

Conflicting Loyalties as Reflected in Ariel’s Social Interaction in Rob Marshall’s *The Little Mermaid* (2023)

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Abstract

People take on additional responsibilities by committing to multiple loyalties in order to adjust to society, which makes it challenging for them to maintain balance. Utilizing literary analysis, this thesis aims to examine how conflicting loyalties affect people’s decisions. With a focus on four main characters who are suggested to be dealing with loyalty issues, the impact obtained is also examined in order to discover how each character makes decisions in distinct ways. To detect conflicting loyalties, Parsons’s (1993) ethical framework is used as a theory to further the analysis by examining characters’s decision-making, which is influenced by their conflicting loyalties. The outcome of this thesis demonstrates the shared loyalty conflicts between the character’s organizational loyalty and their personal or relational loyalty. Each character’s varied point of view (POV) results in a unique pattern of decision-making, which is developed step-by-step by Parsons (1993). By compiling the analysis using TEEL methods, the decision-making pattern includes clarifying values to identify loyalty in question, implementing a principle when putting on acts, and deciding which loyalty should be prioritized at the end.

Keywords: conflicting loyalties, responsibility, decisions, principle, personal discovery

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INTRODUCTION

According to Parsons (1993), with the accumulation of diverse responsibilities to various parties, only a small number of public practitioners agree on the possibility of fulfilling the assigned tasks in a balanced manner. Yet indeed, the public responsibility to which we owe loyalty seems wrong to ignore (Parsons, 1993). As a result of considering this, it is sometimes possible for each individual to experience psychological struggle because of being torn between two choices. Therefore, balancing choices is needed to resolve the problem.

According to Parmiani, Lafrate, and Guliani (2012) in *Loyalty Conflict, feelings of unfairness, and young adult’s individuation difficulties in separated and nonseparated families*, loyalty conflict often occurs in broken home environments (separation or divorce). To explain further, Pamiani, Lafrate, and Guliani define loyalty conflict through two experiences, namely feeling caught between parents and pressured to side with only one side. The study also found that young adults who are trapped in divorced or separated families are more prone to experiencing loyalty than those who live with intact families. To cope, some choose to distance themselves emotionally from their parents or, conversely, choose to become overly emotionally attached. If this conflict continues for a long time, it will affect the individual’s process either to maintain autonomy or to meet the pressure of their separated parents. Problems such as low self-esteem, fear of undergoing intimate relationships, or resentment that never subsides until experiencing emotional distress.

Williams (2009) describes conflicting loyalties as dual loyalties. A more familiar word is ‘conflict of interests,’ which has been the topic of substantial research in ethics, law, business, and other fields. However, unlike conflicts of interests, which are frequently between one’s interests and those of another individual, institution, or group, conflicting loyalties are conflicts between two incompatible outside-of-one’s obligations. Velasco (2018) states that professionals often have

dual obligations to the company and shareholders, among others, the obligation to be loyal. Although the company has firmly established it through its laws, the process of treating each obligation is in fact not equal (Velasco, 2018). To improve the prevention of unethical behavior, it is critical to understand how people handle conflicting loyalties (van Houwelingen et al., 2025). According to research conducted by Ylvisaker & Rugkåsa (2021), social workers explain how they deal with this by balancing implementing policies and providing services, while also maintaining control, helping people, and being loyal to clients, authorities involved, and colleagues.

Since its debut in 2023, *The Little Mermaid*, a Disney remake film adaptation, has captured audience's attention. The film, which is based on the fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen, portrays the mesmerizing narrative of Ariel, a youthful and lively mermaid who yearns to discover the surface world. Ambitious Ariel struggle with devotion towards her family and the underwater kingdom. *The Little Mermaid* portrays the challenges that people encounter when caught between their desires and obligations to others through the topic of conflicting loyalties, which plays throughout the entire story. Ariel falls in love with Prince Eric, a human prince she rescues from a shipwreck, as the story continues. Her desire to give up her mermaid life is fueled by her unexpected love, which also stimulates her interest in the human world.

In *The Little Mermaid*, Ariel faces a problem that perfectly demonstrates the themes of conflicting loyalties. She has to consider the benefits and risks of choices as she sets up her conflicted loyalty to her family and her desires. On the one hand, maintaining her commitment to her underwater kingdom and her father's expectations can bring her the benefit of a safe and comfortable life as well as the maintenance of her connection to her family. But the costs are giving up her dreams as well as the chance to find true love. The first animated movie released in 1989 signaled a new era in Disney animation, and it had a significant impact on how many viewers' childhoods were shaped. Its themes of the search for genuine love hit chords with viewers all across the world. While the first animated movie tells the story of Ariel's struggle to win Eric's love, the remake version displays a modern touch by presenting Ariel as a complex person. Her mission to get out of the sea life is no longer just to pursue the love of the prince, but also brings up themes of finding freedom, self-identity exploration, and rebellion to achieve dreams.

The movie has been previously analyzed by many researchers from several different perspectives. *Semiotic Analysis of The Little Mermaid Movie Poster* (2023) by Lanang Dwi Wicaksono and Nungki Heriyanti aims to analyze the signs and meanings of *The Little Mermaid* (2023) movie poster using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory. The result shows that the movie poster utilizes three distinct types of items, which include characters as Icons, Indexes, and Symbols. Additionally, *Part of Whose World? How The Little Mermaid (2023) Attempts to Revise the Racist Tropes of the 1989 Animated Film Musical* by Niall Richardson, analyzing how the live action remake movie corrects the depiction of racism in a previous animated movie released in 1989. Using a critical race theory, the results show that the remake version of the movie, despite its inclusive visual aesthetic, lacks racial awareness. Race is seen as an aesthetic rather than a political context. Therefore, both studies have some differences with this thesis, as the main focus of this thesis is on conflicting loyalties.

Another study by Katherine & Stefanie (2012) explains how useful fairy tales from any kinds of forms such as movies, books, and short stories have an impact as a resolver of ethical dilemmas that happen in school. They discussed the importance of decision-making through dilemmas and wanted to give the solutions by using illustrative literary works and one of them is fairy tales. According to Katherine & Stefanie (2012), using fairy tales for original illustrations of cases has the purpose of deepening students' awareness of the often-complex complexity of social decision-making. Giving them a chance to learn about problem-solving through decision-making using literary works such as fairy tales is the most effective way of character building too.

Previous studies above show its limited focus on conflicting loyalties, therefore, this study intended to address the issue of conflicting loyalties using literary work from the movie entitled *The Little Mermaid* (2023), as the topic of conflicting loyalties is rarely chosen and more frequently

used to analyze real-human events. Understanding how *The Little Mermaid* portrays conflicting loyalties could help readers to appreciate the movie as art on a deeper level and offers insights into the broader perspective of humanity. This study aims to gain knowledge about the complexities of decision-making, the importance of loyalty in interpersonal relationships, and the interaction between personal desires and familiar or social expectations by examining the decisions made by *Ariel* and other characters in the face of conflicting loyalties.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses the newest version of *The Little Mermaid*, released in 2023, as a primary source of data. Directed by Bob Marshall, this movie is 2 hours and 15 minutes long. The data will be collected in textual and visual forms. Facial expressions and body language will be collected with evidence captured in the form of screenshots to collect the visual data. The screenshots will be capturing specific camera angles and movement (close-up, long shot, medium shot, pan shot, etc.) based on shot-by-shot analysis proposed by Michael Ryan and Melissa Lenos (2012) along with lighting and color selection. The researcher will conduct an in-depth analysis by carefully watching the movie multiple times to exhibit a clear sign of conflicting loyalties identified in each character. Time stamps will be noted, and each selected scene where a major character faces conflicts will be categorized based on the type of loyalty conflict using Patricia's major types of loyalty framework, which includes four components: self, colleagues or peers, people served, and society. The data analysis will be conducted with the TEEL method. Each analysis begins with a clear topic sentence, followed by evidence and elaboration that depicts the conflicting loyalties. The elaboration will be linked to how conflicting loyalties affect a character's decision-making using Parson's three steps of ethical decision-making process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides an in-depth analysis of the study and is divided into two parts: identifying the portrayal of character's conflicting loyalties using Parson's four major types of loyalty and analyzing how the decisions are made based on conflicting loyalties using a Parson's ethical decision-making framework, which consists of three steps, starting from values clarification, applying principles, and loyalty selection.

Portrayal of Conflicting Loyalties in The Little Mermaid

1. Ariel's Conflicting Loyalties

As a main character, Ariel is known as a dreamer who is curious about the human world. That curiosity drove her to find out everything related to humans. In addition, Ariel's curiosity about the human world becomes a core driving force which operates as both the trait of character and narrative element which explores the deeper themes of the story. This curiosity is evident from Ariel's eagerness to learn about the human world and her recklessness to rebel against the system established by her father, the king. Ariel is very insistent on being a part of human life. However, it turns out that the little mermaid's longing about human world leads her to experiencing conflicting loyalties between her personal desires for freedom, and her family.



Figure 1, Ariel sits among the collected treasures (00:17:24)

Based on the figure 2, it shows how Ariel likes to collect human items thrown into the sea. The little girl keeps her collection in "secret cave" in order to no one even her father and older

sisters had no idea about it. The items collected are varied, starting from kitchen utensils (such as spoon, pans, and glasses), books, human paintings, mirrors, candle holder, even the fork she used to call as 'dingle hopper.' These objects Ariel collects symbolize desires, ideals, and in need for transformation in life. As a princess who never lacks, Ariel imagines herself becoming richer and freer in her own way. Even though the young girl completely innocence about its uses, yet when her friend Scuttle (seagull) tell her how it works as a hair comb, instead of being a passive listener, Ariel listens actively, imaginatively, and keeps her curiosity nourished. Another item is a smoking pipe, according to wrong information from Scuttle again, the little girl thought this thing functioned as a musical instrument that will make a sound when it blown on. In the story, Ariel might mishear the items, but that's what gives her a meaning, proving that curiosity could encourage individuals to form their own perceptions. This indicates Ariel begin to develop loyalty to self, as she needs to uphold her values by collecting things beyond her nature. (Pettit, JR. et al., 1990).



Figure 2, Ariel sings the song Part of your world (00:20:35)

In figure 3, specifically in the scene around minute 00:20:35 Ariel sings "Part of Your world" to express her longing to gain new experience and freedom in another world. Some lyrics enhance Ariel's desire to be parts of humanity which are, *I wanna see, wanna see 'em dancin', Walkin' around those.... What d'ya call 'em? Oh, feet.* Based on this, it is evident that Ariel wants to have human feet. The magnitude of her desire motivates her to pursue a transformation beyond her original nature, namely a living creature that has legs, instead of tails. Ariel's wish becomes stronger and stronger after which is seen in the next lyrics, *What would I give if I could live out of the waters? What would I pay to spend a day warm on the sand?* Ariel then comes to the realization that to become something she was not born with. The young girl has to sacrifice her old life in the water as the princess of the mermaid kingdom. and be ready to pay whatever it is. The close up image in figure 2 shows Ariel singing while looking up at the surface but the background behind it uses solid black color. This image expresses Ariel who is no longer wants to look back and starts asking for more in another dimension. Therefore, Ariel's fascination with human world reflects **loyalty to self**. Based on Parson's (1993) framework, when considering which one of four major loyalties to make any ethical decisions, the first thing an individual should do is considering loyalties towards him/her (Pettit, Vaughn, Pulley, 1990). To make a judgment and strengthen her determination, Ariel first must have a reason to be loyal to her. When someone puts self-loyalty first, it is essential to maintain psychological integration and sense of independence when their loyalty clashes with external pressures her (Pettit, JR. et al., 1990). However, Ariel's loyalty towards herself can be said to be still at a lower level since she has not received any pressure and is only affirming her desires through singing. Therefore, other evidence is needed to know whether Ariel is able to maintain her sense of independence and emotional integrity by following the analysis below.



Figure 3, Ariel sings for Prince Eric using her siren voice (00:29:53)

The fourth evidence appears in the scene at minute 00:29:53, when Ariel successfully arriving at the coast with Eric. The image with long shot shows Ariel humming a siren's voice to wake up the prince. The image showing two different dimensions, water and land (coast) above showing two colliding worlds symbolizes Ariel's freedom and limitation at the same frame. Her singing voice represents Ariel's truest self, her core identity soul, and feelings. Based on this, Ariel performs the actions that is considered as not entirely truthful, as she saves human's life, but on the other hand reveals her core identity to a creature that are considered a threat to her people (Parsons, 1993). However, Ariel's sense of independence and emotional integrity is starting to be tested when her father, King Triton eventually found her secret cave and the truth of his daughter having interests in human. As a part of the kingdom (organization), Ariel is expected to act according to the orders given (Parsons, 1993) in the minute (00:48:07); the father confronts the daughter and tries to destroy her collections. The king's trident symbolizes the absolute power which he uses to enforce obedience to his daughter. The glowing magical trident also symbolizes destruction and suppression, as Ariel's father tries to create boundaries between the world he leads (sea) and the place where his daughter's dream is anchored (land). The father literally tries to silence her voice and deny her rights to explore the unknown.

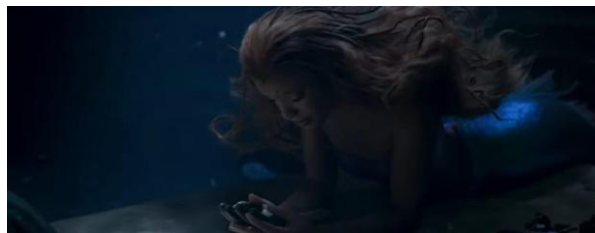


Figure 4, Ariel feels sad holding the remaining treasures, implying her loyalty to the kingdom (00:48:41)

Ariel's reaction to her father's action is seen in the scene at the minute 00:48:41. Ariel felt resentment towards her father and struggled with sadness. Her face quickly shifts to anguish with her eyes filled with tears. Ariel's behavior of holding the remaining treasures represents powerlessness, she lost when she fought back against her father and just watched with grief her remaining treasures burn to ashes in seconds. In this scene, Ariel's desperation due to loss of her collection symbolizes **her loyalty towards organizations**, which in the story is towards her family members. This reflect Parson's concept of serving loyalty towards the organizations. Individuals who become a part of organizations must uphold the beliefs of the collective as a commitment because they have either been raised or protected (Jennings et al., 1987). As a princess who has been raised and prepared by an institution, aka kingdom, Ariel was given the expectation to live like a mermaid who will one day marry another mermaid. But things manifests as a distinct identity when she develops feelings towards humans. Ariel's resignation in this scene shows her helplessness to fight the will of the king and the kingdom.

2. *King Triton's Conflicting Loyalties*

Ariel's father, King Triton is the ruler of Atlantic Kingdom. As a sea king, Triton has the responsibility to protect the merfolk from external threats, especially humans. He is also expected to uphold the mermaid's tradition and maintaining it to safety (Parsons, 1993). The king is blessed with seven children, by order they all are Attina, Alana, Adella, Aquata, Arista, Andriana, and Ariel. Among the daughters, Ariel is the one who has the stronger bond with the king, making her the favorite daughter among others. The reason is that Ariel is strikingly resembles to the late queen, Triton's wife, who died because of human actions. This is what makes Triton demonstrates of overprotectiveness to the youngest princess. The king also known as ruler who leads his kingdom based on fear of humans. Therefore, King Triton has two priorities to maintain, the safety of his people and the safety of his daughter. These priorities have significant impact on Triton's loyalty, encouraging him to decide which loyalty should prevail in his conflict.



Figure 5, King Triton reprimands Ariel (00:48:41)

In figure 5 shows a Triton as an authority figure who has a sense of duty to protect his merfolk, including his daughter. On the first statement, (1) *King Triton: This obsession with humans has to stop* (00:15:07), the king denying Ariel's curiosity and claims it as an obsession which also rejects Ariel's dream of seeing more beyond the ocean. The second statement, (2) *King Triton: You know all you need to know* (00:15:11) serves as another suppression for Ariel to reaches her dream. On the third statement, (3) *King Triton: Yes, foolish enough to be taken with the human world* (00:15:20) shows the king's concern seeing Ariel's action as similar to her late wife as foolish which shows the king's trauma due to the unknown. Finally, on the fourth statement, (4) *King Triton: But as long as you live in my ocean, you'll obey my rules* (00:15:22) the king states his **loyalty towards the kingdom (organization)** by declaring that his order is absolute that no one even his daughter could challenge it as him being a main representative of Kingdom's rule which regulates the survival of his people. (Parsons, 1993)



Figure 6, the father's worry seeing his daughter held captive by the sea witch (00:48:41)

However, Triton's loyalty wavers when Ariel is held captive by the sea witch, Ursula. The close up image showing the king's reaction in shock, with his eyes widen, body stiff, and his face shows horror, implying his disbelief that his daughter choice to be a human could lead to this extreme consequence. His dialogue at the minute (00:48:41), *"What do you want with my daughter?"* spoken with a lower voice portrays his guilt as a father whose rigid control toward his daughter make his favorite fall on the wrong path by asking help from Ursula, the manipulator. This scene shows the turning point of Triton's loyalty from to the kingdom (organization) **to his daughter, Ariel (family members)**. The sea king is willing to sacrifice his power, but not his love. At this point, Triton change his position by taking a consideration of his decision to save Ariel (Parsons, 1993), however, Ursula's snatching of his trident is a clear sign that he has forget his loyalty to the kingdom which invites destruction. Based on the analysis above, it is shows that Triton's conflicting loyalties are torn between his kingdom and his family. His loyalty to the kingdom is fueled by fear of the dangerous unknown, while his loyalty towards Ariel is rooted in love and care, not malice.

3. *Prince Eric's Conflicting Loyalties*

King Triton's kingdom, Atlantic has set strict boundaries due to fear of human, causing a political polarization between two realms that impossible to be connected. On the other hand, a kingdom named Tirulia suffered as a result of the split of these kingdoms. Eric, the prince of Tirulia kingdom falls in love with a mysterious girl who saves him from a shipwreck. Ironically, the girl happens to be a mermaid princess from the kingdom of the sea. Eric's love dynamic enhances

the political development between both realms. However, it turns out that the prince's desire to his savior lead him to experiencing conflicting loyalties between his personal desires for freedom and his kingdom



Figure 7, Eric falls in love with Ariel at first sight (00:30:33)

Eric's attachment to Ariel begins to grow since their first encounter. The prince falls in love with a mysterious girl at first sight even though he does not know her face and identity clearly. This implies that Eric is intrigued by Ariel's siren voice. In Greek mythology, sirens are perceived as an evil creature from the sea which often uses their bewitching voice to lure men sailor to death. This makes Ariel's identity is questioned by the audience whether she is a siren or mermaid, as they are similar but subtly different creatures. Sirens use their voices to prey on fishermen and cause sirens use their voices to prey on sailor and cause shipwrecks, while mermaid on the other hand, is often portrayed as soft loving creature that has no interest in human affairs. Therefore, it is possible that Ariel is siren as she has a powerful voice. However, this perspective may not be entirely accurate, as Ariel has no intention to hurts anyone, including Eric. Despite this, it is important to note that Eric becomes attached to Ariel after hearing her voice singing is undeniable. In figure 11 at a minute 00:30:33 shows Eric wake up with an amazed expression. Eric fascination toward Ariel enhances his character development as he is known as a sailor who initially did not believe in myth of mermaid. However, after that meeting Eric started to believe and begins to search for her everywhere. This reflects Parson's concept of loyalty to self as Eric must first to acknowledge himself to be loyal to his personal desire (Pettit, JR. et al., 1990).



Figure 8, Eric singing a song "Wild Uncharted Waters" (00:43:18)

In figure 12, it shows Eric **loyalty towards him**. The prince's thirst for freedom and adventure gets deeper as seen in his actions searching for the girl anywhere. Around a minute 00:38:41, Eric is eager to find the girl that he initiates by ordering the prime minister of the kingdom to search for her. *"Any sign of that girl yet, Grimsby?"* This dialogue shows Eric commitment to find Ariel as he feels the need to uphold the values (Pettit, JR. et al., 1990) supported by statement declared that he is not pursuing mere fantasy by saying, *"She's real, she saved my life"* (00:38:53) to the queen, his mother. In this depiction, Eric also shows his emotional integrity, he argues that the girl he met is a real deal, as a result, people in the court, especially the queen and prime minister, might be convinced that he is not merely pursuing something based on delusions. Continues to Eric singing the song entitled "Wild Uncharted Water" to express his loyalty to Ariel. One of the sentences in the song lyric that reads *"Come find me again"* expressing Eric's unstoppable longing along with his desire to be reunited with the girl. The image captured with medium close up in figure 14 showing

Eric's color palette of white and blue. The choice of these two colors embodies a symbolize significance. White symbolizes purity and innocence, which portrays Eric's pure intention to build a relationship with girl. Blue symbolizes Eric's loyalty. The color has similarity with the reflection color of the sea water, symbolizing Eric being linked to Ariel's world, which is the sea.



Figure 9, The Queen confronts Eric (00:38:58)

However, Eric's loyalty to self is conflicted with the expectation from the kingdom. As a royal prince, the queen warns Eric to stop his search and encourage to being more focus on royal affairs. This is depicted on the scene with dialogue when the queen confronts Eric by saying, *"Do not think you're using this girl as an excuse to run off again, risking your life on some trade ship for the sheer adventure"* (00:38:55). Hearing that, Eric maintains his sense of independence by answering back *"Sheer adventure? I'm trying to reach out to other cultures, so we don't get left behind"* (00:38:56) strongly depicted that Eric's adventure of trading for 20 cases of quinine to treat Malaria was meant for the greater good, shows him as progressive prince. Nevertheless, he loses eventually when the queen states about their political polarization by declaring some dialogues, which are: (1) *Shipwrecks, hurricanes, the sea gods are against us* (00:39:43-00:39:45) states the fact of their political polarization with the lords of the sea. Followed by the second dialogue, (2) *they are eroding our land from under us, stealing it back into the oceans* (00:39:53-00:39:58). On the third dialogue (3) *I almost lost you to one the other day. We cannot keep tempting fate like this* (00:40:07-00:40:12), and the fourth, (4) *It means that (SIGHS) that your responsibilities are here now. So no more voyages and no more chasing after girl who does not exist* (00:40:21-00:40:25) states the queen's final position of denying Eric's personal desire by reminding the prince of his position. The Prince Eric responds the queen's order with silence, depicting his loyalty towards the kingdom (organizations). Based on this analysis, it concludes despite the fact that Eric has his own way of serving his loyalty to the kingdom, it appears that he could not meet the queen's expectation, leaving him with no choice but to obey it according to the rules (Parsons, 1993). Therefore, based on the analysis Eric's loyalty is torn between his loyalty to self and loyalty to the kingdom (organization).

4. Sebastian's Conflicting Loyalties

In the little mermaid, Sebastian is a red hermit crab who dedicates himself as an advisor to King Triton and court composer in the Atlantic kingdom. His regular duties include arranging royal concerts, giving advice as the King's confidante, and keeping an eye on the youngest princess in the kingdom, which is Ariel. As the king's trusted right hand man, Sebastian's primary loyalty is to the kingdom (organization). He focuses on maintaining harmony between the king and his daughters. However, Sebastian's loyalty eventually shifts after he begins to understand Ariel's struggle, leading him to conflicting loyalties between maintaining harmony of the people he serves and strengthening the bonds of his friendship.



Figure 10, Sebastian's loyalty to the king by reporting Ariel exploring the shipwreck (00:15:55)

In figure 10, it is depicted Sebastian's unwavering devotion to the kingdom by telling the king with honesty about his daughter's condition. Sebastian's initial loyalty to the kingdom is shown by his act of watching over Ariel. He actively contributes as an advisor to help maintaining this father-daughter relationship. The image shot with medium close-up showing Sebastian standing right next to the king's shoulder, symbolizing his influential position as the loyal servant who upholds the king's laws. In this scene, Sebastian appears to be speaking according to what the king is thinking, as he must according to the direction given to him (Parsons, 1993). (1) *King Triton: Was I too hard on her? (00:15:52)* (2) *Sebastian: Definitely not. (00:15:53)* (3) *Sebastian: It's like I always say, "Children got to live by their parent's rules." (00:15:55).* through claiming "Children got to live by their parent's rules" asserting Sebastian who is trying to act according to the kingdom's law by reinforcing the status quo of Ariel as obedient princess and daughter who should be loyal to the kingdom, especially her father (Parsons, 1993). The depiction is supported by the footage of Sebastian's body size, which appears smaller than the King's, symbolizing his limited power, even though he is influential. Based on this, Sebastian's **loyalty towards the organization** is proven by his actions, which often reporting Ariel's actions to the king and become a voice of the establishment. After recognizing Ariel wandering on the shipwreck instead of attending royal's coral moon, Sebastian confirmed her situation truthfully to the king in order for the young little girl not to endangering herself anymore. At this point of the story, Sebastian believes that maintaining the rule and order is more than important than challenging the authority like Ariel did. Therefore, his loyalty is aligned to kingdom and making sure that the rule should be followed, even by the younger generations (Parsons, 1993).



Figure 11, Sebastian sees Ariel who Saves Prince Eric from shipwreck (00:29:31)

However, in the figure capturing the scene at the minute 00:29:31, it shows Sebastian starting to feel a conflict of loyalty. The red crab finds out about his friend, Ariel who saves the male human and sings a siren voice to save him. His eyes are wide open with his mouth gaping showing Sebastian's expression of disbelief at seeing his friend planting an emotional attachment towards human. When Scuttle arrives and sees the same thing, Sebastian invites him to hide the truth about Ariel from the king. (1) *Sebastian: Hey, you listen to me, bird. The king can never hear of this. (00:29:31)* (2) *Scuttle: Ow! (Showing scuttles in pain from being pinched by Sebastian). (00:29:34)* (3) *Sebastian: Are you listening to me? You won't tell him, I won't tell him, and I will stay in one piece. You got it? (00:29:36).* in this scene, Sebastian demonstrates **loyalty towards his friend** (peer/colleagues), Ariel by hiding the fact that the princess starts to rebel against kingdom's authority by making contact with human. Parsons (1993) implies that when someone has loyalty towards friends, it's possible for the individual considers first their decision as it could have a big impact on other members, also to maintain respect and unity within their network. This segment also shows Sebastian change his position based on his superior, which was originally on the King became on Ariel (Parsons, 1993). From this scene, Sebastian respects Ariel's motivation to see more beyond sea life by hiding her actions from external pressures that might become obstacles. Based on the analysis above, the red crab Sebastian is still bound by his loyalty to the kingdom, which concludes that Sebastian's loyalty to the organization clash with his loyalty

towards his friend. Sebastian's loyalty to the king is shown in his dedication to always honestly reporting to the king, on the other hand, his loyalty towards Ariel is shown by him keeping her secret.

Conflicting Loyalties' Influence on the Main Character's Decision Making

Ariel as a main character is portrayed as a childlike young little girl who is brave and easily intrigued by something unique. Her character's development has been perfectly depicted in the story. Ariel faces conflicting loyalties between loyalty to self and loyalty to the organization (kingdom). This conflict she faces requires Ariel to make a decision.



Figure 12, Ariel choose to prioritize her personal loyalty by giving up her voice to Ursula (00:58:42)

In the scene around a minute 00:58:42, Ariel starts to move to make a decision. Ariel's loyalty towards herself evolves when Ursula (the sea witch) invite the young girl to her place. In this scene, Ariel clarifying her values by choosing to follow Ursula's subordinate towards the sea witch's place, showing that Ariel values freedom, love, and honesty more than submitting to the rules set by her father. When the young girl got an offer to get her problem solved, she's aware that Ursula is a sea witch who often causes problems between humans and living creatures in the sea. Therefore, Ariel accepts to seek help based on her emotional honesty by asking, *"Wait, help me how?"* and then follows Ursula's instruction to her place. At this point in the segment, Ariel applies her principle to be honest with herself and demand Ursula to be honest too.

The medium shot image captured showing Ariel giving her siren voice to Ursula. To fulfill her personal desire, Ariel is faced with a situation where she has to lose her tail and siren voice as well as disobeying her father. While on the other hand, she will get something she longed for (to live free as a human and get Eric's love). However from this point, the situation becomes more complex. In order to get Eric's love, Ariel needs her voice. On the contrary, she loses it in exchange for legs. To serve her loyalty towards herself, Ariel is willing to lose her voice with the intention of being respectful towards Eric. This reflects Parson's concept that when Ariel is considering loyalty towards herself, it must be accompanied by the need to clarify her values and determine how far she could go to uphold those values (Pettit, JR. et al., 1990).

The young girl does not want to get Eric by taking advantage of the power she has, instead she choose to act according to heart even though the outcome is uncertain. At the same time, Ariel also follows the rule that violates her principle of being honest. Instead of showing her true form to Eric, Ariel shows up as an ordinary woman who has legs, which ironically brings conflict within her. She may gain a new identity, but in order to achieve that, she must carry out actions that potentially violate her own principle (Parsons, 1993). Therefore, in this scene Ariel decides to prioritize her loyalty to self which is to get Eric's love and live as a human even if she has to be mute.

Ariel's efforts to win Eric's love become more difficult afterwards when Ursula tries to intervene by taking Eric away from Ariel. By wearing a necklace containing Ariel's voice, Ursula disguises herself as a woman named Vanessa to manipulate Eric so that the prince would want to marry her and Ariel's plan to win Eric's love comes to failure. But Ursula's plan ultimately failed. She then dragged Ariel back into the sea. After that, the great battle began between Ursula and Ariel. The mermaid girl also sees her father become Ursula slaves, sacrificing his status and king's scepter to save his daughter. Ursula becomes a giant and creates a storm that attacks all living

things on land and in the sea. Fortunately, Ariel and Eric work together to defeat the devilish woman and succeed.



Figure 13, Ariel looks at Eric's palace from a distance (01:58:44)

Meanwhile, in the scene at a minute 01:58:47, Ariel shows another type of loyalty conflict within her. After steadfastly serving her loyalty towards herself, the young girl feels conflicted after winning a long battle with the villain (Ursula). Ariel comes to a realization that she could not be with Eric anymore after all those horrible things happened to her and everyone close to her. However, she still has tiny hopes that there might be a chance that he could be reunited with Prince Eric. It is depicted on this scene that Ariel has conflicted loyalties within her. This can be seen from Ariel's attitude, which only looks at Eric's palace from a distance supported by her blank facial expression, as if there was no more hope and only emptiness. This segment shows that Ariel serves loyalty towards the kingdom (organization). To serve her loyalty to the organization (kingdom), she needs to carry out the action based on the direction given to her (Parsons, 1993).

First, Ariel clarifies her value by following her father's order to remain in the sea (Christians et al., 1991). Ariel who values love chooses to accept the king's request with consideration for the safety of all living creatures from realms, land and sea, especially Eric. The background captured in a medium close up behind Ariel supports the depiction of this loyalty. The sea water, which previously appeared pitch black behind Ariel, in the scene the water actually returns to showing the typical blue color of the sea, implying that Ariel is once again tied to the sea and on the other hand, feels far from land.

However, when applying her principles into action still her heart could not lie, which sparked conflict within her as she could not doing anything because of the dilemma that enveloped her heart. Therefore, it is shows that although Ariel challenges the kingdom's authority, she is not entirely disloyal and abandons her obligation. She chooses to prioritize her loyalty towards the kingdom but still feel the lingering desire to remain loyal to her self-loyalty. This event may change if Ariel thinks further, as she might decide that her true desires shall be fulfilled, and the organization would suffer anyway (Parsons, 1993). If only King Triton has not realized his daughter's distress and gives her human legs after that, it is possible that Ariel would remain as a mermaid forever.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study discovers characters' shared loyalty conflicts between loyalty to the organization and loyalty to self or loyalty to colleagues or peers. The main characters (Ariel and Prince Eric) exhibit similarities between their loyalty to self and loyalty to the kingdom (organization). Meanwhile, the other protagonist characters (King Triton and Sebastian) are both conflicted between being loyal to Ariel (as friends or family members) and being loyal to the kingdom (organization). This study also found character's decision-making examined using Parson's framework resulting in contrasting decisions fueled by different motives. Ariel took impulsive decisions. Eric takes deliberate actions. Triton's decisions are based on his role as ruler and father. Lastly, Sebastian's decision is taken through a comprehensive understanding of Ariel's actions and internal struggle throughout the story as a whole. Through these characters, conflicting loyalties become an important factor that needs to be considered when making decisions performed by an individual. Utilizing consistent steps from Parson's framework, decision-making could be approached with careful consideration, including clarifying loyalty

conflict, implementing principles, and prioritizing which loyalties should prevail in conflict.

Limitations and future direction

The finding of this study is to discover the portrayal of conflicting loyalties and how decisions could be made using Patricia Parson's framework of ethical decision-making. However, there are certain limitations that must be considered to enhance many facets of conflicting loyalties in literature. In this study, the analysis is limited to only four protagonist characters in *The Little Mermaid*, which includes Ariel (main character), Prince Eric, King Triton, and Sebastian. Therefore, this study encourages future researchers to examine other supporting characters to gain an in-depth understanding of the movie's implementation of conflicting loyalties.

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