

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Studies have shown that media frequently reproduces gender stereotypes, objectification, and sexualization, thereby reinforcing sexist assumptions about women and men (Santoniccolo et al., 2023). Early feminist film critics such as Haskell (1974) and Rosen (1973) argue that mainstream cinema has historically represented women through narrow and restrictive roles that reflect patriarchal values. Mulvey (1975) further demonstrates that cinematic form itself may position women as objects of visual pleasure within a male-centered structure of looking. These perspectives establish film as an important site for analyzing how gendered power relations are represented, reproduced, and potentially challenged.

However, examining women's representation solely through the lens of gender is insufficient. Such an approach risks treating women as a homogenous category and overlooking the social differences that shape their experiences. To address this limitation, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989; 1991) introduces the concept of intersectionality, arguing that systems of oppression such as sexism, racism, and class inequality do not operate separately but intersect to produce compounded forms of marginalization. Intersectionality challenges single-axis analyses by emphasizing that women's experiences cannot be understood through gender alone; rather, they must be examined through the interaction of multiple social identities and structures of power. In her discussion of political intersectionality, Crenshaw (1991) further argues that feminist movements themselves may reproduce exclusion

when they fail to account for internal differences among women. This argument is particularly significant because it complicates the assumption that shared gender identity automatically creates unity or solidarity.

Building on this perspective, scholars of collective action have emphasized that solidarity is not a natural consequence of shared oppression, but a political process shaped by differences in power, privilege, and vulnerability. Roth (2021) notes that social movements are structured by multiple axes of inequality that affect participation, agenda-setting, and whose voices are heard within collective activism. In this sense, solidarity must be understood not simply as togetherness, but as a process of negotiating differences among participants who occupy unequal social positions.

This view is further developed by Ciccio and Roggeband (2021), who conceptualize intersectional solidarity as an ongoing and negotiated political process. According to them, solidarity within feminist movements may take different forms depending on how differences are addressed. They propose two important dimensions for analyzing solidarity. The first is the framing dimension, which concerns whether collective action is built upon a common-denominator understanding of shared oppression or whether it explicitly recognizes internal differences among participants. The second is the transformative dimension, which concerns whether solidarity merely coordinates collective action or also challenges internal asymmetries, privilege, and unequal power relations within the movement itself. This framework is highly relevant because it shifts solidarity from being

understood as automatic unity toward being viewed as a contested and evolving practice.

Such a perspective is particularly useful in examining feminist activism in school settings. Schools are not neutral spaces; they are institutions in which hierarchies of gender, race, class, popularity, and social legitimacy are constantly reproduced through everyday interaction. In this environment, female students may experience sexism differently depending on their racial background, class position, confidence, or social status within peer culture. As a result, collective resistance among female students cannot simply be assumed to emerge from shared gendered experience. Instead, it must be understood as something constructed across differences, shaped by recognition, negotiation, and internal critique.

These issues are significantly portrayed in *Moxie* (2021), a film directed by Amy Poehler and adapted from Jennifer Mathieu's novel. Set in a high school environment, the film presents the emergence of a feminist student movement in response to normalized sexism, harassment, institutional negligence, and gendered double standards. Through the experiences of Vivian and other female students, *Moxie* depicts not only resistance against patriarchal school culture, but also the tensions, differences, and uneven risks that shape collective feminist action. The film shows that the girls involved in the movement do not occupy the same social position. Their experiences are influenced by intersecting factors such as race, class, cultural background, and popularity, which affect how they respond to sexism and participate in activism. Therefore, *Moxie* offers a relevant narrative for examining how intersectional solidarity among female students is portrayed.

Several previous studies have analyzed *Moxie* from feminist perspectives. Alvita (2023) focuses on feminist ideological strands represented in the film. Chairunnisa, Moelier, and Asyrafunnisa (2023) examine signs of gender inequality through a semiotic approach. St. Khadijah et al. (2024) analyze forms of gender injustice in the school setting, while Fathurokhmah et al. (2024) discuss androcentrism and male-centered discourse in the film. Nisrina and Anggraeni (2025) investigate discrimination against female students within a liberal feminist framework. These studies provide valuable contributions to the understanding of sexism, feminist resistance, and gender inequality in *Moxie*. Nevertheless, they tend to focus on identifying oppression, categorizing feminist ideas, or exposing patriarchal structures. Limited attention has been given to how solidarity among female students is portrayed as an intersectional, negotiated, and internally differentiated process.

Previous research has not sufficiently examined how intersecting identities among female students shape collective action in the film, how solidarity is framed across differences, and how internal asymmetries are negotiated within the movement. This gap is important because *Moxie* does not merely portray girls resisting sexism together; it also depicts the complexity of building solidarity among students who do not share the same degree of privilege, risk, or social legitimacy.

Based on this gap, this study analyzes the portrayal of intersectional solidarity among female students in *Moxie* (2021). Drawing on Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality (1989; 1991) and Ciccio and Roggeband's (2021) framework of

intersectional solidarity, this study examines how intersecting identities are represented, how solidarity is framed, and how differences and internal asymmetries are negotiated within the student movement. Through this analysis, the study seeks to show that solidarity in *Moxie* is portrayed not as automatic unity among girls, but as an evolving and contested process shaped by intersecting social identities and collective feminist struggle.

1.2. Research Questions

The research questions of this study are:

1. How are female students intersectionally positioned in *Moxie* (2021) through gender, race, class, ability, body type, and social visibility?
2. How is intersectional solidarity portrayed among female students in *Moxie* (2021), specifically through common-denominator framing, recognition-of-differences framing, and transformative praxis?

1.3. Research Objectives

This study aims to analyze the portrayal of intersectional solidarity among female students in *Moxie* (2021). Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Identify how female students are intersectionally positioned through gender, race, class, ability, body type, and social visibility.
2. To examine how intersectional solidarity is portrayed among female students, focusing on:

- Common-denominator framing: how shared experiences unite the group.
- Recognition-of-differences framing: how internal differences and hierarchies are acknowledged.
- Transformative praxis: how the group negotiates, acts collectively, and redistributes risk or agency.

1.4. Scope of the Study

This study examines the experiences and collective actions of female students in *Moxie* (2021), focusing on how their identities are shaped by the intersection of gender, race, class, ability, body type, cultural expectations, and social visibility. It further explores how these students develop solidarity, highlighting collective actions that unite them around shared experiences while recognizing differences and negotiating risk within the group. The analysis uses dialogue-based narrative analysis to capture the experiences, interactions, and activism of female students, applying common-denominator framing, recognition-of-differences framing, and transformative praxis to understand how solidarity is constructed and enacted. The study is limited to the representations found within the film and does not include visual analysis, audience reception, or interpretations outside the dialogue content.

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study is expected to provide both academic and practical contributions.

Academically, this research contributes to feminist film studies by foregrounding intersectional solidarity as an analytical focus in the study of *Moxie* (2021). While previous research predominantly examines gender discrimination or identifies feminist ideological strands within the film, this study shifts the emphasis toward solidarity as a negotiated and dynamic process shaped by intersecting social identities. By applying Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality and Ciccia and Roggeband's framework of intersectional solidarity, this research offers a more nuanced understanding of how collective feminist activism is constructed, framed, and developed within cinematic narratives. It thus extends discussions of feminist representation beyond individual resistance to include the internal dynamics and negotiations within collective movements.

Practically, this study may assist readers and viewers in critically engaging with representations of feminist activism in popular culture. It highlights that solidarity among female characters is not portrayed as automatic unity, but as a process that involves recognizing differences and negotiating diverse social positions. Moreover, this research may serve as a reference for future studies exploring intersectional solidarity, coalition-building, and collective action in films and other narrative media.

1.6. State of Art

Recent studies on *Moxie* (Poehler, 2021) have mainly focused on the representation of gender inequality, feminist ideology, and women's resistance within the high school context. Research by Alvita (2023), Chairunnisa, Moelier, and Asyrafunnisa (2023), St. Khadijah et al. (2024), Fathurokhmah et al. (2024),

and Nisrina and Anggraeni (2025) examines the film through various feminist perspectives, including liberal feminism, radical feminism, feminist discourse analysis, and theories of gender injustice. These studies generally emphasize the identification of discrimination, the classification of feminist ideological strands, and the depiction of institutional sexism in contemporary teen film.

Although these studies provide important contributions to the understanding of feminist representation in *Moxie*, their analytical focus largely remains on documenting forms of inequality or interpreting resistance as a thematic outcome. In many cases, solidarity among female students is treated as a narrative consequence of shared gender-based oppression rather than examined as a complex and negotiated process. While some studies acknowledge diversity and marginalization among female characters, limited attention has been given to how intersecting identities, such as race, class, and social positioning, shape the formation and development of collective activism in the film.

More specifically, the framing of solidarity within the movement and the negotiation of differences and internal asymmetries among female students have not been systematically analyzed. Existing scholarship tends to foreground gender as the primary axis of analysis, thereby overlooking the intersectional dimensions that influence participation, voice, and positioning within the collective.

Therefore, this study addresses this gap by foregrounding intersectional solidarity as its central analytical concern. Drawing on Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality (1989; 1991) and Ciccio and Roggeband's (2021) framework of intersectional solidarity, this research moves beyond identifying discrimination to

examine how solidarity is portrayed across differences and how collective feminist activism is shaped by negotiation, unequal positioning, and internal dynamics. In doing so, this study offers a more specific contribution to scholarship on Moxie and to contemporary feminist film studies.

