

## Family Values in Don Hall and Carlos Lopez Estrada's Movie *Raya and The Last Dragon*

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### ABSTRACT

In the Disney animated film *Raya and the Last Dragon*, family values serve as the emotional and moral foundation of the story, reflecting Southeast Asian cultural principles of unity, trust, and interdependence. This study aims to explore the portrayal of family relationships in the film through Van Wel's (1994) Family Bonding Theory, which identifies seven core values: attachment, commitment, interdependence, closeness, trust, intimacy, and love. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the research analyzes key scenes and dialogues between Raya, her father Benja, and her companions to uncover how these values are expressed through emotional development and character interaction. The findings reveal that attachment is embodied in Raya's bond with her father, commitment appears in her determination to continue his vision of unity, interdependence arises in her collaboration with her allies, closeness is built through shared vulnerability, trust becomes the central moral challenge, intimacy is expressed through open emotional exchanges, and love stands as the ultimate force of reconciliation. The study concludes that *Raya and the Last Dragon* present a culturally grounded yet globally resonant narrative, demonstrating how Southeast Asian family values can be meaningfully represented in contemporary animation to inspire emotional healing, cooperation, and collective responsibility.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Family has long been recognized as the foundational institution of society, functioning as the primary environment where individuals first learn cultural norms, social expectations, and moral principles. In many Asian contexts, the family unit is not understood merely as a private domestic arrangement, but as a moral community that shapes identity and ethical behavior. These values extend beyond the nuclear family to include extended relatives and even community networks, illustrating a collectivist worldview in which personal identity is deeply interwoven with familial belonging. According to Dunst et al., (1988), family values refer to the beliefs, practices, and guiding principles that influence familial relationships and interactions with the broader social world (as cited in Karies & Ramadhana, 2021). In the Asian tradition particularly within cultures shaped by Confucian ethics family is seen as the foundation for moral cultivation. Iwai (2018) argues that filial piety, respect for elders, and intergenerational responsibility are not simply emotional attachments, but ethical duties that structure one's place within society.

Film serves as a significant cultural medium and narrative that reflects, critiques, and guides the interpretation of family values, functioning as a cultural text expressing collective experiences and symbolic meaning (Pratista, 2008). Animated films hold a distinctive power, capable of subtly transmitting cultural frameworks, values, and emotional storytelling to both younger and global audiences through visual symbolism and character arcs (Wang, et al., 2025), making them an arena where traditional values are reinterpreted in response to modern challenges like globalization and individualism. *Raya and the Last Dragon* (2021) exemplifies this by embedding Southeast Asian cultural values within mainstream global cinema, using the fictional land of Kumandra inspired by multiple Southeast Asian traditions (e.g., communal eating, architecture, martial arts) to frame a deeply personal narrative. Raya's quest is rooted in grief, loyalty, and inherited responsibility to restore unity and her father, illustrating how family legacies shape the moral direction of future generations.

This research utilizes the full 107-minute animated film *Raya and the Last Dragon* (2021), as its primary data source. The analysis involves a close textual examination of the film's complete cinematic elements, including its narrative structure, character development, dialogue, visual symbolism, mise-en-scene, and thematic content (screenplay, visual design, music, etc.). The focus is on specific scenes that prominently feature family dynamics particularly Raya and Chief Benja's relationship and the formation of Raya's chosen family to understand how Southeast Asian family values are constructed, communicated, and visualized. This examination looks at both explicit narrative elements (dialogue, actions) and implicit cinematic techniques (visual metaphors, color, spatial relationships, musical cues) to gain insight into the contemporary representation and negotiation of these values within a globally distributed Western animated film.

Raya: "It's not about her magic. It's about trust."

Namaari: "WHAT?"

Raya: "That's why it worked. That's why we can do it too. By doing the one thing Sisu wanted us to do my Ba wanted us to do to finally trust each other and fix this. But we have to come together. Please."

Tong: "After what she's done..."

This dialogue exemplifies trust as the central family bonding value transmitted intergenerationally from father to daughter within the framework of Van-wel's (1994) theory. Raya's invocation of "By doing the one thing Sisu wanted us to do my Ba wanted us to do to finally trust each other and fix this" explicitly connects trust to filial duty and demonstrates how family values are transmitted across generations, even when temporarily rejected due to trauma. The statement "It's not about her magic. It's about trust" reveals Raya's profound realization that the Dragon Gem's power was relational rather than supernatural; it functioned because it symbolized trust among dragons and humans thereby elevating trust from an abstract sentiment to a concrete, life-saving force. Van-wel's framework identifies trust as the confidence and reliance family members have in each other's intentions and character, serving as both the foundation and expression of strong family bonds. In this climactic scene, Raya finally integrates her father's early teaching about being a "Guardian of trust" with her lived experience of betrayal and loss, demonstrating that trust in Asian family contexts is not naive belief but a conscious, courageous choice made in full awareness of risks. The phrase "that's why we can do it too" emphasizes trust as a learnable practice rather than innate disposition, while "we have to come together" illustrates how trust creates the psychological foundation for interdependence and collective action. This moment represents the completion of Raya's character arc: she embodies her father's legacy by taking "the first step" of trust despite personal trauma, showing how family values can be both inherited and consciously chosen, and how trust operates simultaneously as an intimate family bonding mechanism and a broader social principle capable of healing fractured communities.

Previous studies have laid a strong foundation by examining family values across various media and cultural settings, including: the semiotic analysis of Indonesian values in films like *Nanti Kita Cerita Tentang Hari Ini* (Karies & Ramadhana, 2021); the successful integration and transformation of Confucian values in Chinese animation such as *Nezha 2* (Wang, et al., 2025); the analysis of intergenerational conflict and bonding in diasporic Chinese-Canadian family values in *Turning Red* (Bahri, et al, 2024); the conveyance of family unity in non-dialogue genre films like *A Quiet Place* (Ayuniantari et al., 2020); and sociological comparative work highlighting the varied adoption of egalitarian family practices across multiple Asian societies (Iwai, 2019). However, a critical gap exists because existing film analyses have centered primarily on single national cultures (Chinese, Indonesian), North American diasporic contexts, or live-action films, leaving pan-Southeast Asian narratives and their representation by a major global studio like Disney largely unexamined. This study addresses this by specifically analyzing how traditional Southeast Asian family values (e.g., filial piety, collective duty) are constructed, visualized, and negotiated with contemporary Western themes (e.g., individual agency, chosen family) in Raya

and the Last Dragon, which uniquely synthesizes multiple Southeast Asian cultural traditions and constructs both biological and chosen family systems simultaneously for global consumption.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Van Wel's (1994) Family Bonding Theory*

Van Wel (1994) states that the family is a social system built upon emotional and moral connections. This relationship forms the foundation for psychological stability, mutual trust, and emotional well-being. He identifies five essential values that maintain harmony within the family: attachment, commitment, interdependence, closeness, trust, intimacy, and love. These elements exist not only in biological family structures but also in broader social and cultural contexts that resemble familial bonds, such as friendship, community, and social unity. In cinematic storytelling, these values are often portrayed through character relationships that emphasize emotional growth, reconciliation, and the moral strength of human connection.

#### *Attachment*

Attachment refers to the emotional bond that links individuals who depend on each other, such as parents and children. Van Wel describes attachment as a source of psychological security, affection, and consistent emotional support. It develops through shared experiences, care, and protection, allowing individuals to feel safe and valued. A secure attachment fosters empathy and trust, while a weak or anxious attachment can lead to fear of loss and difficulty maintaining stable relationships. In film narratives, attachment is often depicted as the emotional foundation of family stories. In "Finding Nemo" (2003), Marlin's relationship with his son Nemo represents this concept vividly. After losing most of his family, Marlin becomes overly protective, fearing any harm that might come to his child.

Marlin: "I promised I'd never let anything happen to him."

Dory: "That's a funny thing to promise. You can't never let anything happen to him. Then nothing would ever happen to him."

This conversation reflects the dual nature of attachment, in which love and fear coexist. Marlin's overprotective behavior shows both deep affection and anxiety, illustrating Van Wel's idea that attachment creates emotional closeness but may also limit independence when fear dominates love.

#### *Commitment*

Commitment represents long-term dedication and responsibility within family relationships. Van Wel defines it as loyalty, sacrifice, and perseverance in maintaining harmony and moral stability in the family. Commitment reflects emotional constancy and the willingness to uphold togetherness even during hardship. It is not limited to fulfilling material needs but also includes being present emotionally and morally for each other. Through commitment, family members develop mutual trust and dependability that reinforce their bond. An example of commitment can be seen in "The Pursuit of Happyness" (2006) when Chris Gardner continues to care for his son despite losing his home and job. His consistent devotion embodies moral strength and resilience.

Chris: "No matter how hard things get, I'm not leaving you."

Christopher: "I know, Dad. We can do this together."

This dialogue captures the essence of commitment through reassurance and shared perseverance. The exchange reflects mutual faith between father and son, showing that true commitment arises not from words alone but from reliability and emotional endurance. Van Wel emphasizes that such constancy is what sustains familial harmony through adversity.

### *Interdependence*

Interdependence refers to a balanced relationship of mutual reliance among family members. Van Wel describes it as a recognition that every family member contributes to the group's harmony through cooperation and empathy. No one functions in isolation, and the family remains stable when individuals respect one another's roles and responsibilities. The concept of interdependence is clearly represented in "Encanto" (2021). The Madrigal family depends on each member's unique abilities to sustain their magical household. However, when Mirabel feels excluded for lacking a special gift, the family's unity falters. Only by accepting and supporting one another equally can they restore their harmony.

Mirabel: "You're the miracle, mamá. We all are."

Alma: "The miracle is you."

This conversation portrays the spirit of interdependence, where every individual contributes meaningfully to the whole. It echoes Van Wel's belief that family is a dynamic system that flourishes through empathy, cooperation, and mutual appreciation rather than hierarchy or competition.

### *Closeness*

Closeness describes emotional and physical nearness that fosters belonging and comfort. Van Wel explains that closeness is more than proximity. It is mutual understanding built through shared experiences and affection. It reflects warmth that turns family spaces into emotional sanctuaries. In "Inside Out" (2015), Riley's parents comfort her after a difficult move, illustrating this form of connection.

Mom: "It's okay to be sad, sweetheart."

Riley: "Thanks, Mom. I just miss home."

The gentle exchange reveals emotional transparency. Closeness, as Van Wel notes, strengthens resilience by ensuring that family members feel heard, accepted, and emotionally secure.

### *Trust*

Trust is the emotional and moral foundation of every healthy family relationship. Van Wel explains that trust builds openness and stability among family members, allowing them to share feelings without fear of judgment or betrayal. It encourages honesty, empathy, and the courage to depend on one another. In "Coco" (2017), Miguel's loss of trust in his family arises from their rejection of music due to past pain. However, as he learns the truth about his ancestors, he begins to understand their motives and rebuilds that trust.

Miguel: "I thought I was abandoned, but you were protecting me."

Mama Imelda: "All I wanted was to protect my family."

This moment shows how forgiveness and understanding can restore trust after misunderstanding. Van Wel views trust as the moral bridge that reconnects

individuals, emphasizing that real trust involves compassion and the willingness to see through another person's perspective. Within the family, this value maintains emotional balance and strengthens mutual respect.

### ***Intimacy***

Intimacy is the deep emotional closeness that allows individuals to share their inner thoughts, fears, and dreams without fear of rejection. Van Wel distinguishes intimacy from love by emphasizing its role in emotional honesty and mutual understanding. Intimacy requires openness, empathy, and vulnerability, turning relationships into spaces of healing and acceptance. This can be seen in "Little Women" (2019), where sisters comfort each other through emotional struggles.

Jo: "Do you love him?"

Meg: "I do. He makes me happy, Jo, even if our lives turn out different."

This tender exchange shows acceptance and emotional honesty. Van Wel's concept of intimacy reflects this level of sincerity, where shared feelings and mutual respect create a bond that deepens trust and preserves emotional harmony.

### ***Love***

Love represents the unconditional affection and care that hold families together beyond conflict or hardship. Van Wel considers love as the central value that unites all others, offering patience, forgiveness, and compassion. True love is demonstrated through actions that nurture well-being, understanding, and growth. In "Up" (2009), the relationship between Carl and Ellie embodies enduring love that continues even after separation by death.

Ellie: "You and me, we're in this together, right?"

Carl: "Always. You're my greatest adventure."

The exchange reflects unconditional devotion and unity. Van Wel's notion of love extends beyond romantic affection. It represents the strength that allows family members to endure loss, overcome fear, and keep each other emotionally whole.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method grounded in Van Wel's (1994) Family Bonding Theory to analyze the portrayal of family values in Disney's animated film *Raya and the Last Dragon* (2021). The analysis focuses on the seven key values proposed by Van Wel, namely attachment, commitment, interdependence, closeness, trust, intimacy, and love. Each of these values is examined through the relationships between Raya, her father Benja, and her companions as they rebuild trust and unity among divided lands. Through this qualitative approach, the study aims to explore how these values are expressed in the characters' interactions, emotional development, and collective journey toward reconciliation. The analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of how *Raya and the Last Dragon* reflect strong family bonding as a moral foundation for restoring harmony and togetherness.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

There are seven elements of family values based on the Van Wel (1994)'s bonding theory, namely attachment, commitment, interdependence, closeness,

trust, intimacy, and love. In this research, all of the aspects were found based on the Raya and the Last Dragon. These are data results:

### *Attachment*

#### **Dialogue 1**

Time: 00:19:13-00:19:31

Benja: "There's still light in this. There's still hope."

Young Raya: "No, we can make it together. You're okay..."

Benja: "Raya, don't give up on them. I love you, my dewdrop."

Young Raya: "Ba?"



Picture 1

This highly impactful scene, occurring during the destruction caused by the Druun, is the ultimate expression of Attachment through parental sacrifice. As the Druun approach and Benja realizes he cannot escape, he quickly transfers his protective role and the gem shard to Raya. His choice to forcibly push her into the river, saving her life, is preceded by his final verbal assurance of their bond: "I love you, my dewdrop". This sentence contains the key element Attachment because it shows that even in the face of certain death, Benja's focus is entirely on affirming his emotional connection to his daughter, prioritizing her security and survival above his own. The use of the diminutive nickname, "dewdrop," preserves the tenderness of their relationship right up to the moment of separation. Raya's subsequent years-long quest is a direct, enduring reflection of this moment of profound attachment-she is driven not merely by duty, but by the deep-seated emotional pain of loss and the desire to reverse the moment that shattered her most essential source of love and security.

#### **Dialogue 2**

Time: (00:07:10 – 00:07:40)

Young Raya: "Wow. (Chuckles) The spirit of Sisu."

Benja: "For generations, our family sworn to protect the gem. Today, you will join that legacy. Raya, Princess of Heart, my daughter, you are now a Guardian of the Dragon Gem."



Picture 2

This dialogue, taking place in a peaceful and heartfelt exchange between Raya and Benja, demonstrates Attachment through emotional reassurance, acknowledgment, and a strong sense of connection. When Benja tells her “You are now a Guardian of the Dragon Gem”, the statement rises above its formal purpose and becomes an affirmation of Raya’s value, identity, and the closeness they share. His choice to address her as “my daughter” further emphasizes their intimate bond, showing that her role in the family legacy is grounded in their relationship rather than obligation alone. The scene reflects the core of Attachment because Benja’s intention is to deepen Raya’s feelings of safety and belonging, offering emotional support that will guide her into the future. His act of entrusting the Guardianship to her symbolizes his confidence and affection, blending elements of trust, care, and reliance typical of a strong parent-child connection. Raya’s journey throughout Kumandra later reveals how much this moment shaped her, as her courage and resolve are fueled not only by a sense of duty but also by the emotional strength drawn from her father’s pride and loving guidance.

### ***Commitment***

#### **Dialogue 1**

Time (00:10:27-00:10:53)

Young Raya: “That's ancient history, Ba.”

Benja: “But it doesn't have to be.”

Benja: “Listen, if we don’t stop and learn to trust one another again it's only a matter of time before we tear each other apart. This isn't the world I want you to live in. I believe that we can be Kumandra again. But someone has to take the first step.”

Young Raya: SIGHS



Picture 3

This dialogue occurs during a private conversation between young Raya and Chief Benja on a balcony before the leaders' summit. Raya dismisses unity as "ancient history," while Benja's response demonstrates his unwavering commitment to healing Kumandra. Van Wel (1994) defines commitment as deep-seated loyalty and dedication to family well-being, prioritizing harmony above individual interests even during adversity. Benja's statement "**I believe that we can be Kumandra again. But someone has to take the first step**" exemplifies Van Wel's commitment framework in three key ways: First, the phrase "I believe that we can be Kumandra again" demonstrates enduring dedication that transcends immediate circumstances. Despite generations of division, Benja maintains hope and commitment to unity, reflecting Van Wel's concept that commitment involves working toward harmony even when facing skepticism. Second, "someone has to take the first step" reveals commitment's active dimension. Van Wel emphasizes that commitment requires proactive responsibility and initiative. Benja articulates that commitment demands courageous action being vulnerable first and extending trust before receiving it embodying commitment as a conscious choice to prioritize collective well-being over personal safety. Third, Benja's insistence that "This isn't the world I want you to live in" connects commitment to intergenerational responsibility. His dedication is rooted in love for Raya and duty to provide her a better future, demonstrating how family commitment extends beyond immediate family to the broader community.

#### Dialogue 2

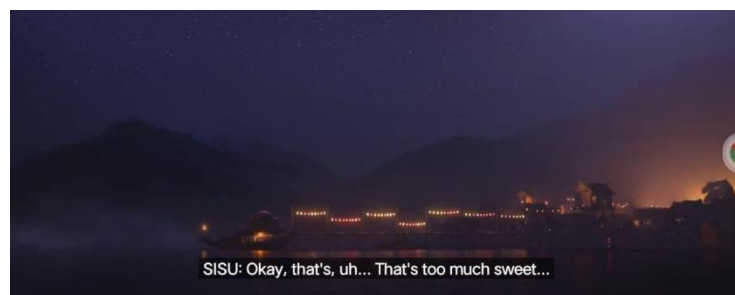
Time: 00:21:30 - 00:22:05

Sisu: "You can't give up, Raya. Your dad believed in this dream."

Raya: "He believed... and look what happened. He's gone."

Sisu: "But you're still here. You can finish what he started."

Raya: "**Then I'll see this through. For him.**"



Picture 4

This dialogue highlights the complexities of family commitment through Raya's struggle with doubt and grief. Raya's dedication to her father, despite the pain it brings, illustrates that commitment isn't always straightforward or easy. She reflects on her six years of loyalty, which has not changed her father's state, showing that commitment requires ongoing choices, especially when faced with challenges. Sisu reminds Raya that her commitment is deeply personal, tied to her father's vision rather than just a goal. This emphasizes the interpersonal nature of commitment in Asian cultures, where honoring family members is

paramount. Raya's survival and determination to fight for her father's legacy further exemplify her commitment, revealing that it manifests through ongoing presence and effort. Ultimately, her declaration, "Then I'll see this through. For him," shows that her motivation is relational, focusing on family rather than broader ideals. The dialogue also suggests that commitment can fluctuate and often needs support from others, like Sisu, to reinforce it. This scene powerfully portrays commitment as an active, conscious choice that demands renewal over time, serving both as a source of meaning and a burden.

### *Interdependence*

#### **Dialogue 1**

Time: 01:02:15 – 01:02:54

Chief of Spine: "Why are you here divine water dragon?"

Sisu: "Isn't that obvious, big guy? My girl Raya and I are gonna fix the world. Bring everyone back."

Kapten Broon: "You're gonna bring everyone back? I wanna help."

Raya: (SIGHS) "I'm sorry, I can't let you do that. It's too dangerous."

Kapten Broon: "You're not the only one who lost family to the Druun. Please. Let me help you." (CON-BABY MUMBLING).

Chief of Spine: "I too wish to join this fellowship of Druun butt-kickery!"



Picture 5

This dialogue shows how Raya begins to embrace interdependence as she realizes that restoring Kumandra is not something she can accomplish on her own. The lines **"My girl Raya and I are gonna fix the world,"** **"I wanna help,"** **"You're not the only one who lost family,"** and **"I too wish to join this fellowship"** reveal how each character connects their personal pain and hopes, forming a supportive group that functions like a chosen family. In Van wel's view, interdependence develops when people allow themselves to receive help, and this moment challenges Raya's habit of carrying every responsibility by herself. The sincerity of Broon and the Chief of Spine in offering their support shows that cooperation naturally arises from shared struggles, while Sisu's confident reassurance highlights that healing grows through unity rather than isolation. Raya's hesitation reflects how her past experiences of betrayal and loss have built emotional walls, but the group's willingness to stand with her suggests that trust can slowly return. This exchange becomes meaningful because it marks the point where Raya accepts that saving Kumandra requires not only restoring

the gem but also learning to depend on others again, allowing interdependence to guide their journey forward.

### Dialogue 2

Time: 00:57:40 - 00:58:25

Boun: "We're here for you, Raya."

Raya: "I... I've been on my own for so long. I don't know how to do this."

Sisu: "**That's the thing about family you don't have to do everything alone.**"

Tong: "We're stronger together."



Picture 6

This dialogue highlights Raya's journey from independence to interdependence, a crucial aspect of her character growth. According to Van-wel's theory, interdependence means recognizing that family members should support each other rather than bearing burdens alone. Raya's line, "I don't know how to do this," shows her vulnerability after years of isolation, which has hindered her ability to rely on others. Sisu's reassurance, "**That's the thing about family you don't have to do everything alone,**" reinforces the importance of family support. Raya's past experiences, including her father's petrification and Namaari's betrayal, led her to prioritize self-reliance over teamwork. However, as she forms a chosen family, each member brings unique strengths: Sisu offers magic and hope, Boun provides transport and business savvy, Tong contributes strength, and Little Noi adds agility. Tong's remark, "we're stronger together," reflects her father's teachings, signaling a return to those values. This scene is pivotal as it marks the start of Raya's healing process, helping her rebuild the interdependent relationships that her trauma had fractured, ultimately setting her up to trust again and save Kumandra.

### Closeness

Time: 00:13:22 - 00:13:39

Young Raya: "Rice or stew?"

Young Namaari: "This is actually one of the first times I've had rice in a while."

Young Raya: "Really?"

Young Namaari: **“Fang may look nice on the outside, but we have some pretty big holes on the inside.”**



Picture 7

This moment of conversation occurs inside the palace during the gathering of the chiefs, where Young Raya and Namaari are engaging in a seemingly trivial exchange about food preferences. Namaari surprises Raya by revealing that her nation, Fang, suffers from scarcity, a stark contrast to their opulent surroundings and the political strength they project. Namaari's profound disclosure: **“Fang may look nice on the outside, but we have some pretty big holes on the inside,”** contains the key element Closeness because it is a direct act of emotional transparency and vulnerability that dismantles the political barrier between the rival princesses. By admitting her nation's hidden suffering, Namaari signals that she trusts Raya with information that could easily be used as a political weapon, creating an immediate, intimate connection. This willingness to shed her nation's public facade and expose a private, painful truth is the essence of Closeness, forging a genuine, albeit fleeting, bond based on empathetic understanding rather than diplomacy.

### *Trust*

#### **Dialogue 1**

Time: 01:24:00 – 01:24:52

Raya: “Everyone, give me your gems. We can still put it together. It can still work.”

Kapten Broon: Sisu’s gone, Raya! We don’t have her magic!”

Raya: **“It’s not about her magic. It’s about trust.”**

Naamari: “What?”

Raya: “That’s why it worked. That’s why we can do it, too. By doing the one thing Sisu wanted us to do. What my Ba wanted us to do. But we have to come together. Please.”

Chief of Spine: “After what she’s done?”

Kapten Broon: “We’ll nevert trust her”

Raya: “Then let me take the first step.”

Kapten Broon: “Raya! No!”



Picture 7

This dialogue shows the depth of *trust* as Raya realizes that saving Kumandra depends on emotional courage rather than magical strength. When she says **"It's not about her magic. It's about trust,"** the line becomes more than a strategic observation; it acts as a declaration of belief in the power of unity and vulnerability. Raya's words reveal her understanding that restoring harmony requires the same faith her father once taught her, shifting the group's focus from fear to the emotional bond that once united their people. Her willingness to acknowledge trust as the core solution reflects a personal transformation, one shaped by her experiences of betrayal, loss, and gradual healing. The moment carries emotional weight because Raya is not simply asking others to trust Namaari but is also expressing her own readiness to rebuild broken relationships, even at great risk. By centering trust as the key to restoring Kumandra, Raya demonstrates that genuine connection and mutual belief are the forces capable of overcoming division. This realization becomes the foundation of her leadership, guiding her decisions and giving her the emotional strength to take the first step toward reconciliation.

#### **Dialogue 2**

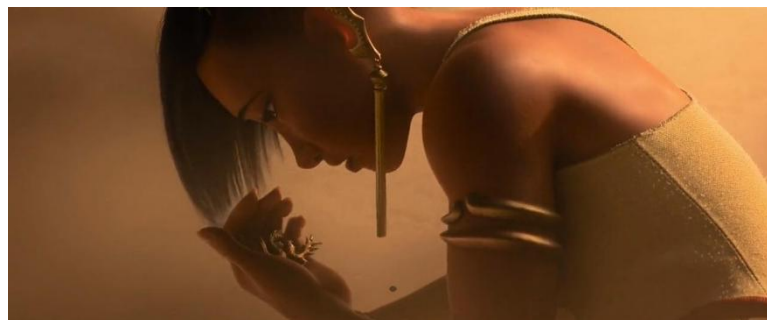
Time: 00:10:15 - 00:11:30

Benja: "If we don't stop and learn to trust one another again, it's only gonna get worse."

Young Raya: "What can I do?"

Benja: "You can be the one to make the first step. You're not just a Guardian of the Dragon Gem now."

Young Raya: **"You'll be a Guardian of trust. To become one, you'll have to trust me first."**



Picture 8

This pivotal scene occurs the evening before the five lands gather at Heart Palace, where Chief Benja teaches young Raya about trust in an intimate father-daughter moment, establishing the film's central theme. Van Wel (1994) defines trust as the confidence and reliance family members have in each other's intentions and actions, serving as the foundation of strong family bonds. Benja's teaching "You'll be a Guardian of trust. To become one, you'll have to trust me first" exemplifies Van Wel's trust framework in several ways: First, the phrase "Guardian of trust" elevates trust from a personal feeling to a sacred responsibility, positioning it as precious and powerful like the Dragon Gem itself something that must be protected and has the capacity to unite people. Second, Benja's statement "If we don't stop and learn to trust one another again, it's only gonna get worse" acknowledges that trust has been lost and must be actively rebuilt, reflecting Van Wel's emphasis that trust is dynamic and requires conscious effort, with "learn to trust" indicating it is a learnable practice that must be continuously maintained and can be repaired after damage. Third, "you'll have to trust me first" demonstrates that trust is taught through practice within the parent-child relationship, which Van Wel identifies as the training ground for broader social trust establishing the foundation from which all other trust relationships develop.

### *Intimacy*

Time: 00:38:33 – 00:39:04

Raya: "Sisu, I saw people lose their minds over a dragon gem. Can you imagine what they'd do over an actual dragon? Look, we need you to make this all work. Until we have all the gems, you have to stay human. Please."

Sisu: "Wow. You've really got some trust issues."

Raya: "Look, my father blindly trusted people and now he's stone."

Sisu: "Hey. We'll get your ba back. I got you, girl. Come on. Who's your dragon? I mean human. Because I'm gonna be human until... yeah, you get it."



Picture 9

This scene takes place on Boun's shrimp boat as Raya desperately tries to convince Sisu to remain in human form to avoid drawing unwanted attention. Raya initiates the conversation by revealing her deep fear that if people knew Sisu was the last dragon, they would harm her, echoing the trauma Raya

experienced years ago. Sisu probes Raya's guarded emotional state, which leads to a critical moment of self-disclosure. Raya's emotional disclosure, "**Look, my father blindly trusted people and now he's stone,**" contains the key element Intimacy because it is a profound act of emotional vulnerability that exposes the root of her psychological defense mechanisms and six years of trauma. She reveals the foundational pain and guilt her father's tragic end being tied to trust to Sisu, a depth of personal sharing that defines Intimacy. Sisu responds by offering deep emotional support and affirmation of their bond "I got you, girl" validating Raya's pain without judgment and demonstrating a mutual reliance that deepens their connection beyond simple partnership to shared emotional safety.

### *Love*

Time: 1:10:12-1:10:28

Raya: "**Do you think he would even recognize me? So much has changed.**"

Sisu: "Of course he will."

Raya: "You remind me of him."

Sisu: "Oh yeah? Strong, good-looking, with impeccable hair."



Picture 10

This poignant dialogue occurs where Benja's petrified hands have gathered rainwater. It is a powerful display of Love as Raya processes her prolonged grief and insecurity over the loss of her father. By questioning, "**Do you think he would even recognize me? So much has changed,**" Raya expresses the deep-seated fear that the painful trauma she endured has altered her identity to the point where the unconditional love she once received may no longer apply. This sentence contains the key element Love because it underscores the foundational importance of her father's recognition and acceptance as the definition of her security and worth. Sisu's immediate, affirming response ("Of course he will") and her continued comforting presence act as a bridge to that lost love. Raya's final, honest admission, "**You remind me of him,**" is the ultimate testament to the strength of her enduring love, showing that she seeks to rebuild the essential emotional resource the supportive, loving parental figure within her new relationship with Sisu. This moment confirms that all her efforts are driven by a desperate, loving need for the familial bond she lost.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research results confirm that *Raya and the Last Dragon* successfully encapsulates Van Wel's (1994) seven essential family bonding values, evidencing how emotional attachment, moral duty, and communal ties not only facilitate individual growth, but enhance and contribute to the collective harmony of the family unit. Close textual analysis of the film highlights that attachment is grounded in Raya's profound emotional bond with her father, which ignites her journey in the film and informs her perspective even after his transformation. Commitment unfolds as Raya commits to honoring Benja's principles, regardless of the tension generated by grief, conflict, or self-doubt. Interdependence continues to come to the fore as Raya grows accustomed to being more open to accepting help from her companions and ultimately accepting a chosen family, infused with Southeast Asian communal values. Closeness is also produced through shared vulnerability, especially as characters acknowledge their fears, histories, and shortcomings, fostering emotional connections, despite cultural contexts.

Trust serves as the foundation upon which the film builds both the narrative arc and moral framework, acting as an impetus to change, reconciliation, and harmony in the splintered realms of Kumandra. Raya's journey to relearn trust after betrayal highlights how significantly trust built on family-based values is woven into the fabric of relationships within the broader society. The depth of their connection is evidenced through the emotional authenticity both characters share during moments in which they reveal personal truths and bond over their grief. Love informs all values, at times expressed through sacrifice, as characters reassure one another and rediscover the hope of reconnecting with family. When viewed holistically, the film depicts a profound representation of Southeast Asian family values through a merging of biological kinship and chosen-family ties, illustrating the notion that unity and emotional harmony is only possible when trust, empathy, and shared responsibility among people is prioritized. In short, the film not only reflects core cultural tenets but also offers a contemporary reimagination of familial unity that is relevant for global audiences.

#### **FURTHER STUDY**

This research still has limitations, so it is necessary to conduct further research related to the topic of Family Values in Don Hall and Carlos Lopez Estrada's Movie *Raya and The Last Dragon* in order to perfect this research and increase insight for readers.

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