's Movie Script the Bucket List*. Using Bertrens' moral values theory, the study shows that Edward Cole and Carter Chambers have the moral values such as courage, honesty, patience, responsibility, and humility due to which a lot of people are given advantages.

The last study refers to an article *Moral Values in Roald Dahl's Danny, the Champion of the World* studied by Andrian Nasser, et. al (2022). They, then, analyze the moral values of Danny. Using respective theory proposed by Schwartz and Boehnke, the study shows that Danny has the moral values of honesty, responsibility, modesty, and bravery. Thus, it is clear that since the researcher's study of moral values show the result of beneficence, honesty, and gratitude attached to the main character of Susan Caraway once turning into stargirl, therefore, the researcher's study has the novelty.

### Moral Principles

The researcher uses the theory of moral value by Robert Audi that classifies moral values as follows: harm, lying, promising, justice, not punishing people unfairly, beneficence, reparation, and gratitude. By harm, he means that people should not hurt other people. By lying, he means people should speak and behave honestly. By promising, he means people should keep their words. By justice, he means people should play fairly, correct injustice, not sentence others unfairly. By beneficence, he means people should be kind to others. By reparation, he means people should amend to what they have done wrong to others and by gratitude, he means people should be grateful to other people that are meaningful to us (2023). However, not all the mentioned moral values above are discussed here. The researcher only chooses beneficence, honesty (the researcher derives from not punishing people

unfairly), and gratitude because beneficence, honesty, and gratitude are excluded from the previous studies above. Consequently, by using the three mentioned moral values, this study has the novelty.

## **METHOD**

### **Design and Sample**

The researcher refers to a qualitative descriptive method and descriptive and dramatic method. The former is the determination of the complication and the observation of the maintenance of the study and of the factors affecting it (Nassaji, 2015). Further, there are aspects in this method such as deep observation and exploration that must be conducted, besides descriptive qualitative is worth an application for the examination of the social aspects of the study (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). Therefore, the researcher uses this method to elaborate the moral values of Susan Caraway turning into stargirl in Jerry Spinelli's *Stargirl*.

The latter refers to how the researcher describes, discusses, and reports the speech and action of the character, then, how the researcher presents and analyzes Stargirl's moral values. Consequently, the researcher uses Robert Audi's three kinds of moral value: beneficence, honesty, and gratitude to be a main method to analyze moral values in Jerry Spinelli's *Stargirl*.

Whilst, the sample population are taken from Jerry Spinelli's *Stargirl* from which the researcher quotes the words that have things to do with moral values: beneficence, honesty, and gratitude. Thus, not all words are worthy of quotation here.

### **Instrument and Procedure**

Since it is a literary study, therefore, the instrument of this study is the researcher herself through grouping the data: beneficence, honesty, and gratitude. The researcher then gives explanation of the kinds of moral values and then get the quotation from the grouping. Alas, the researcher is made easy by such a procedure.

### **Data Analysis**

There are four steps in this data analysis; the first step is the researcher's explanation of the main character's beneficence, honesty, and gratitude. The second step is the researcher's quotation connected to beneficence, honesty, and gratitude. The last step is the researcher's analysis of the quotation and the connection of the quotations to beneficence, honesty, and gratitude by Robert Audi's moral values in case of the mistaken quotation.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1) Moral Values Depicted in Susan Caraway's Character

As explained above that this study describes how moral values are in Jerry Spinelli's *Stargirl*, therefore, this study explores moral values theory by Robert Audi: beneficence, honesty, and gratitude. The moral values, further, discussed here actually give the novelty of the study since there is only one similarity in the moral values with the previous study, that is, honesty. Whilst, good attitude, justice, responsibility, moral courage (Mitsla, 2021), honesty, patience, responsibility, modesty, bravery (Marini, 2022), honesty, responsibility, bravery, modesty (Nasser, 2022) are excluded in this discussion except honesty.

#### a. Beneficence

Beneficence refers to having positive thinking, being responsible, and having self-control. The researcher considers that beneficence here commences the novelty of this study, though within beneficence, there is responsibility which as at first glimpse it is similar to the previous study. On the contrary, it is not. The main character, Susan, later on calls herself as Stargirl, is a thoughtful girl in that she thinks positively to matters she confronts. Her positive thinking is shown by the fact that her desire to be a popular girl in the school community does not come true yet. "It's going to be okay! It's going to end! I had a vision!" (Spinelli, 2001). This positive thinking is said to Leo who has been upset for Susan for her not achieving the mentioned dream. However, Susan responds somewhat positive. Thus, through her saying 'it's going to end!' it means that Susan does her friend a favour to please Leo's heart. In other word, Susan does something beneficent. Indeed, Susan is not necessary to entertain Leo as the problem simply belongs to her that no one in the school would like to close to her at lunch. It is the value of morality to prevent the other from unnecessary deep sadness.

In spite of encouraging Leo through her positive thinking, Susan also encourages her other friend through her positive thinking. Susan's comradeship with Dori Dilson almost draws to an end because Dori Dilson is disappointed by Susan turning into Susan Caraway from the stargirl. Dori Dilson threatens not to give supports for her speech contest. "But I know Dori," she said, "and I'll tell you one thing." "What's that?" "She'll be in the front of the mob cheering for me when we get back tomorrow." (Spinelli, 2001). Though this conversation is spoken to other friend instead of Dori Dilson, however, her positive thinking about Dori is fruitful. Dori Dilson no longer hates Susan. She greets Susan in their school gate to congratulate Susan for the speech contest she won. This morality of Susan is excluded from Danny, Edward, and Campbell characterization of moral values in the works in the previous studies, respectively. What happens to Susan here can be traced back to a religious teaching that positive thinking (husnu dzon) even to God always gives beneficial effects to the person that God is with His servant's thinking.

Other beneficence Susan shows is being responsible. Narwanti (2014) states that responsibility is related to someone's job or duty. In other words, the researcher dares say that responsibility refers to somebody's capability to put their life at stake for judgements or anything about their life. Though responsibility here does not stand alone as the previous studies above, however, it is worthy an explanation to get clear of the novelty of this study. Nasser at all (2022) in their article regards Danny's father as having responsibility raising his son as a single parent "When I was four months old, my mother died suddenly and my father was left to look after me all by himself. I had no brothers or sisters. So all through my boyhood, from the age of four months onward, there were just the two of us, my father and me." To them, Danny's father, acting like a mother, has a moral value through bringing his son up alone. Mitsla in her article also regards Campbell as having a moral value to save Anna from jail "Anna," I say, at the exact moment as Sara Fitzgerald. It is my responsibility to explain to Anna that Judge De Salvo wants a few minutes in private" (2021) because Campbell is Anna's lawyer. The researcher thinks otherwise. What Danny's father does to him is an obligation though he has to act like a mother. Likewise, Campbell's action towards Anna is not a sort of moral value. It is a sort of job description, instead.

As explained above that Susan's dream is to be popular at her school but no school mates are near to her at lunch meaning that she will have no supports from the audiences when her duty to be a cheer leader addresses her. Being responsible, she welcomes the duty. Cheerleading practice drew a crowd. At least a hundred of us stood by the parking lot that day, watching her learn the cheers, watching her jump around in her long pioneer dress. She spent two weeks practicing. Halfway through the second week, she wore her uniform: green-trimmed white V-neck cotton sweater, short green and white pleated skirt. She looked just like the rest of them (Spinelli, 2001).

The quotation above shows Susan's hard effort to be a good cheer leader. It is her responsibility to raise her school's reputation that through the cheer leading the victory of the game will be on her school's side. Her effort then comes into fruitful. She is elected to be the cheer leader, "let's do it. Schedule her" (Spinelli, 2001). It is again a beneficence shown by Susan to do her school good instead of harmful because her involvement to encourage the school's team is a sort of responsibility. Further, the researcher believes that what Susan has done is a strategic way that she wants to be popular, therefore, through her involvement in the cheer leading, she has two kinds of beneficences one for the school team and the other is for herself, being popular 'At least a hundred of us stood by the parking lot that day, watching her learn the cheers, watching her jump around in her long pioneer dress.' Different from Danny's father's and Campbell's actions above, Susan's action here is a sort of moral value since what she does is neither a natural obligation like Danny's father's nor business one like Campbell's. Thus, Susan's action here refers to two novelties, the one that belongs to beneficence excluded from the previous studies, the other one though belonging to responsibility (within beneficence), still the

responsibility in the two previous studies the researcher thinks does not have the moral value, whilst, Susan's responsibility does.

The last example of the beneficence shown by Susan is a self-control. As commonly understood that self-control refers to the capability to control emotion in order that long-term results are well chosen, on one hand. On the other hand, the impulsivity, the results of the short-term is ignored. Then, Susan controls her emotions here when she has a little problem with Leo Borlock and Hillari Kimble. The former refers to the incident in front of Susan's house when Leo Borlock tails Susan. It is a sort of a humiliation towards Susan. However, Susan remains calm. Likewise, when Susan asks him about his personal matter with his response "None of your business" (Spinelli, 2001), Susan does not grow angry. She apologizes, instead. This kind of behaviour is beneficent for Susan and Leo Borlock's sides. For Susan, she still owns comradeship with Leo Borlock, whilst, for Leo Borlock he feels respected for his personal matters are not further questioned by Susan.

The latter refers to Hillari Kimble's hatred to Susan and even till the end of the story this hatred remains still. It is an incident when Hillari Kimble accuses of Susan of ruining everything then slapping her. Being accused and slapped, Susan is able to control herself by kissing her friend, whilst, Hillari is ready for Susan's revenge as well as slap to her. "But it was lips that touched her, not the palm of a hand. Stargirl kissed her gently on the cheek. She was gone by the time Hillari opened her eyes" (Spinelli, 2001). In fact, Susan easily snaps Hillari knowing that Hillari closes her eyes for Susan's retaliation that is quite fair enough if Susan does that. However, Susan shows her moral value by not doing so. The beneficence Susan shows is that she does no harms to her friend who did her harm. Again, this is the moral value shown by being able to control herself. This self-control of Susan towards Leo Borlock and Hillari Kimble is regarded as having the novelty of this study as it is within beneficence and no previous studies above discuss self-control as moral value.

#### **b. Honesty**

There are two articles in the previous studies above mentioning honesty in Nasser's and Marini's. However, the researcher comes to the agreement with Nasser's but not with Marini's. Whilst, honesty in Nasser's refers to Danny's father who is under police suspicion of mixing the petrol he sales but he confirms the police's finding of his honesty by saying "Of course we were not doing this ..." (Nasser, 2022). It has a similarity with the researcher's study that the concept of honesty in Nasser's and in the researcher's is the same that it is about a truth that does not do other people harm. It is the moral value. The honesty in this study refers to Susan's condition as a guest in her school TV program called Hot Seat. Though she changes her name it does not mean that she is a liar. She does it merely for professional matters. Why she changes it, she answers honestly.

"Nothing. It was a good name." "What was it?"

"Susan."

“So why did you drop it?”

“Because I didn’t feel like Susan anymore.”

“So you just threw out Susan and named yourself Stargirl.”

“No.” Still smiling.

“No?” (Spinelli, 2001).

Susan Caraway has been in a habit of referring to herself as Stargirl. In fact, she does the change of her name a few times. Susan does that as she thinks that she does not feel comfortable for her popularity. No sooner does Susan become a strange girl in the mind of MAHS students than Susan's quirkiness quickly spread throughout the MAHS students. Consequently, Susan is invited to the Hot Seat because Hot Seat always invites attractive students. When the audience asks about herself, Susan answers all questions honestly. She does not even try to hide anything. Though she knows she will be mocked in the end because of her answer, she does not care about that. Susan still answers all the students' questions honestly. She does not want to lie and cover up the facts. This is the moral value of Susan. Though she puts her popularity at stake, she maintains her telling the truth to the audiences.

In Marini's, the researcher thinks that the concept of honesty is different from Nasser's and the researcher's that Carter regards Virginia, his wife, as childish after forty five years of marriage as an honesty (Marini, 2022) is a mistake. It should be a patience. Therefore, honesty applied as a moral value in her article is mistaken. Thus, though there is a similarity between Nasser's finding and the researcher's finding, still, the researcher's study has the novelty since the other findings are different.

### **c. Gratitude**

Gratitude refers to appreciation to others. Appreciation has been shown by Susan towards Leo Borlock who feels compassion to her of other friends' mockery. Indeed, Leo Borlock hopes so much that Susan stops using names that are not her names. Accordingly, Susan gives him a positive response by going back to her real name, Susan Caraway. This is a kind of appreciation to a friend caring for her reputation.

“I’m answering your question. The answer is yes. I’m giving up on trying to be popular and normal.” Her face and body language did not seem to match her words. She looked cheery, perky. So did Cinnamon, perched on her shoulder (Spinelli, 2001).

The quotation above shows Susan's appreciation towards Leo though ‘her face and body language did not seem to match her words.’ This indicates that Susan's heart is against Leo's will. However, Susan ‘looked cheery, perky.’ In addition of the appreciation, Susan wishes to be close to Leo at the end of the story. The researcher regards Susan's will is more than appreciation towards Leo. It could be said as thankfulness. To express her appreciation, further, she gives up calling herself stargirl. She comes back to her birth name, Susan Caraway. Then, the researcher regards the moral value of Susan, being grateful, as having the novelty since the previous studies' findings show no gratitude as moral value.



In a nutshell, Susan Caraway once turning into Stargirl really has moral values such as beneficence, honesty, and gratitude which commonly are excluded from the previous studies above. Consequently, this study has the novelty.

## CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, the researcher comes to the conclusion that Susan Caraway has moral values mentioned by Robert Audi: beneficence, honesty, and gratitude. Beneficence, then, is divided into having positive thinking, being responsible, and having self-control. Honesty is presented in the form of not lying to others, whilst, gratitude is presented in the form of appreciating other's kindness. To develop the literary study, the researcher then hopes so much that other researchers get attracted to analyse this novel with the same topic but with different theory.

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