

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the early history of the United States, a man virtually owned his wife and children as his material possessions (Women History Online). Hence, women had been uniquely viewed as a unique creature. It can be seen when woman was identically as a person who only stayed at home and raised the children as a good mother and wife, and men were identically with their muscular power, which were considered as masculine. They had to work outside the house, and became the head of the household and the protectors of their families. But, nowadays women were considered not only inferior to men but also dominance to arrange her household necessity.

In the 19th century, a lot of women began to work outside their homes, for example in garment shops and textile mills. In 1910s, the United States began to release a new regulation about the limit of working hours and improving working conditions for women and children (Women History Online). According to Nancy Rubin Stuart, in The New Suburban Woman: Beyond Myth and Motherhood, about 400 women that lives in New York and California when their area (suburbs) were changing from traditional bastions of home and hearth become vibrant. They are captured as the shock waves which they have to choose between stay at home mothers or woman who worked outside the home (1). Nowadays, suburban women can no longer be stereotyped as housewives. They can no longer be assumed as stay-at-home mothers, who spend their days only for a monotone activity such as gardening, shopping or volunteering for local charities. Now,

more than half of suburban women are working outside the house, and most of them entrust their child to day care, or just tend with baby sitters (Stuart 3-4).

The drama series, Desperate Housewives published in 2004. It was created by a movie director, Marc Cherry. This drama series becomes popular and phenomenon because it presents the fractured lives of four upper middle class suburban women (the independency of women) and also the problems surrounds them. Not only that, Desperate Housewives becomes successful with audience approximately 115 to 119 million viewers (Desperate Housewives Online). Another literary works, such as Bridget Jones Diary (2001), Stepford Wives (1975), also present about suburban women or women as wives and mothers.

Marc Cherry was best known from the episodes of Touchstone Television's hit comedy series The Golden Girls (1985-1992). In addition, he had created or co-created three sitcoms: The Five Mrs. Buchanans, the Crew, and Some of My Best Friends. Desperate Housewives presents different stories from Sex and The City (2004). The mix of comedy and drama in this series makes the viewers enjoy the story.

Desperate Housewives has four seasons. The writer uses the first season until third season but not all episodes of each season will be used for data analysis. In the beginning of the season, Marc Cherry presented the main mystery of the unexpected suicide of Mary Alice Young. In the first season in Pilot episode, the identity of Gabrielle's and her problems emerged and became the intrigue of her marital problems. In the second season and the third season, the drama presented the floating identity of Gabrielle. The beginning season also showed the identity of women in suburbs area. And in the third season presents the end of Gabrielle's marital life.

The movie director used the term Desperate Housewives to present how desperate the four main characters as the housewives with all their problems. The viewers can have an impression of housewives who are desperate for sex and scandals. Some of women have marriage problems like in Desperate Housewives. Viewers watch the lives of a group of women with all the problems inside the drama, how they are facing the secrets, crimes, and mysteries hidden behind the doors of their-at the surface-beautiful suburban neighborhoods (Desperate Housewives Online).

The writer is interested in analyzing the character of Gabrielle Solis because she is the only brown skin woman, sophisticated, and rich. Not only that, sometimes she looks naughty when she is brave enough having affair with her young gardener. The writer also wants to figure out the identity of Gabrielle's character as a suburban woman portrayed in story located in Wisteria Lane. Besides, the writer wants to see the shifting identity that happens toward Gabrielle upon several aspects in her social life, such as family, marriage, career and sexual relationship. Subsequent to identity, it will be discussed further to see the shifting on Gabrielle.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Considering the background of the study above, the writer will propose some problems as follows:

1. How is the identity of suburban women portrayed in Desperate Housewives?
2. How is Gabrielle character represented in the drama series?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Providing the answers to the above questions satisfactorily, the objective of the study is:

- 1 To know the identity of suburban women portrayed in Desperate Housewives
- 2 To know the character of Gabrielle represented as suburban women.

1.4 Significance of the Study

By analyzing Desperate Housewives, the writer hopes that the thesis will give contribution to the world of knowledge in general and to the study of literature in particular. The study of the shifting identity has functions to show and identify the identity of Gabrielle and her lifestyle. Even though many students have written the same topics about women, marital life or gender issues using the same theory, but they used different literary works, movies, or dramas.

The writer uses Desperate Housewives drama series as the data for analyzing the problems, also important to understand about woman as a mother and housewife who holds the important roles in the family. Hopefully, we can take some lessons from Gabrielle's experiences related to his material ambition. Besides, it is hoped that the study can help the readers realize the meaning of life. Not only that, the writer hopes this analysis will helpful for students of the English Department of Airlangga University.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The study concentrates on the condition of the suburban women society in Desperate Housewives drama series, the writer limits the analysis on the characterization

focusing on Gabrielle's life as suburban women, and the identity on Gabrielle which influences her thought about the happy life.

However, because there are many characters and series of Desperate Housewives, the writer only chooses on one character, Gabrielle Solis. The writer uses the first season until the third season to see the characteristics of suburban women.

1.6 Theoretical Background

The thesis is intended to analyze the portrayal of suburban women in Gabrielle's identity and also identify the problem in her marriage life. The first theory that is used to examine the identity of suburban women in the story is the process of the identity by Kathryn Woodward in Concepts of Identity and Difference, "identities now have moved away from traditional, class-based loyalties towards lifestyle choices where they are concerned with ethnicity and race, gender, sexuality, age, disability, social justice and environmental concerns that produce new identification (Woodward 26)."

The idea behind the sequence is "to evoke the show's quirky spirit and playful flaunting of women's traditional role in society". It explains the society in the world of fictional story movies that has its functions, value and the formal roles (Desperate Housewives Online). Because of that, the writer uses the second theory of new identity of woman by Myra Macdonald. According to her Representing Women: Myths of Femininity in the Popular Media, nowadays women can accomplish whatever they want to, they are prepared to make sufficient effort. They are also associated with stylishness and the belief that it is possible to be both feminine and supportive of feminist objectives at the same time.

1.7 Method of the Study

To make a proper analysis of the work, the technique of data collecting consists of certain steps. First, the method used in this study is library research which is used to gain the information that can support the analysis. The main source used is the drama series itself. Articles from the internet, determining the data based on the criteria and other sources are used for supporting the study. The criteria used here contains the portrayal of suburban women including her point of view upon several things, lifestyle, principles, and others that still have the role during the process of suburban women identification in the story. Second, the writer also tries to find information from any books dealing with literary theories and approaches that will be used in the analysis.

Regarding the subject of the study, to defend the argument in the analysis of the movie, the writer uses descriptive analysis. So the analysis of the thesis is done by describing the problems of the work through dialogue script, events, situation (by capturing the scene) and actions of the story related to the identification process of suburban women in the story and identify the identity of Gabrielle. To make the analysis completely written, the conclusion turns out to be the last phase in writing the analysis of Desperate Housewives.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

Suburbia : areas of towns and cities that are outside the centre, and consist mainly of houses and flats/apartments. In the 20th century, however, many suburban areas began to see independence from the central city as an asset.

- Suburban women : women who are married or single and live in suburbs area
- Urban Women : Women aged 20-30 years old, living in the city, and are still fighting for her career or the material wealth and also love life (women quarter-life-crisis).
- Feminine : having the qualities or appearances considered characteristic of women.
- Feminism : a movement to support belief in the principle that women should have the same rights and opportunities (legal, political, social, economic, etc) as men.
- Identity : The characteristic, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others (such as name, state or place, character, behavior and attitude)
- Shifting Identity : The changing of the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others (such as name, state or place, character, behavior and attitude)