

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

It is a mainstream perspective accepted in society that gender is divided into two types; feminine and masculine. Gender refers to the behavioral, psychological, and social characteristics of men and women (Pryzgoda & Chrisler in Carroll, 2010, p. 84). Gender is socially constructed (Butler, 1999, p. 178) therefore society often relates the way of acting or behaving women with feminine traits and men with masculine traits. Further, feminine traits mean that women are intuitive, loving, nurturing, emotionally expressive, and gentle. Meanwhile, masculine traits mean that men are strong, stable, aggressive, competitive, self-reliant, and emotionally undemonstrative (Carroll, 2010, p. 94). In addition, femininity and masculinity become the ideal stereotype traits that society attributes of each gender.

Gender stereotype shapes society's opinion about how women and men act sexually. As a representative of society's knowledge of customs, myths, ideas, religions, and sciences, stereotypes affected individual behaviors. Therefore, family as a social institution and as the fundamental unit of the society has a vital role in gender construction (Devadoss and Sudha, 2013, p. 1). The gender construction begins when the baby born by looking at their genitalia to indicate whether it is a girl or a boy. Further, family, especially parents, will treat them differently based on the gender such as dressing them in specific colors and giving differentiated toys (Thorne in Witt, 1997, p. 2). Additionally, the society believes that majority of people are gender

congruent (Money in Carroll, 2010, p. 84) means that their biological sex, gender identity, and gender behaviors are all in sync.

Biological sex is fixed and determined by the body (Blasius, 2001, p. 183). Sex assigned to the infant at birth by a doctor's visual check of the genitalia while accurately predicts the child's gender identity. According to American Psychological Association (2016), gender identity refers as an individual's internal sense of being male, female or something else. Moreover, gender identity is not always visible, personal, and determined by individual alone. Further, gender behavior or gender expression refers to the way an individual communicates gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice or body characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine. Nevertheless, Butler in *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution* (1988) believes that those whose gender identity contradicts with social norms consider as taboo and will be punished (p. 7).

However, the opposite situation occurs to transsexual who experiences gender incongruent which means the biological sex, gender identity, and gender behaviors are not sync. The word transsexual was first used by Harry Benjamin, an American endocrinologist and sexologist, to refer a particular type of cross-dresser who wanted to live life in an "opposite gender role" in the early 1950's. Unfortunately, many people mistaken transsexual with transgender. Transgender is the umbrella term describing a diverse community of people whose gender identity differs from which they were designated at birth and includes three main groupings: transsexual, transvestite, and cross-dresser (Carroll, 2010, p. 111). Meanwhile, classified under the

term of transgender, transsexual refers to people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex (American Psychological Association, 2016) and feels trapped in the body of the wrong gender (Carroll, 2010, p. 85).

Walter Bockting, a clinical psychologist and co-director of the LGBT Health Initiative at Columbia University Medical Center, states that transsexual experiences a feeling of having intense distress that her/his body is inconsistent with the gender s/he feels they are. Those inconsistent feeling within transsexual's gender identity with his/her biological sex is called gender dysphoria (Carroll, 2010, p. 102). Gender dysphoria itself is a replacement of Gender Identity Disorder (GID) approved by American Psychiatric Association in May, 2013. Gender dysphoria leads transsexual to gender identity crisis which refers to internal conflict within individual of the physical and gender which s/he identify (APA, 2016). Different symptoms of gender dysphoria experience by children and adult.

Moreover, Harry Benjamin Gender Dysphoria Association argues that an individual who has persistently, from an early age, believed that s/he be in the wrong body considers as primary transsexual, while those who comes to realize their true identity at later age and usually does so via a path of cross-dressing are considers as secondary transsexual. In children, they usually have a strong desire to be the opposite sex and preference for cross-dressing, rejecting toys, games, or activities which conforming their own sex, and hate their genitalia (Cook, 2004, p. 27). Those symptoms lead an individual to gender identity crisis and suffer over whom they are and what gender they belong to.

Furthermore, transsexual desires to modify their bodies to make it as congruent as possible with their gender identity through hormones therapy and/or sexual reassignment surgery (SRS). Transsexual includes those who go from male to female, known as trans-woman, and female to male, known as trans-man. Those terms aimed to identify the direction of transition and the gender identity they have chosen. Yet, those who does not take SRS but undergoes the hormones therapy also belongs to transsexual (Cook, 2004, p. 22). In short, it is the *desire* for the surgery, rather than its realization, that defines the transsexual.

The nature and nurture which caused individual to be transsexual is still debatable. National Center of Transgender Equality (2009) speculates that there are links between transsexual identity and brain structure. Moreover, psychologist indicates that transsexuals feel that their gender identity is an innate part of them as an essential quality of who they were born to be. However, culture also influences individual to be transsexual since it creates specific ways for people to live in roles that are different from that assigned to them at birth. Besides, American Psychological Association argues that biological factors such as genetic and prenatal hormones level influenced. Meanwhile, they argue that individual's early and later in adolescence or adulthood experiences contributes to the development of transsexual identity. Regarding the debatable causes, this study assumes that it is the nurture influencing transsexual as there are external and internal factors leads them to be.

One of the factors linked individual to be transsexual is the closeness relationship of mother – son. Robert Stoller, a professor of psychiatry in UCLA, in

Made to Order: Sex/Gender in Transsexual Perspective by Ines Orobio de Casto, states that “the mother and only the mother who has an impact on the transsexual’s gender identity” (1993, p. 26). Additionally, the marks of femininity of the son are caused primarily by the mother’s unconscious wishes (Stoller, 1966, p. 109). In trans-man cases, the boy believes that they had been actively encouraged by the mother. Moreover, Zucker and Bradley (1995, p. 263) states that mother tolerates son’s gender dysphoria because of her fears towards male aggression in resolving the marital problem and the failing of providing support to each other. Therefore she encourages femininity as a way to encourage nurturance. The development and the repeated mother’s encouragement lead to the son’s resistant of being transsexual.

Transsexual relates to gender performativity theory by Judith Butler. As a theorist of power, gender, sexuality, and identity, Butler states in *Gender Trouble* that gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being (1999, p. 43). By stating this, Butler implies that gender is not stable but fluid since it is constructed after the repetition acts from the individual itself or the society. In short, Butler states there is no gender at all without those acts (1988, p. 522). The repeated actions include the expression of gender such as appearance, hair style, and behavior.

Additionally, there is a performance of repeated acts by the individual as the constructed gender identity. In this sense, gender identity is performative. Moreover, gender identity is an individual’s survival which has cultural survival as its end

(Butler, 1999, p. 177). Society expected individual to perform properly as heteronormativity. Since gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo (Butler, 1988, p. 520), those who do not do their gender correctly are punished by society.

Further, transsexual usually attracted to the same sex person which lead to the confusion about their sexual orientation. Therefore, transsexual often hides their true gender identity from outside world since they are afraid to be discriminated, such as bullied and alienated. Sexual orientation, according to American Psychological Association (2008), refers to an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions to men, women or both sexes. Sexual orientation also refers to a person's sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviors and membership in a community of others who share those attractions.

Moreover, this study is borrowing Sedgwick's concepts related to sexual orientation in analyzing transsexual's gender identity construction. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, an American academic scholar in the fields of gender studies, queer theory, and critical theory, argues three concepts of homosexuality which are homosocial desire, homosexual panic, and closet. The concepts structured by the binary opposition of homosexual and heterosexual. In *Between Men* (1993), Sedgwick's term of homosocial desire refers to the way of bonding between two men without being judge as homosexual. However, homosocial desire leads to homosexual panic which is an anxiety on individual towards the possibility of having desire to the same sex. Therefore, Sedgwick states that the individual usually live as a double agent means

live in a closet; first closet they keep the identity as a homosexual and second is the world where s/he pretends as a people with congruent gender. Sedgwick's term defines closet as an analogy for a hidden and private room where they keep secret and hide their sexual identity from the world (1990, p. 71). Further, at the time when individual accepting and openly expressing their true identity to society is called coming out.

After the legalization of same-sex marriage on June, 2015, the percentage of American who comes out as transgender, the umbrella term of transsexual, increased twice in the last five years. A research by the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law (2011) finds that 0.3 percent of American identifies as a transgender. Moreover, recent studies in April, 2016 figures out there are 0.6 percent American distinguishes as transgender. The enhancement of transgender percentage shows that same-sex marriage legalization in United States influences transgender's courage to coming out.

Gender identity construction issue has been raised into novels such as *Luna* by Julie Anne Peters, *The Danish Girl* by David Ebershoff, and *If I was Your Girl* by Meredith Russo. *Luna* narrates about a boy named Liam who acts and dresses as a girl every night by borrowing his sister attributes as he believes that he is a girl named Luna. *Luna* is narrated by the main character's sister perspective therefore the reader cannot fully understand the main character's feeling and perspective towards gender identity construction. Meanwhile, *The Danish Girl* tells about an artist, Einar, who by a chance likes to dress as a female and later undergoes surgery to be a woman. The story sets in 1925 when technology of medical has not developed like nowadays;

hence his condition considers as insanity, schizophrenia, or indeed perversion, a condition which needed to be cured by imposing the most extreme measures, such as radiotherapy.

On the other hand, published in UK on 2016, *If I was Your Girl* is partially inspired by the author experience since she is a trans-woman. Therefore, the reader is presented different perspective towards gender identity construction issue from the individual itself. Nevertheless, gender identity construction issue in this novel has not been discussed before. Reflecting a life of a young Tennessee transsexual named Amanda, *If I was Your Girl* captures her struggles to find her true gender identity and how she finally acknowledge herself as a transsexual to society.

Born as a boy named Andrew Hardy, he experiences gender identity confusion since he was 9 when his teacher asks to write a story about what he wants to be in the future. Surprisingly, Andrew's story depicts his journey to meet a woman who identifies herself as Andrew in the future. When Andrew's father knows Andrew's story, he gets upset since he always tries to raise his son in masculine way such as ask him to go hunting, camping, and play some sports. On the other hand, Andrew's mother constructs him as feminine such as cooking and gardening. The contrast treatments repeated by his parents leads to Andrew's uncertainty of his true gender identity. Even so, Andrew keeps away from doing masculine activities since he does not like it and considers himself a girl.

Further, Andrew experience homosocial desire when he is attracted with his best friend, Marcus, at the age of 13. This brought him to homosexual panic as he knows

that boy supposed to be attracted to girl, but he does not. Therefore, Andrew experiences gender identity crisis which refers to the confusion of his true gender. Moreover, Andrew has a desire to wear girl clothes and use female toilet. Those actions show that Andrew violates social norms of gender construction which resulted him to be bullied and alienated by his friends as society punishment.

Besides, as a Catholic Andrew feels anxious since it does not accept the incongruent gender. The internal and external conflicts within his life about gender identity brought him to depression and attempt to suicide. After diagnosed with GID, Andrew joins a support group and more believes that he is a girl, named Amanda. By the age of 16, Amanda starts hormones therapy and moves to Lambertville a year later as a girl. However, Amanda hides her true identity as a transsexual to her peers at first. By the end, they finally know her true identity as transsexual which mark her claiming of the truest gender identity and happily accepted Amanda which mark the coming out.

In conducting this study, four previous related studies are used. The first one is conducted by Kristopher Cook (2009) titled *Gender Identity Disorder: a Misunderstood Diagnostic*. Cook found that transsexual and their surroundings do not aware with the possibilities of experiencing gender identity disorder. Transsexual is often hides their existence from the society while facing the criteria of gender identity disorder. This study is referred to the diagnostic by American Psychiatric Association.

The second study is conducted by Anita Yuliana (2009) titled *Konstruksi Identitas Gender Tokoh Utama dalam Film Chouchou*. Using cultural studies as an approach, this study have similar idea with the first study that transsexual hide his/her

true identity from the outside world and pretend as to be someone else in order to survive from being the victim of harassment by the society. However, transsexual finally claims the true gender identity to the society since they have desire to have a normal live without pretending and to be accepted by the society.

The third study is titled *The Danish Girl and the De/Construction of Gender Identity* by Annalena Lorenz (2012) also found that transsexual pretends to be someone else as the form of the survival. In this case, theater enables Einar, the main character, to perform as a woman named Lili as he desired. It is proved Butler's theory that gender is an action since he identifies himself as feminine. Through Lacan's mirror stage, Einar has power to create Lili and turns himself as an object to become a woman as he desired to be.

The last study is titled *Reconstructing the Main Character Gender Identity in Jeffrey Eugenides' Middlesex* by Novia Dwi Putriyana (2012). Butler's gender performativity theory is used in this study to reveal the reconstruction gender identity of the main character, Calliope, who was born as an intersex. Nature plays a dominant role in passing gene mutation that causes ambiguous genital. This study finds that gender identity is not given but fabricated by the human as Calliope finally finds her true gender identity and reborn as a boy named Cal by the age of 14.

Merging and developing the previous related studies, this study examines the gender identity construction in Meredith Russo's *If I was Your Girl*. In analyzing the issue, Judith Butler's gender performativity is used as an approach of the analysis since it reveals how gender identity is constructed. Besides, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's

concepts of homosexuality also applied to support this study as it shows phases of gender identity crisis experienced by the main character. Later, the issue will be analyzed by using descriptive analytical method with a qualitative approach.

1.2 Research Question

How is Andrew/Amanda' gender identity constructed in Meredith Russo's *If I was Your Girl*?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The study aimed to examine gender identity construction of Andrew/Amanda in Meredith Russo's *If I was Your Girl*.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study focused on the narrations indicating gender identity construction of Andrew/Amanda in Meredith Russo's *If I was Your Girl*.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is expected to give a better understanding of gender identity construction applied in literary works. Hopefully, the result of the study can be a reference and give beneficial contributions for those who want to develop this research in the future.