

CHAPTER 1

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In his book, *A Theory of Human Motivation*, Maslow (1943) explains that human basic needs such as the need of food, drinks, love, safety, self-actualization, self-transcendence and also self-esteem must be fulfilled. The needs to be accepted by the society as in Maslow's need of self-actualization lead people to do what is regarded as "good or bad and appropriate or inappropriate" for man and woman in society. The appropriateness or the inappropriateness of man's and woman's action is actually gender stereotyped roles because there is always a different way to be male or female.

Gender stereotyped roles are the result of complex interactions between biological and social forces (Wienclaw, 2011, p. 17). Wienclaw (2011) states that biologically, people are segregated into two, man and woman whose difference is obvious in their reproductive organs. While man has penis and scrotum which produce sperms, woman has vagina and womb which produce ovum. Woman's reproductive organs enable her to get pregnant and deliver babies. As a person who delivers babies, woman is deemed by the society to take care of the children and stay at home. It can be seen that those biological differences are often (mis)used by the society to position woman as "weak and inferior". As someone who stays at home and takes care of the children, woman is assumed to use less muscle strength compared to man who works outside the house. As a result, man is considered physically stronger than woman so man is commonly regarded as the head of a family who has power over woman and children (Wienclaw, 2011, p. 17).

The distinction based on the biological difference between a man and a woman leads to the act of labeling. The labeling which is based on the society's expectation on how a man and a woman should act is called gender stereotype. (Sharon, 2000) states that stereotype presents a trap into which many people fall. In the past women are treated differently from men as a result of gender stereotyping, especially in patriarchal society. For example, women in United States of America did not have rights to vote until 1920 because before that, they were often perceived as "second-class citizens." As a result, many women fight for equality in many aspects such as in politic, economy, education, and sexes during the nineteenth century in Europe and America. As a result, there were women's right movements to fight against gender inequalities in many aspects such as in politics, economy, education, and sexes in Europe and America during the nineteenth century. This women movement is called feminism, whose goal is to reach equality between men and women in all aspects of life.

The movement of feminism itself consists of three waves which every wave has criticized throughout time, and it continues until now. First Wave Feminism deals with women's rights in election that began in nineteenth century and Second Wave Feminism concerns with issues of gender and discrimination in early 1960s. As to perceive of failure of Second Wave Feminism, in early 1990s, Third Wave Feminism emerged and focused on the Second Wave Feminism's paradigm about what is good or not for women. It also supports queer theory which is considered as taboo in two previous waves before.

Feminism movement also affects film industry. In the past decade, the filmic superhero like *Batman*, *The Wolverine* and *X-men*, (Hatch & St-Lauren) and in television series such as *Smallville*, *The Flash*, *Green Arrow*, and *Legend of Tomorrow*. In 2015, Marvel produced an American Television Series, *Marvel Agent Carter* that is inspired by popular superhero movie

Captain America, The First Avenger released in 2011. *Marvel Agent Carter* has been played by Hayley Atwell, or known as Peggy Carter.

Peggy Carter is a strong female character, but before she gets her high position she has to struggle against her colleagues that do not support her at all based on the fact that she is the only woman who works in the agency. As the only female, she has been asked by her fellow co-workers to do menial chores like serving coffee and some snacks too. She is never allowed to join in office meeting and when she gives an opinion, no one pays attention on her. As a female secret agent who has a routine office works in New York City in the year of 1946, Peggy Carter must fight for her life in a patriarchal environment.

(Shneiderman, 2016) says that 1940s was the time when women were planting seeds for the rebirth of feminism. One of the venues of Western societies that have seen great changes in gender roles over the past century is the workplace (Wienclaw, 2011, p. 19). Prior to 1942 in America, women were not allowed to serve in military, except becoming a nurse. Then after World War II was declared, many women signed up to serve. At that time, American's involvement in WW II marked a change in women's roles. Approximately 350.000 women served during the war.

Marvel Agent Carter consists of 2 seasons. The first season has 8 episodes and the second season with 10 episodes. The first season took place in 1946 New York with Peggy Carter working as an Agent in Strategic Scientific Reserve (SSR). Peggy has to break the patriarchal environment and struggle for gender equality. In the second season, Peggy moves from New York to Los Angeles to deal with the threats of the new Atomic Age by the Secret Empire in the aftermath of World War II, gain new friends, a new home, and a potential new love interest. Peggy also enjoys her femininity, individual choices and independence.

Peggy's role in *Agent Carter* is a representation of Girl Power, which is a part of Third Wave feminism. Girl Power is a cultural phenomenon to represent female empowerment, independence and self-sureness. However, in Peggy Carter's case, Peggy's superior ability cannot be easily accepted by her colleagues who live in the year of 1946. She has to face challenges to do her role as a secret agent, a typically male work in the era after WW II.

Based on the above discussions, the writer is interested in the way Peggy Carter breaks the male-dominated world in her workplace. She is so inspiring and motivating for women working in the area dominated by men. For the writer, Peggy Carter is an independent woman icon represented in movies and comics. At the end of this series, she receives her high position that is worth struggling. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze Peggy's gender stereotyped experiences and Girl Power aspect through her actions and appearances as portrayed in *Marvel Agent Carter* movies using feminism approach.

1.2. FIELD OF THE STUDY

The field of the study is Literature. The study will use Girl Power theory which linked to Third Wave Feminism.

1.3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This scope of the study is Literature, especially Gender Studies.

1.4. PROBLEM FORMULATION

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the gender stereotypes experienced by Peggy Carter?
2. What are Peggy Carter's actions and appearances that reflect Girl Power?

1.5. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to answer this question:

1. To find out the gender stereotypes experienced by Peggy Carter in her work.
2. To reveal Peggy Carter's actions and appearances that reflects Girl Power.

1.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is expected to gain more understanding on feminism, especially gender stereotype and Girl Power. This study does not merely discuss about the film itself but also the lesson and values learnt from the film. It gives readers awareness that film can also be represented academically.

1.7. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

1. Third Wave Feminism

Third Wave Feminism is a term that has been used by a number of women, as well as popular media, to describe contemporary versions of feminism that evolved over

the past decades (Johnson, 2007, p. 10). This wave is different from two previous waves before. While the First Wave and Second Wave Feminism deal with social issues, the Third Wave Feminism deals with women themselves and how they find their identity. This wave also supports queer theory, which is considered as taboo in two previous waves before.

2. Girl Power

Girl Power is a cultural phenomenon that emerged in 1990s and early 2000s. It represents the idea that women can do everything they choose, especially on a personal level, make their own decisions, make sure that their voice or opinion would be heard, be aggressive and be active (Hains, 2005, p. 1).

