CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the introduction about the representation of woman as a feminist agenda in the film "Wonder Woman," the author of this research would like to open this research by explaining and describing the background of the research and other aspects to give a glimpse for starters before moving forward to the next chapters of the research. Henceforth, in this chapter, the author of this research will explain the background of the research, to give the readers the purpose of this researcher, as well as a description to how this research could be useful for future purposes.

I.1. Background of the Study

With the rise of technology, mass media is changing too. Evolving technologies continue to drive the development of mass media (Marc, David, 2018). "Media is a means of communication whether it is written, broadcasted, or spoken to the large mass or audience in forms of television, radio, newspaper, magazine, film and so forth" defined by CliffsNotes.com (2016). The key features of mass media are their capacity to reach the entire population rapidly and with much the same information, opinions and entertainment; the universal fascination they hold; their stimulation of hopes and fears in equal measure; the presumed relation to sources of power in society; the assumption of great impact and influence (Dennis McQuail, 2010:p11). With the key features, people uses mass media to gratify their needs for information, opinions and entertainment; and it

was proven that "Of the approximately 40 hours per week available to an average person, 15 hours of 38 percent are spent watching television, said Robinson and Goobey (1997)," thus creating media effects to an individual or to the society.

One of the forms of mass media which has given impact for society is film because it combines visuals, movement, sound, and music all at once thus communicating effectively to the audience; because these levels of medium are placed into a film, attracting the audience to the cinema according to Payal Kamat (2012). Moreover, film is a reflecting or representation of the past and present society, infused with plot twists and narratives that a viewer could draw heavily from their everyday lives hence the viewer could relate to the emotion that the character of the movie is feeling. Since film can portray these situations, the meaning and information transferred becomes effective between the filmmaker and the viewer in providing a pervasive power for social information.

One of the ways film provides social information is through the portrayal images of gender representation. "Through these images comes different characteristics and having different meanings that is being transferred to the audience in stimulating their cognitive, such as behaviors of violence, crime, and delinquency amongst others," Manatu (2003) stated. Social psychologists have also suggested that these images often alter the way people perceive the social realities. Gender representation also plays a big part as film usually depicts male as dominated socio-cultural, political and economic character, and depicts female as a negative gender role stereotype.

A negative gender role stereotype of women could be taken of women's portrayals in films because subconsciously directors normally represents women as a someone who is weak and has low self-esteem (Gamble, 2010), for example, a secretary, receptionist, a whiny, weak character, or as a sex object for men in films. A film example like Pretty Woman, portrays Vivian, a young woman who is a street hooker meets and marries a rich guy from the upper class who transformed her into a proper lady. This portrays women as a weaker gender, sex objects, and reliant on men. Through those characteristics, "Gender representation in media influences how people perceive gender issues since some specific gender roles uplift and strengthen the images of men. Some movies clearly show the gender power structure where men are depicted as the stronger sex. Although some women in movies are represented as being strong and independent, they cannot dispute the evident gender power structure" (Alzahrani, 2016).

The annual report on gender representation in film, from the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film at San Diego State University, showed that out of the 100 highest grossing films of the year, 24 percentages protagonists role were led by women, 37 percentages female lead character, and just 34 percentages of the female speaking characters, an accumulation report made in 2017.

Table 1.1. Prevalence of Female Gender Roles in Film

Prevalence	2015	2016	2017
% Female protagonists characters	22	29	24
% Female major characters	34	37	37
% Female speaking characters	33	32	34
Films researched	100	100	100

Source: San Diego State University, 2017

From Table 1.1, it is shown that female protagonist rises and declines; female major characters increases and stays the same, and female speaking characters decreases and increases from the year 2015 to 2017. The top three movies that featured a strong female character in 2017 for the highest grossing film according to resources such as The Guardian, Parade, Glamour, Hollywood Reporter, and so forth are Beauty and the Beast, Star Wars: The Last Jedi, and Wonder Woman. According to The Wrap (2017), these three movies marks the first time that female-led films took the top three spots at the box office in nearly 60 years. Star Wars: The Last Jedi earned $533 million after less than a month in theaters, Beauty and the Beast took in $504 upon its release, and Wonder Woman lassoed a whopping $412 million in domestic gross.

We could see that there is an imbalance and a gender inequality from Table 1.1 because most of the roles are dominantly taken by men. Table 1.1. shows the prevalence of female roles in films, however there are also stereotypes that was found in women's characters particularly according to the study by Rachel Montpelier in 2017. Montpelier stated that "women's characters are particular and rarely important to a movie's plot; they are merely cliched set decoractions. To support that statement, researchers Anil Ramakrishna, Victor R. Martinez, Nikolaos Malandrakis, and Karan Singla and Professor Shrikanth Narayanan held a research about "Linguistic Analysis of Differences in Portrayal of movie characters."

Through this research, these authors analyzed female and male characters' language and their interactions across gender, race, and age in nearly 1000 film

scripts. Quoting from their research, "The results shown were that movies with female writers or directors in the production team are observed to have balanced gender ratios in characters compared to male writers or directors. Across several races, female actors are found to be younger than male actors on average. Female characters appear to be more positive in language use with fewer references to death and fewer swear words compared to male characters. Female characters also appear to be more prominent in horror movies compared to male characters."

Table 1.2. Linguistic Analysis Portrayal of Movie Characters Results.

Gender	Male	Female
Dialogue	37,000	15,000
Portrayal of characters	4900	2000
Writers	7 times more than female writers.	7 times less than male writers.
Writers' impact	Male writers will give female character representation on screen on average 50 percent lower.	Female writers will give female character representation on screen on average 50 percent higher.
Directors	12 times more than female directors.	12 times less than male directors.
Producers	A little over 3 times more than female producers.	A little over 3 times less than male producers.
Gender	Contained more words related to achievement, death, and more swear words than the scripted for women.	More positive in valence.

Source: University of Southern California, 2017

Overall, Table 1.2 showed further that female are less dominant than male in real life as well that could be seen in the table above in the writers, directors, producers' section. There will be more screen time for female charcaters if the writer is also female. In dialogue and characters, male are more dominant than female. Through the research that has been done, the author of this research sees that the female role in films is not equal than the male role. Hence why the protrayal of Wonder Woman would like to be researched, because the title of the movie itself is a female character is played by a female character.

I.2. Problem Identification

From Table 1.2, we could see how female has less speaking parts or dialogue compared to male. According to Martha Lauzen in Lang (2015), the executive director of the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Films at San Diego State University stated, "The truth is, even in the latest films, female characters are two times more likely than males to be identified only by a life-related role rather work-related role, they are consistently younger than their male counterparts, and they are rarely portrayed as formal leaders." Additionally, Lang (2015) revealed that women are overwhelmingly valued in film based on their identification as a mother, wife, or lover. Based on these two statements, we could see that female not only get less dialogue, but is normally represented in life-related role as a mother, wife, or lover in films as Lang has described.

Owing to that fact, we could also see there is a gender norm that could be seen in films. According to Student Resources (2005) studies, film industry cast roles in films based on a person's gender. Men are typically given a role that is dominant while women play the damsel in distress or subordinate. If men were to play roles associated with taking care of babies or cooking, it'd be seen as unusual. If a woman were casted to play the lead in a war movie, she would be seen as going against the gender norm. It is almost impossible for a woman to be casted the leading role in a movie. When the word "men" comes to mind, most think of dominance and being strong, while women are seen to be the opposite; they are viewed as "weak" or "fragile."

However, when we talk about superheroes, it is a hero having powerful skills. Merriam Webster defined superhero as a hero having extraordinary or superhuman powers. Superhero is mainly a term used for male hero, for female superhero is called "superheroine." Dictionary.com defined superheroine as a woman who has special achievements, abilities, or personal qualities regarded as a role model.

Superheroes are characters that may communicate ideas of social norms and values, including to femininity as well as masculinity. The importance why the author of this research picked up on studying a superhero film, Wonder Woman is mainly because superhero movies have grown in popularity and attract a large number of viewers according to Time Magazine. According to Anderson and Cavallaro (2002), children view superheroes as role models because of traits or skills the character possess. In addition, Jaffe and Berger (1994) said that it could contribute to expectations and perceptions of gender roles. Henceforth, it leads back to what the author have discussed, that media has placed an effect to the society about gender messages whether it is talking about male and female characters. In a research held by Miller, Rauch, and Kaplan (2016), results show that media influences gender roles and gender inequality may be harmful because it limits socially accepted roles and reinforces stereotypes within society, which might affect how people judge and treat others.

However, even when there are films that display female as weak and fragile characters, superhero female action, similar to its definition are portrayed as a character who has special abilities, achievements, qualities, and a role model thus

meaning that female superheroine character is strong and someone who has strong principles. Thus resulting in a different gender perspective on female and feminism from the audience because media portray female as a strong character too.

In effect, this becomes a light in a tunnel in the pop culture for the feminism community. In recent years, movies that portray female hero characters are rising in this awareness such as Katniss Everdeen from the Hunger Games because this character according to Student Source Guide goes against the idea of female in films being associated with fighting and it became a big hit movie throughout the world. David Gautlett (2002:p247) stated "the traditional views of a woman as a housewife or low statues worker has been kick-boxed out out of the picture by the feisty, successful 'girl power' icons." There are other 'girl power' icons characters too in the recent films such as Elsa from Frozen, Tris from Divergent, The Heat; and now, Wonder Woman the first ever female super female action film.

Similar to the reason why Marston created the character Wonder Woman in the first place, the impact that Wonder Woman has a correlation to that reason. In Wonder Woman's history, it is said that this fictional character of DC Comics female action here created by Marston as a "distinctly feminist role model whose mission was to bring the Amazon ideals of love, peace, and sexual equality to a world torn by the hatred of men." Because Wonder Woman is created in the era of World War II, hence why Marston wanted to show that women are strong enough to fight combats against men. The impact that was seen after Wonder Woman was released in 1941, many women started to join the Women's Army Corps in 1942

during World War II (Gladys Knight, 2010). Additionally, according Michele Kennerly and Carly S. Woods (2017), the growing involvement of the United States brought major cultural changes domestically, among them the movement of many women from spaces and work deemed appropriate for women to jobs and environments that had been the province of men. This movement of women into "the world of men" parallels that of Wonder Woman into "the world of man." Therefore the reason of Wonder Woman becoming a role model was reflected through the growth of feminism movement and sexual equality. This impact that Wonder Woman has in the World War II era is similar to the impact it has today.

Through Wonder Woman's mission of love, peace, and sexual equality as created by Marston and as a feminist icon, there is more to this character. Through this film, Leigh-Brown (2017) stated it proves to the film industry that a female hero are not necessarily weak, and that "Wonder Woman [as a female hero] is a great role model as she is someone who knows her talents and gifts and follows her own heart, she faces fear and does what she can to put things right, by choosing love." Wonder Woman was also instilled with natural abilities, separate from her arsenal of power, such as altruism, empathy, daring, and intellect. She also had super strength, and she was also immortal (Knight, Gladys, 2010:p309). In short, Wonder Woman is represented as a strong character with arsenal abilities, and she became a movement for the feminist community and female growth as critics have stated such as The Guardian, Huffington Post, Grazia, and many more.

The question that rose now is why the author of research is interested in researching about the representation of feminism. Virginia Woolf, a feminist in the nineteenth century defines 'feminist' as one who champions the rights of women. Margaret Walters (2005) said, "Though Virginia Woolf's 'right to earn a living' was, and remains, central to feminism, getting on for a century after she wrote it is clear that its attainment by no means solved all women's problem. Thus meaning that even after a century, from nineteenth century to the twenty first century, there is a still a 'rights' problem that is still not solved.

Through this film and the story plot line, Wonder Woman fought for the 'rights.' Although the rights was not for only the female community, but it was for the world. In the last line of the movie, Wonder Woman said: "To end war and bring peace to mankind. But then I glimpsed the darkness that lives within their mind...and learned that inside every one of them...there will always be both. A choice each must make for themselves. Something no hero will ever defeat…And now I know...that only love can truly save the world. So I stay...I fight and I give...for the world I know can be. This is my mission now. Forever." There is darkness in this world, in the researcher's case, there is gender inequality however how is Wonder Woman being represented to the world that could bring movement to the feminist community as said by critics through this film, and that's the essence of this research.

Henceforth, the researcher will analyze the representation of feminism by using semiotic analysis. Semiotics is the study of signs where it uncovers

meanings and analyzed unconscious cultural patterns, by Charles Peirce. Semiotics analyzes and interprets verbal and non-verbal signs.

I.3. Research Question

Through this researcher, the author of this research would like to unveil the representation of feminism through the film of Wonder Woman. Therefore, this research identifies the problem as follows:

1. How is women being represented in the film Wonder Woman?

2. How is the Wonder Woman character fitting to the feminism agenda?

I.4. Research Objective

This purpose of this research is to analyze and describe the representation of feminism using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics analysis by breaking down scenes to analyze the signs represented by the character, her attitude, and social codes through the film, Wonder Woman.

I.5. Signifiance of Research

I.5.1. Significance for Knowledge

1. To become a reference for future Communications' studies about film, specifically about gender studies through semiotics analysis by Charles S. Peirce.

I.5.2. Significance for the Society

1. To make readers to be critical towards film, to see it not only as a form to gratify their needs of entertainment, but to be critical whether the messages that is being sent from the filmmaker and viewer affects society in a positive or negative way.

2. To unveil and give information to the society how female is being portrayed through film.

3. To know how we could fight for our own rights through the signs analyzed in order to be interpreted and accepted well in the society.

4. To build people's awareness regarding gender inequality and how important it is to be living in a society where female and male are being treated equally.

I.6. Organization of the study

Chapter one will begin with the background of the study and the problem identification regarding the topic that is about to be researched. The identification of problem will lead to the research questions that is asked, and of this research's significance.

In Chapter two, researcher will explain in detail about the object of study. This chapter will consist of all information related about the topic, and finding the state of the art by comparing previous researches regarding feminism and semiotics movie analysis.

In Chapter three, the researcher will describe in detail and correlate how this study is related to Chapter one using communication theories.

In the fourth chapter, the researcher will explain the methodology used to do the research and how information is obtained in order to answer the research questions raised in the first chapter.

In Chapter five, the researcher will explain the result findings, and analyzes the data obtained from primary data collection and secondary data collection. The answer and the explanation of the findings will provide information in detail to answer the research question in Chapter one.

Chapter six will discuss in conclusion of the results of this research as well as giving critics for the author of research's work in order the future researches could be better.