

Chapter 1

Introduction

This chapter provides the reasons that lead me to conduct this research. It also explains the context of the research which are; the problem that is focused on, the objective, the scope of research, and the significance of research.

Basic Consideration

People in the world are often strongly influenced by the roles that he or she has to play within society. Each role they play determines how they should act, think and feel in a particular society. These roles may be different from one society to another, due to particular belief and value of particular society on gender roles.

We can see the difference of gender roles in the United States families throughout the time. In some periods of time, for instance in 1950's, the white families hold the traditional marriage roles where the husband takes on the role as breadwinner and the wife fulfills the role of homemaker and does not do work outside of the home. Meanwhile, in the same period of time but in the different community, black families in the US hold the mixed type role. This type of gender role allows the woman to work either outside or inside the house in order to help the economy of the family, yet she works less than the husband. In this type of role, the main role of woman is working on domestic tasks and taking care of the children while the man is still the breadwinner. On the other hand, there is a time where the woman from both communities, White and Black, started to be more concerned to struggle for their rights and does not want to be ruled anymore, because they want to have the equal rights just like the man. They tend to enter the workplace and reach the highest education from college.

One of the parts of US families' history on gender roles which hold the very traditional gender roles is in 1950's. It was noted in the history that in this period of time, the gender roles were very strict and rigid where the man was the sole breadwinner, who worked outside the home to make a living and the woman had to be the one who worked for domestic tasks and took care of the children. As denoted from Holt (2008, p. 1), "women were considered domestic caregivers, with sole responsibility for the home and child rearing, while men 'brought home the bacon' or as the breadwinner". It means that woman worked for domestic tasks. As a wife, she stayed home, did the housework and cooking, while caring for the children. She was expected to not work outside, but to remain home instead, regardless any educational background she may have had and many more. On other hand, the man, or husband, went out to work. He worked outside of the home. He was the sole breadwinner. His job was to provide the necessity of the family and he also took care of the family financially.

However, the traditional gender roles type in 1950's did not work in African-American families in the US. In this period of time, the African American families hold mixed type roles, where the wife does not only do the household tasks but also helps the economy of family by working outside or inside the house even though the husband is still the main breadwinner. It was influenced by the economic condition of most of African American families. Most of them struggled with poverty, for this reason the wife had to help her husband in order to improve the economy of family.

Historically, gender roles in 1950s were much more rigid, strict and traditional, particularly for women (even though some of the families in this period hold mixed type roles). Unpredictably, as the victims of gender roles that have been designed in the society, there were some of the women in this period of time who struggled for gender

roles equality. It is supported by Bloom (2009, p. 41) “in the African-American community exists the even more marginalized group of women, facing and fighting prejudice expressed along both racial and gender lines”.

Those phenomena which are happened in 1950s at Southside Chicago are obviously portrayed in *A Raisin in the Sun* film. It is a film that shows an African-American family living in the society of Southside Chicago who struggled to find their identity and act based on gender roles that have been set out on their community and in contrary; one of the characters struggled to make a change on existing gender roles.

As quoted from a conversation in the film:

- Walter : Who in the hell ever told you to go be a doctor, anyway? You so crazy about messing with sick people, why don't you go be a nurse like other women?
- Beneatha : **I'll be what I want to be.**
- Walter : With somebody else's money.
- Beneatha : It's Mama's money.

(Dialogue 205-209, CD 1, 00:13:25--> 00:13:33)

The conversation above clearly shows that Walter wants Beneatha to stop reaching her dream of becoming a doctor. He believes that it is uncommon in their society when a girl wants to be a doctor. So, he asks his sister, Beneatha to be a nurse like others. On the other hand, Beneatha does not agree with her brother. She wants to be what she really wants to, that is becoming a doctor. It implies she wants to be different and free to express herself. Then, Walter emphasizes to Beneatha that she just uses somebody else's money in reaching her dream, but Beneatha against by saying that money which is used by her belongs to her Mom, so she has a right for it.

From the above conversation, it can be concluded that Walter wants Beneatha to be like other women in their society, the common one. However, Beneatha does not want to be ruled by others and the gender roles that have set out in her society.

Discussing about the meaning of gender roles, there are some experts that denote their concepts about gender roles. For instance, Boon at all (2012, p. 3) designated that “gender role is a number of hopes which determines the way how males or females are supposed to think, act or feel. It means that the society where the people (males or females) live has set the roles which obligate the people in that society to think, act and feel based on the roles”.

Besides, Blackstone (2003, p.2) stated that “gender roles are based on the different expectations that individuals, groups, and societies have of individuals based on their sex and based on each society's values and beliefs about gender”. She also said that “gender roles are the product of the interactions between individuals and their environments, and they give individuals cues about what sort of behavior is believed to be appropriate for what sex”. This point clearly described that gender roles are according to the sexual category that are male or female, the principles and the viewpoint of a society regarding gender. Additionally, she wrote that gender roles are the result of communications between the people and their environments. They determine the kind of attitude which is supposed to be acted by males or females.

Based on the explanation above, I take the gender roles as the topic of my research. I am willing to acquire it because the analysis of gender roles in a literary work, particularly in the department of English, is hard to find. This reason guides me to make a research about the analysis of gender roles in a film. I also intend to take it, in order to make it become more familiar in the community of English department.

Moreover, I acquire an African-American film to be the object of my research. The title of the film is “*A Raisin in the Sun*”, directed by Kenny Leon. It is a film that is adapted from a play by Lorraine Hansberry. It was released in 2008 by Sony Pictures Television Inc and broadcasted by ABC on February 25th, 2008.

I choose to analyze the topic of gender roles in this film, because based on my observation from the film I have found that “*A Raisin in the Sun*” is a representative film which tells about gender roles of African-American family in Southside of Chicago in 1950s. From this film, I can see the gender roles that have been set out in that society, how the society acted by those roles and in another way, how they broke the roles because they did not want to be ruled. The most interesting thing in this film is: in 1950s the gender role was strict and rigid, that is why most of the members of family in the film struggled to follow the roles whatever it may take. Meanwhile, unpredictably one of the members of the family acted in opposite way. She did this way for the reason that she wanted to be different from the other women in her family (her mother and sister-in-law). Additionally, she did not want to be ruled by the gender roles in her society.

There are several reasons that have influenced me to choose *A Raisin in the Sun* as the object of research. Firstly, as I intend to analyze the gender roles of African-American in 1950s, therefore I take *A Raisin in the Sun* because it represents the gender roles of African-American in that year.

Additionally, this film is considered having a high quality. Nielsen Media Research showed that it was watched by 12.7 Million viewers and the 9th rank in the ratings for the week ending March 2nd, 2008.

Some of the materials in *A Raisin in the Sun* are adapted from the real life of its original writer, Lorraine Hansberry, who had struggled for equality in the South Side of Chicago, USA in the 1950s. She struggled to raise her gender that is oppressed her to make a move. As cited from Bloom (2009: p. 13) “Hansberry proudly declared, “I was born black and female,” rejecting the limits society placed on her race and gender”. Thus, this film is suitable to be the object of an academic research.

It is expected that this research will give contribution to the part of literary criticism course in English Department, especially analysis of a literary work with the use of content analysis.

Problem of Research

Based on the explanation above, I formulate the research problem as follows:
How is gender role portrayed in the main characters of *A Raisin in the Sun*?

Objective of Research

The research is aimed to: analyze and describe gender roles which are portrayed in the main characters of *A Raisin in the Sun*. The gender roles here are analyzed according to the types of gender roles which are designated by Green.

Scope of Research

This research focuses on the analysis of gender roles in the main characters of *A Raisin in the Sun*. In categorizing the data, I focus on the analysis of gender roles on three types of gender roles which are traditional home-maker types, mixed types, and egalitarian types.

Significance of Research

This research is mainly expected to give contribution to the part of academic community of English Department. Specifically, the significances of this research are:

- It is aimed to help the students in exploring and comprehending more about gender roles. As far as I know, gender roles are the material that is learned in literary criticism class. Therefore, the students can explore comprehend and broaden their views on gender roles through this research.
- It is aimed to assist the students who want to conduct the research related to gender roles, particularly in literary work. It will be one of the guideline for them. As a guideline, it will provide the information on how to identify, analyze and describe the occurrence of gender roles according to the types in a film.