

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Homosexuality

The word "homosexual" entered Euro-American discourse during the last third of the nineteenth century (Sedgwick, 1993, p. 2). It made behavioral and sexual behavior cluster became wider. This made every person is necessarily assigned as homo/heterosexual as well as being assigned as male or female gender. The assignation made sexual aspects of personal existence is important to an individual. Modern Western culture placed sexuality as one of the aspects that constructs a person's identity.

Julie Harren Hamilton from National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) in *Homosexuality 101: What Every Therapist, Parent, and Homosexual Should Know* (2008) argues that parents' role and temperament contributes to a boy to develop homosexuality. Father is the main role model for his son to learn masculine traits. From his relationship with his father, the boy discovers how to be male by learning how his father acts, behavior, and traits. When the father neglects his role as a parent, the burden of constructing the boy's gender falls upon the mother. With the lack of father figure's role, the boy is not able to learn masculinity traits. Therefore, the mother's nurture makes the boy indirectly learns femininity instead.

As the boy understands more about femininity, he develops feminine traits such as naturally sensitive, observant, intelligent, and is sometimes more artistic than athletic (Hamilton, 2008, p. 2). These traits make the boy might find difficulty to make friends with other boys at school and find him more comfortable with girls. By the time he reaches puberty he is not interested in the opposite sex since he is familiar with femininity. However, he still wants emotional connections with males and it begins to take on a sexual form. This sexual attraction to the same-sex person makes the boy's sexual orientation as homosexual.

Sedgwick's queer theory focuses in analyzing homosexuality in literary works. Her works are influenced by Foucault's notions on sexuality. She argues that twentieth-century Western culture as a whole is structured and narrows the definition of homo/heterosexual. In analyzing modern homo/heterosexual definition, she discusses the contradictions between seeing homo/heterosexual definition. Sedgwick (1990, p. 1) argues that there are two views that can be used to understand sexual identity and desire, which are minoritizing view and universalizing view. The minoritizing view means that some individuals are born as gay and only those born with the queer traits share an interest in them. The universalizing view argues that homosexuality is relevant to anyone with a wide range of sexualities.

The existence of homosexuality brings controversy due to the prohibition constructed by the society and religion. Patriarchal structure suggests the "obligatory heterosexuality" is built into male-dominated kinship system

(Sedgwick, 1993, p. 698). It constructs the society to become heteronormativity – a belief of the “normal” or accepted sexuality in the society is heterosexual. In the mainstream society, homosexuality is considered as abnormal and unacceptable. Thus, homosexuals are often being rejected by the society and makes homosexuals feel alienated in heterosexual society.

Homosexuality is also rejected by family because of the constructed heterosexual institute (Sedgwick, 2005). As the first social institution, heterosexual parents educate their children to be heterosexual as the social norms accepted. As homosexuality is considered as unacceptable by the society, parents will find difficulty to accept their homosexual child. Parents might do anything to ‘heal’ homosexual youth to make them accepted by the society as they think it is their form of love to their child. On the other hand, homosexual youth might misunderstand it as a rejection of their identity. This misunderstanding might lead to family conflict. In some cases, homosexual youth are forced to leave home as their parents cannot accept their sexual identity.

In analyzing homosexuality, Sedgwick uses the concepts of homosocial desire, homosexual panic, and closet to see the process of sexual identity crisis. Homosocial desire is relationship between men without judgment from the society. Homosexual panic is an anxiety of being accused as a homosexual. Closet is the analogy of homosexual hiding the sexual identity which related to the state of being in the closet and coming out of the closet. Below is the further explanation of Sedgwick’s homosexuality concepts.

2.1.1 Homosocial desire

In the patriarchal society, it is normal for women to hold hands to show their close relationship. However, even though there is no sexual intention when men hold hands, it is considered as not normal and they will be judged as homosexuals. We live in heterosexual society that confused the bond between two men as homosexuals (Sedgwick, 1993). All the form of affections between men is seen as not normal and lead to the labeling of homosexuality. It is because male relationship is more logical than emotional like female.

This misunderstanding of the relationship between two men leads Sedgwick to derive the term homosocial desire – the social bonding between men without judgment. Sedgwick argues that homosocial is “social bonds between persons of the same sex.” She uses the word “desire” rather than “love” to mark the erotic emphasis and as an analogy of “libido” (Sedgwick, 1993, p. 696-697). Even though contains the word “homo”, homosocial desire does not always mean that the relationship between men will lead to homosexuality.

Male homosocial desire is the matter of male friendship, mentorship, and/or rivalry. It cannot be separated from class relation and the relation with women and gender system. However, homosocial desire is also related to the judgment of the homophobes. Even though homosocial desire considers any emotional expressions between men is normal and acceptable as long as it does not lead to homosexuality, homophobes might consider it as the expression of homosexuality. The concept of homosocial desire is expected to acknowledge people to

understand and appreciate the relationship between men without judging them as homosexuals.

2.1.2 Homosexual panic

Male relationship has created solidarity among men. It might lead the bond to have romantic feelings. Homosexual panic is a defense strategy for a man accused of being gay to prevent anti-gay violence. Sedgwick defines homosexual panic as "the most private, psychologized form in which many twentieth-century Western men experience their vulnerability to the social pressure of homophobic blackmail." (1990, p. 21). Homosexual panic might perform as a double act of minoritizing view. One acts as a confirmation of gay people minority, and another act as some people who question their sexuality, yet afraid of normal moral responsibility (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 20). For some gay people, homosexual panic might be the confirmation of homosexuality. While for some other gay people, homosexual panic might be the act of questioning sexual identity. These gay people are confused and sometimes refuse their sexuality due to heterosexual society norms.

Homosexual panic refers to the supposed uncertainty about an individual's own sexual identity of the perpetrator of the antigay violence (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 20). Some heterosexual men might snap as a defense mechanism when people suspect him as a homosexual. It is because they are afraid of the society that forbids any romantic feeling and sexual desire between men. For heterosexual men, homosexual panic can be define as the fear of homophobic blackmail to the

male bonding they have (Sedgwick, 1993). However, for some homosexual men, homosexual panic might be one of the acts of hiding their sexual identity. It is a 'legal defense' to avoid hatred from homophobes because patriarchy structurally requires homophobia (Sedgwick, 1993, p. 698).

2.1.3 Closet

To avoid any kind of hatred towards homosexuals, some homosexual might choose to be in the closet. Closet is an analogy for the place homosexual used to hide their sexual identity which related to the state of being in the closet and coming out of the closet. "Closetedness" itself is a performance initiated as such by the speech act of a silence - not a particular silence, but a silence that accrues particularity by fits and starts, in relation to the discourse that surrounds and differentially constitutes it (Sedgwick, 1990). For homosexuals, being in the closet means that keeping their sexual identity for themselves. This kind of silence counted as speech act in discourse. Being in the closet also relates to the existence of homophobes in the society. The fear of being rejected by society and family makes homosexuals choose to hide their sexual identity.

The act of openly expressing homosexuality to the public is known as coming out. It takes courage for homosexuals to come out of the closet. Coming out also considered as a process rather than an event. It might take series of actions for homosexuals to reveal their sexual identity. Coming out does not always mean homosexuals must declare by saying "I am gay". It can take other forms such as wearing a T-shirt bearing the text, "I am out, therefore I am"

(Sedgwick, 1990, p. 4). Even so, homosexuals must be aware of the social condition that might affect society to accept their sexual identity. It is possible for homosexuals to receive any form of hatred toward homosexuals after they come out. In many cases, homosexuals might receive social punishment such as being bullied, discriminated, and/or even death treat.

Coming out also means homosexuals have the freedom to stop being a double agent (Sedgwick, 1990). Double agent means when a homosexual lives in the closet, he lives in two worlds. The first is where he keeps the knowledge that he is homosexual for himself, and the second is where he pretends that he is heterosexual to the society. Coming out marks the end of a homosexual being double agent. He does not have to hide his sexual identity and no longer has to pretend to be heterosexual. He can live freely without worrying other people to find out his sexual identity and can accept himself as a whole.

2.2 Sexual Identity Crisis

Identity is constructed since we born and constructed through discourse (Sedgwick, 1990). In queer study, sexuality cannot be separated from an individual's identity. Sexual identity is considered as the matter of self-definition, as Sedgwick (2005) states that "Sexual identity is the understanding of your own gender, biological sex and the traits related, the desire within self toward your preferred partner and his/her gender, biological sex and the traits related, and also your performances reflecting your sexuality." It means that to determine sexual

identity, first we have to understand our whole mental and physical, then we have to understand our desire towards the opposite or same sex and gender.

The study of sexual identity cannot be separated from the study of gender. Modern sexual identity structured by gender which generalize human as male and female (Sedgwick, 1990). Heteronormativity considers that male must be masculine and female must be feminine. The constructed rule of sexual identity as male and female does not always congruent with the gender. It is possible for man to identify himself as feminine and female to identify herself as masculine. This notion does not always happen in homosexuality. It is also possible for a man sees himself as a man and identifies himself as masculine, but he is sexually attracted to men.

The idea of being trapped in the wrong body is known as gender identity crisis, the crisis on people who confused about their gender (Sedgwick, 1991). Sexual identity crisis is often mistaken as gender identity crisis. People with sexual identity crisis are not necessarily experience gender identity crisis. It is because sexuality and gender are two different things yet they are related closely. Sexual identity crisis happens when a person questions his/her sexual identity for being attracted to the same or both member of sex, but they consider their gender as the sex assigned from birth.

2.3 Gender Performativity

Sex and gender are two different topics, yet they are related closely. When talking about sex, it cannot be separated from gender. Butler argues that gender is

performative as it is always a doing rather than being (1999, p. 33). As Butler claims from Simone de Beauvoir, "one is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman," she is appropriating and reinterpreting this doctrine of constituting acts from the phenomenological tradition. In this sense, gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts. There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender, which identity is formed performatively and repeatedly.

Judith Butler in *Bodies that Matter* (1993, p. 12) argues that performativity is not a singular act for it is always a repetition of a norm or set of norms performing attributes of gender representation. Gender could be interpreted freely based on the performance without seeing the real sex of the actor. Butler on Salih (2002, p. 55) argues that there is no sex that is not always already gender. All bodies are gendered from the beginning of their social existence which means that there is no "natural body" that pre-exists its cultural inscription. Gender performativity concept is referring to the reality when boy or girl dresses and acts like the opposite sex.

The process of gendering is talking about the repetition and creation of gender based on the baby's genital since birth. A baby shifts from an 'it' to a 'she' or a 'he'. The process of a girl being 'girlled' brought into the domain of language and kinship through the interpellation of gender (Butler, 1993, p. 7-8). However, the process does not end there. Butler argues that gender performativity has three stages, which are action, repetition, and performance. The notion of gender is

created by various acts of the gender itself (Butler, 1988, p. 522). The acts—collective action—that represent the gender are being taught by parents who adopt the society norms.

For example, parents dress their baby with pink dress and ribbon to construct this baby as a girl. The parents raise their baby as a girl and educate her with femininity, such as wearing skirts, doing domestic chores, and giving girls toys. The girl also learns about femininity from her mother's traits of loving and nurturing. These acts must be performed repeatedly, amended, and fortified through time in order to be agreed by the society. The agreed acts of gender create social norms that must be performed well in order to be accepted. Those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished (Butler, 1988, p. 522). As the society that constructs gender, the punishment also comes from the society.

2.4 Homophobia

Any negative feelings or attitudes toward homosexuals are known as homophobia. It is a necessary consequence of such patriarchal institutions as heterosexual marriage. Our own society is brutally homophobic (Sedgwick, 1993, p. 698). Homophobes often express their hatred toward homosexuals by discriminating, harassing, and/or physically abuse them. Homophobia exists because homosexuals violate heteronormativity and religion. It makes homosexuals easily being bullied, discriminated, and/or receive death treat.

Homophobia also happens due to lack of information of LGBT. It makes gay teens easily exposed to bullying. Alabama, Pennsylvania, South Dakota,

Texas, and Utah do not have anti-bullying or anti-discrimination laws to protect LGBT youth. Statistics from National School Climate Survey 2013 show that 74.1% of LGBT students were verbally bullied because of their sexual orientation and 55.2% because of their gender expression; 36.2% of LGBT students were physically bullied because of their sexual orientation and 22.7% because of their gender expression; and 49% of LGBT students experienced cyberbullying in the past year. The fear of being bullied makes LGBT students depressed. Further, the depression does not only cause LGBT students to skip school, but also lead to suicide.

The rejection from family and society become obstacles for gay teens. On one hand, they want to express their sexual identity; on the other hand, they are afraid of God's condemnation and being rejected by family and society. It is clearly stated on the Bible that homosexuals are considered as sinners and will not be able to go to heaven, as stated in 1 Corinthians 6:9, "Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men." For religious family, it is hard for parents who have homosexual child to accept their child's sexuality. Many gay teens choose to repress their curiosity and hide their sexual identity to avoid external conflicts. As they are forbid to express their sexual identity, it causes the confusion in understanding their sexual identity. The confusion then leads gay teens to experience sexual identity crisis.

2.5 So Hard to Say

So Hard to Say is one of Alex Sanchez's novels that explore sexual identity crisis issue in gay teen. It was published on 2004 by Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers in New York. It wins Lambda Literary Award 2004 Winner; Rhode Island Teen Book Award Nominee; VOYA Top Shelf Fiction for Middle School Readers; Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) Choice; Borders Bookstores "Original Voices: New and Emerging Writers" selection, Mi Zona Hispana selection, New York Public Library 2005 "Book for the Teen Age". Told by two narrators, the novel is about Frederick, the new student in California, who questions his sexual identity. From Xio's and Frederick's narration, the reader is invited to see how Frederick struggles to find out his sexual identity with the help of Xio's feeling towards him.

When Frederick moved from Wisconsin to a Mexican neighborhood in California, he easily becomes friends with Xio and friends. However, Xio wants to be more than friends. Frederick questions himself for not being able to feel the same excitement as Xio when they hold hands. Instead, he finds himself thinking more and more about Victor, the captain of the soccer team. Whenever Victor embraces him, he feels the excitement that supposed to be felt when he is with Xio.

When Carmen, Xio's friend, asks him whether he is gay or not, Frederick snaps and denies it since he sees Iggy, a boy he always curious about, being called "*maricon*" or "fag" by almost everyone, including Iggy's older brother. On one hand, he is curious about Iggy's sexual identity and he also cannot deny his

excitement of Victor. On the other hand, he is afraid that everyone will find out and start calling him names like Iggy and Xio will make a distance with him. Frederick chooses to hide his sexual identity to avoid any rejection and performs his masculinity to cover his femininity and his sexual identity. He finally determines his sexual orientation as gay after he realizes that he does not have the same feeling as Xio, but he is attracted to Victor instead.

2.6 Alex Sanchez

Alex Sanchez was born in Mexico to a German and Cuban heritage parents. At the age of thirteen, he heard the word “gay” for the first time and immediately knew that he is. He got depressed and refused to accept his sexual identity as he watched other boys got beaten up for being labeled as homosexuals. Sanchez explains in an interview with Toby Emmert that his books mostly based on his experience, “There was no such thing (LGBT young adult literature) as being out when I was in high school. I do remember one boy who was labeled queer and, consequently, got beat up every day. I watched and stood silent, afraid that if I said anything, I might be found out, too. So instead, looked on, feeling ashamed and guilty for standing by.”

Sanchez received his master’s degree in guidance and counseling from Old Dominion University and for many years worked as a youth and family counselor. He started writing about gay character on his post-graduate study. He started to write *Rainbow Boys* the year he left work as a youth counselor and moved into human resources. It took five years to finish writing the novel and was published

on 2001 after he got the contract with Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. Sanchez hopes that his books will help LGBTQ teens to see positive images and guide them through the confusion of adolescence.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

The aim of this study is to investigate the sexual identity crisis in Alex Sanchez's *So Hard to Say*. The main character in the novel, Frederick is an American teenager dealing with sexual identity crisis. This study uses homosexuality concept by Sedgwick to see the steps that Frederick takes in order to investigate his sexual identity and gender performativity concept by Butler to see how Frederick performs himself to cover his sexual identity. As mentioned above, there are three terms Sedgwick uses to analyze homosexuality, which are homosocial desire, homosexual panic and closet. Homosocial desire aims to see Frederick's relationship with other men, homosexual panic used to analyze Frederick's feeling in dealing with the fact that he is a homosexual and closet is the term to explain why he is hiding his sexual identity. Gender performativity used to see how Frederick performs himself as his sex assigned to hide his sexual identity. The stages of performativity are used to analyze the actions repeated by Frederick in order to perform masculinity and to hide his femininity.