

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

The process of questioning someone's sexual identity is known as sexual identity crisis. It is confusion between self-acceptance and heteronormativity values. Sexual identity crisis can be found in young adult literature and *So Hard to Say* by Alex Sanchez is one of them. The crisis can be happened by several factors, one of them is family condition. In the novel, Frederick, the main character, is a thirteen-year-old boy who comes from an intact family. However, Frederick does not have much time to spend with his father due to his father profession as a chemical engineer. Moreover, his mother sabotages his quality time with his father in sports because she is afraid his asthma will be relapsed. Also, he is the only child of the family. Hence, Frederick becomes closer to his mother than to his father. It results in Frederick sharing the same interest with his mother and developing feminine traits. Therefore, it causes Frederick to have the tendency of being gay.

However, family condition is only a small factor of sexual identity crisis. Religious views also affect sexual identity crisis. Frederick as a Lutheran understands that Christianity forbids homosexuality. It causes confusion between his fear of condemnation of homosexuality and his hope to be accepted as gay. Moreover, the society views on homosexuality also contribute to sexual identity crisis. California and Wisconsin's society cannot accept homosexuality, as they

apply heteronormativity. It causes homophobia, where the society commits homophobic acts towards homosexuals. The existence of homophobia in the society oppresses people in question of sexual identity and homosexuals.

Those external factors defect internal conflicts to Frederick. He repeatedly rejects and denies his sexual attraction towards Victor due to homophobia. However, he finally accepts himself as a gay after being told that being gay is not harmful for others by Iggy. There are several important events that indicate sexual identity crisis. The events show how Frederick, the main character, experience sexual identity crisis and how he finally accepts his sexual identity. Below is the plot that reflects sexual identity crisis in *So Hard to Say*.

4.1.1 Exposition

Alex Sanchez's *So Hard to Say* uses first person point of view where Xio and Frederick are the narrators. In the exposition, Frederick's characterization and family condition are being introduced. Frederick likes to cook and being neat. He is closer with his mother than with his father due to his father's profession as a chemical engineer. From his characterization and family condition, it can be seen that Frederick has feminine traits due to his closeness to his mother.

4.1.2 Rising Actions

In the rising actions, there are four important events that reflect sexual identity crisis in the novel. The first event is when Frederick notices Iggy for the first time on his first day at his new school. Their eyes meet and Iggy grins at him,

but Frederick knows there is something different about Iggy. Frederick then realizes that Iggy is being accused as a gay when a group of boys calls him names and wave their wrists in feminine way.

The second event is Frederick's meeting with Victor which his masculinity becomes Frederick's admiration. From Victor, Frederick engages masculinity through soccer that he cannot acquire from his father since his mother forbids him to be involved in sports due to his asthma. This is one of the factors why Frederick admires him besides his masculine physical appearance. However, he does not admit his admiration towards Victor publicly as he knows that it is unacceptable by the society. He is afraid that if people know his admiration towards other boys, he will be accused of being gay. Therefore, he conceals his admiration by denying it and performing masculinity.

The third event is when Frederick spends Thanksgiving Day with Iggy's family. In this event, Frederick finds out that he has things in common with Iggy, such as music genre, hobby, and feminine trait as they spend the day together. Frederick then starts to feel comfortable with Iggy as they share the same interests. However, he fears his friends find out he and Iggy spend Thanksgiving Day as he fears of social sanction. Thus, when his friends find it out and ask him if he is gay, Frederick loses his temper and denies the accusation. Further, he starts to realize that he experiences sexual identity crisis as there is a tendency of him being gay and he denies it.

The fourth event is Xio's party before Christmas holiday. At the party, Xio arranges a game which everyone who loses the game must pick a partner to kiss in

the closet. Xio loses and she chooses Frederick since she has a crush on him. To his surprise, Frederick suddenly imagines he is kissing Victor when he and Xio kiss in the closet. He performs masculinity by denying his imagination of kissing Victor and pretending to enjoy the kiss to avoid being accused of being gay.

The fifth event is when Xio comes to Frederick's house after he does not phone her back for days. She finds out that it is Frederick and Victor's photo being displayed by Frederick instead of theirs. Xio's suspicion of Frederick is gay increases after she kisses Frederick, but he did not kiss her back. However, Xio denies her suspicion as she likes him very much. Further, Frederick starts to realize that he is gay since he does not have the same feeling with Xio. Then he plans to tell Xio about his feeling without having to tell her that he is gay.

To conclude, Frederick experiences homosexual panic as he realizes that he experiences homosocial desire. From the narration, it can be seen that Frederick denies his sexual attraction towards Victor as he fears homophobia oppression. However, he realizes that it is undeniable since he does not have the same attraction towards girls, not even Xio. Thus, he starts to accept the tendency of being gay and he is now in the 'closet'.

4.1.3 Climax

The climax in this novel is when Xio asks Frederick about his feeling towards her. After she knows that Frederick does not have the same feeling as she does, Xio confronts him if he is not attracted to girls. Gathering all of his courage, Frederick finally comes out to Xio that he is gay. However, Xio cannot accept his

coming out and gets angry. It makes Frederick feels bad for breaking her heart until she skips school. Xio's rejection makes Frederick afraid that she will tell people at school. Even though Frederick has made her promise not to tell anyone, he knows her friends will ask her. He realizes the risk of coming out of the 'closet' is he will be called names and might lose his friends if they know.

4.1.4 Falling Action

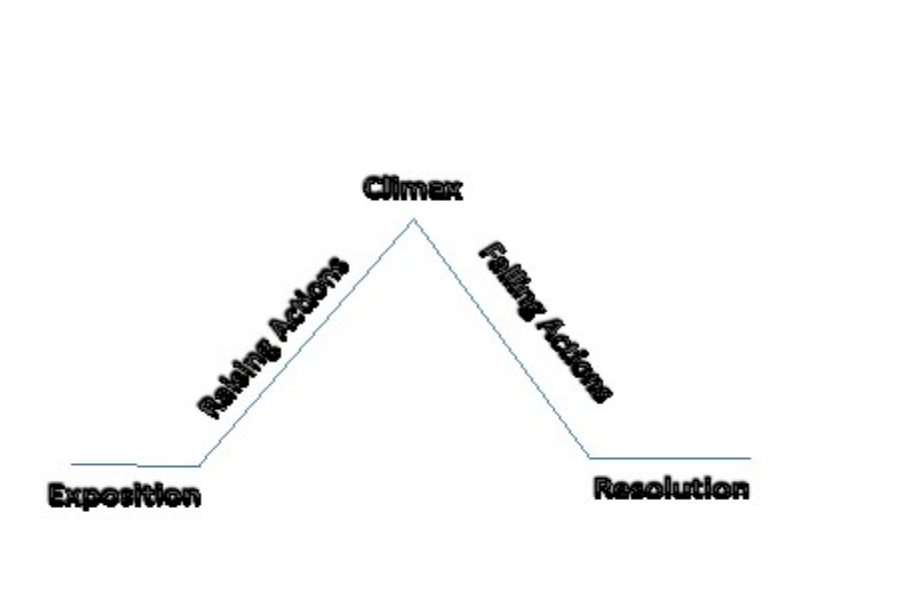
The falling action starts when Frederick decides to see Iggy to ask for help. He has no one to talk to since Xio is still mad at him. At this event, they finally come out to each other. Iggy believes that he is born that way and he accepts it. Although he cannot tell his parents due to their religious views that forbid homosexuality, Iggy believes that God loves him no matter what his sexual orientation is. From Iggy's opinion, Frederick's perspective on homosexuality shifts and he starts to accept his sexual identity as gay. From this event, Frederick changes his perspective of being gay. Further, he no longer thinks that homosexuality is something bad. As they kiss, Frederick's doubts gone and he feels relieved because he feels being accepted after he comes out. Hence, Frederick finally accepts his sexual identity as gay.

4.1.5 Resolution

The resolution of this novel begins when Xio tells her mother that Frederick is gay. She finally finds out that her father is also gay, which is why her parents divorced. Then, Frederick comes to her house to apologize. From this

event, Xio learns that there is nothing wrong with Frederick as she knows that Frederick is a good person. Xio realizes that being gay does not change Frederick and he is still a good person. Frederick acquires Xio's acceptance, which is important to him since Xio is his best friend. Further, Xio's mother also accepts Frederick as gay. Even so, he is not ready yet if his other friends know that he is gay. He believes that it will need time for them to accept him as he also need time to accept himself.

Considering the resolution, the author wants the reader to start to accept homosexuals. From sexual identity crisis Frederick experienced, the author shows the contestation between being homosexual and heteronormativity can frustrate people who questions their sexual identity. The reader is expected to understand that being gay is hard as homosexuals struggle to accept themselves as gay. Acceptance is an important matter for homosexuals to help them accept themselves.



4.2 Discussion

In this subchapter, the writer discusses Frederick's sexual identity crisis in Alex Sanchez's *So Hard to Say*. It will be analyzed with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's concept of homosexuality and Judith Butler's performativity theory. Firstly, the writer discusses the external factors affecting Frederick's sexual identity crisis to explain how his family condition, religion views, society views, and homophobia oppressions construct Frederick's sexual identity and view on homosexuality. After that, the writer will discuss the internal conflicts of Frederick which are his characterization and his rejection and denial of sexual identity crisis affected by the external factors. Lastly, the writer discusses the claiming of Frederick's sexual identity that explains the process of his coming out.

4.2.1 External Factors Affecting the Main Character's Sexual Identity Crisis

In the process of accepting his sexual identity, Frederick is affected by external factors which are family condition, religious views, society views, and homophobia oppression on homosexuality. These external factors contribute to Frederick's confusion on his sexual identity since all of these factors are against his sexual identity. These factors then affect his point of view on homosexuality and his decision of claiming his sexual identity.

4.2.1.1 The Main Character's Family Condition

Family is the smallest unit of social institution. As the first social institution a child knows, family is where a child earns nurturing, temperament,

security, support, socialization, and religious views. Parents have the biggest role on child's development. They are the biggest influencers on constructing a child's identity as they are their children's main role model. From his/her parents, a child inherits temperament and learns attitude and behavior.

Butler (1999, p. 78) believes that gender is socially constructed. Society constructs the gender through the family. Parents have the critical responsibilities on constructing their child's gender. A child's earliest exposure to what it means to be male or female comes from parents (Lauer & Lauer, 1994; Santrock, 1994; Kaplan, 1991). Even before the baby is born, parents usually start to construct the gender by preparing the clothes, bedroom, and toys based on the sex of the baby. After the baby is born, s/he will identify the gender constructed by the parents.

Hamilton (2008, p. 1) argues that the process of gender identification begins approximately between age two and a half and four. For boys, it is during this phase that they begin to move from their primary attachment with the mother to seeking out a deeper attachment with the father. Thus, at the age of thirteen a boy already attaches to his father. However, at the age of thirteen Frederick is still attached to his mother. His mother once shows her affection towards Frederick in public, but he tries to refuse it. "*She reached over and stroked the back of my neck like she usually does. Normally I like it, but not when parked in front of the whole world.*" (Sanchez, 2004, p. 10). Frederick's refusal of his mother's affection is a sign of his effort to detach from his mother and to attach to his father.

Frederick comes from an intact family. Even so, there is something that prevents him from attaching to the father (Hamilton, 2008, p. 2). His parents'

profession is one of the reasons why he becomes closer to his mother than to his father. As his father's profession as a chemical engineer, his father does not have much time to spend with him. "*Since Dad works in science (he's a chemical engineer), his face always lights up when I ask him for help with it.*" (p. 36). Due to the limited time to spend with Frederick, his father is always happy whenever Frederick comes to him to help him doing his homework. It makes his father feels being needed by Frederick. Further, helping Frederick to do his homework is a compensation of being absent due to his father's job.

Meanwhile, his mother is an accountant who sometimes does her works at home. It makes his mother has more time to spend with him than his father. Due to imbalance proportion of time with his father, he will stay connected to the mother and will instead soak in femininity (Hamilton, 2008, p.2). As they spend more time together, they build a close relationship. Their closeness resulted in they share the same interest on interior designing and layout. In addition, Frederick is the only child of his parents. It makes he does not have anyone to spend his time other than his mother. Thus, being the only child and the absence of emotional presence of his father results in Frederick has a closer relationship with his mother than with his father.

Moreover, Frederick's parents have different way of raising him. His father always encourages him to do sports. In contrast, Frederick's mother is always overprotective to him due to his asthma. "*Dad always tells me that in order to grow I should get more involved in sports. But Mom freaks out because of my asthma, and they start arguing.*" (p. 21). His father's effort to engage close

relationship and masculinity through sport is always being sabotaged by his mother. His mother's domination of parenting role makes his father complaints every time they argue about Frederick's physical activities. It prevents him from developing masculinity and develops femininity instead. As a result of failure with father, the boy does not fully internalize male gender-identity, and develops homosexuality (Nicolosi, 1991). To overcome this problem, his father tries to engage masculinity to him through a relatively 'safe' sport which is also his hobby. His father usually takes him to play golf on some Saturdays.

Frederick's father is a golf fanatic. *"Even though I'm not crazy about golf, sometimes I like to go with him just to be together."* (p. 12). One of the benefits of golf, as quoted from *agolf.com*, is to spend quality time and build relationship with other people. For males, the relationship between a boy and his father is the initial source of developing a secure gender identity (Hamilton, 2008, p. 1). Usually the father-son relationship is built through doing sport together. By playing golf, Frederick can spend his time together with father. As a role model for his son to develop masculinity, Frederick's father chooses golf as golf stick represents penis as a symbol of masculinity. The notion of gender is created by various acts of the gender itself (Butler, 1988, p. 522). His father repeats his action of engaging golf whenever he has free time to build a close relationship with Frederick in order to construct Frederick's masculinity.

One Saturday when they play golf, Frederick asks his father how people become lefties. His father believes that it is genetically inherited. He also makes binary oppositions between 'normal' and 'abnormal' people.

“People used to think lefties were evil. You know that’s where the word sinister comes from? Lefties, albinos, the mentally retarded—anyone who’s somehow different has at one time or another been considered bad or evil.” (p. 92).

When Frederick asks his opinion on homosexuals, his father responds “*I guess gay people aren’t any different than the rest of us.*” (p. 92). On the contrary, his father continues his respond, “*Except they’re gay.*” (p. 92). Even though his father says that gay people are not different with heterosexuals, the statement “*except they’re gay*” shows that his father segregates homosexuals with heterosexuals.

His father’s statement of his believe that being lefties is inherited by some unidentified gene is an analogy of he also believes that being gay is genetically inherited. It shows that his father sees homosexuality in minoritizing view. Homosexuality as a minoritizing identity is seen as tied to an also unidirectional, and continuing, emergent understanding of homosexuality in terms of gender inversion and gender transitivity (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 45-46). His father is the smallest unit in social institution that represents how heteronormativity views homosexuality in minoritizing view as he believes that people are actually born as homosexuals.

In the late nineteenth century, "the homosexual" was identified as "a species". It saw homosexuality in the minoritizing view. The minoritizing view of homosexuality means that some individuals are born as gay and only those born with the queer traits share an interest in them (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 1). His father creates symmetrical binary opposition of heterosexual/homosexual and same/different as he believes in absolute truth. He justifies homosexual condemnation as “the others” and alienates homosexuals from heterosexuals, just

like people in the late nineteenth century. Frederick's father thinks that homosexuals are also considered bad or evil as homosexuals are different with heterosexuals.

Due to his father's opinion on homosexuality and his mother's protectiveness, when Frederick starts to realize that he is gay, he cannot talk to his parents. He becomes paranoid every time of their conversation is leading to homosexuality. "*Although his words were reassuring, his look made me wish I hadn't asked.*" (p. 92). Frederick is afraid that his parents will find out that he is gay by asking about gay people. Furthermore, he is afraid that he will be forced to leave home as his parents cannot accept his sexual identity. Hence, he is in the state of being in the 'closet' as he hides his sexual identity from his parents. Even after he has accepted his sexual identity, he is still being in the 'closet'. "*I wished I could tell her, but it was all too much.*" (p. 219). Statistics from The Center for American Progress reports that there are between 320,000 and 400,000 homeless LGBT youths in the United States (rollingstone.com, 2014). This data reflects that coming out to the family might cause gay teen lose their family as they do not get any support or acceptance.

In conclusion, family condition contributes in affecting someone's sexual identity crisis. Parenting style influences the child's gender identity construction. Parents' view on homosexuality also affects the child's point of view about it. Gay teen experiences sexual identity crisis because they cannot ask for help from their parents. Parents who cannot accept homosexuality can cause gay teen feels being rejected. One of the contributing factors that make Frederick experiences sexual

identity crisis is because he cannot ask for his parents' help. Since his parents cannot accept homosexuality, Frederick rejects and denies his sexual identity.

4.2.1.2 The Main Character's Religious Views on Homosexuality

Since the beginning of Christianity, most Christians have regarded homosexuality as morally wrong, which led to the position upheld today by most mainstream denominations such as Catholic, Orthodox, and also most Evangelical Protestant. It is clearly stated on the Bible that, as written 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." Homosexuals are considered as sinners and will not be able to go to heaven as it is a great sin.

Frederick comes from Eau Claire, a small town in Wisconsin. "*We found out he's from a town called Eau Claire, which Nora spelled for us. He's Lutheran, which Maria said is basically like Catholic, except they don't believe in the pope.*" (p. 18). Lutheran is one of the sects of Evangelical Protestant. Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) argues that homosexuality is a sin since it is contrary to God's intention in creating man and woman. Quoted from *deseretnews.com*, Wisconsin is averagely religious. People in Wisconsin are not conservative, yet they still go to the church and understand their religious views. Frederick also went to Sunday school when he was at his young age. It can be inferred that Frederick knows that being gay is considered as sin from Sunday school and church's dogma.

It is not stated in the novel whether he still goes to the church after he moves from Wisconsin or not. As reported by *city-data.com*, there were only 6.7% Evangelical Protestant adherents compared to 29.3% Catholic adherents in California in 2000. It can be inferred that Frederick does not go to the church because it is hard to find an Evangelical Lutheran church in a Catholic society. In spite of that, Frederick still acquires religious values from his school. Frederick moves to San Cayetano Middle School, Ventura County that named after a Catholic Saint in California. It shows that Frederick goes to a Catholic school, even though he is a Lutheran. Catholic schools can accept non-Catholic students, as long as they commit Catholic values.

In addition, when he browses teenage gay on the internet, he also browses churches that accept gay people. “*Finally I clicked the links at the end, leading to all sorts of teen-oriented stuff—youth groups, parents’ organizations, even churches that accepted gay people.*” (p. 87). From this narration, it is shown that Frederick still considers religious values as church’s dogma sticks to his mind. There is confusion between his fear of religious views on homosexuality and his hope to be accepted as gay as he experiences sexual identity crisis.

Later, his confusion is answered by Iggy, a gay from Frederick’s school coming from a religious Mexican Catholic person. For religious family, it is hard for parents who have homosexual child to accept their child’s sexuality. The parents will think that their child is a sinner.

“They think being gay is a sin. At church our minister talks every Sunday about gay people burning in eternity. If my parents knew about me they’d probably send me for an exorcism.” (p. 199).

Church views homosexuality as a great sin. I Corinthians 6:9-11 clearly states that those who were adulterers and homosexual offenders must be “washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” to wipe away their sins. As a Catholic believer, Iggy acknowledges that being gay is sinful. He might be joking by mentioning exorcism, but he actually afraid of the consequences if his parents know that he is gay.

Exorcism is a practice to cast demon out of human body. There are churches that believe homosexuality is a form of demonic possession of human body that leads human in committing great sin. There was an exorcism performed by church on 2009 in real life. Reported by nbcnews.com, a video of 16-year-old gay teen exorcism posted on YouTube by the Manifested Glory Ministries, Bridgeport, Connecticut, went viral. The ministers of the church performed this ritual in an attempt to rid the boy of feelings that he did not want to have. By doing exorcism, church believes that homosexuality ‘demon’ will be cast out.

However, Iggy continues, “But I know God loves me.” (p. 199). Iggy’s opinion on homosexuality affects Frederick’s perspective. From Iggy, Frederick understands that being gay has consequences, including considered as a sinner. Even so, Iggy believes that God loves him even though he is gay. He believes that being gay is not something bad as he never hurt anyone. Iggy’s view on homosexuality makes Frederick starts to accept himself as a gay.

Religious views give oppression to gay Christian adherents. Homosexuality is condemned and considered as a great sin in Christianity. There are verses that explicitly forbid mankind to commit homosexuality and state the

consequences of it. This notion creates burden to homosexuals to accept their sexual identity. Furthermore, this burden contributes to the crisis that people who still questioning their sexual identity experienced.

4.2.1.3 The Main Character's Society Views on Homosexuality

People cannot be separated from their society as mankind is a social creature. From the society, people acquire values and apply them in daily life. Thus, society and its values unconsciously construct the personality. We live in a society that adhere patriarchy. Patriarchal society constructs heteronormativity which suggests the “obligatory heterosexuality” is built into male-dominated kinship system (Sedgwick, 1993, p. 698). Heteronormativity requires society to be heterosexual and performs the gender based on the sex assigned from birth.

The novel sets in California and Wisconsin on 2004. At that time, California had legalized same-sex marriage. However, the legalization was cancelled short after. This legalization-cancelation happened twice in the same year. Quoted from huffingtonpost.com (2013), California then became the first state that legalized same-sex marriage on 2008. From the history of same-sex marriage in California, it can be seen that not all people in California could accept homosexuality. As even though the bill was approved, some lawmakers argued that same-sex marriage violates the State constitution. Meanwhile in Wisconsin, the 2004 voter-approved constitutional ban on same-sex marriage was passed by 73 percent of voters. These data shows that both California and Wisconsin on

2004 had not legalized same-sex marriage, which means that homosexuality was not accepted by the heteronormativity society at that time.

School as a part of the society applies heteronormativity values. Frederick first experienced homophobia oppression in fourth grade in Wisconsin. Since heteronormativity is constructed by patriarchy, it structurally requires homophobia (Sedgwick, 1993, p. 698). Homophobia is a term for any negative feelings or attitudes toward homosexuals. Here is how homophobia oppression is described in the novel.

“I’d made that mistake once in fourth grade—and got called gay for a month afterward. That’s so stupid because guys know which guys are good-looking and which aren’t. Why should saying it out loud mean you’re gay?” (p. 26).

In heteronormativity, it is believed that male is supposed to be attracted to female. By saying other male is cute, it will be considered as an act of homosexuality. Frederick’s act of saying other boys were cute reflects Frederick’s failure of performing his gender role as heterosexual. Those who fail to do their gender right based on the social construction are regularly punished (Butler, 1988, p. 522). In this case, Frederick received the punishment from his school peers since he was considered as violating heteronormativity.

From this experience, Frederick acknowledges that being associated with homosexuality will make him considered as homosexual. The first time he sees Iggy, some boys tease Iggy by calling him gay and wave their hands in feminine way. Even though Frederick does not know yet whether Iggy is gay or not, he is afraid that he will be considered as gay if he gets near Iggy. Frederick knows that heteronormativity cannot accept homosexuality and he will get the

consequences if he is involved in any homosexual act. He even feels embarrassed when Iggy greets and smiles at him. Hence, Frederick avoids being close to Iggy to avoid being considered as gay too.

Our own society is brutally homophobic (Sedgwick, 1993, p. 698). A national study of school climate reports that 91.5% of LGBT youth reported hearing homophobic remarks in their school frequently or often (Kosciw, 2004). Homophobic remarks are used by Victor and his friends to put down others at soccer. *“But instead it seemed like the guys kept cursing “Maricón!” every time someone stole a ball or “That was gay!” whenever someone missed a goal.”* (p. 90). Soccer is related with masculinity, while being gay related with femininity. Those who failed to play soccer well are considered as being failed to perform masculinity. Performing one's gender wrong initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect (Butler, 1988, p. 528). It reflects how heteronormativity sees homosexuality as negativity.

Another character who states her homophobic behavior is Carmen. *“I think maricónes are so gross.”* (p. 39). She shows her disgust towards Iggy without even knowing whether it is true or not that he is gay. She judges Iggy as gay from the way he talks and walks and his physical appearance. It shows that stereotypes of gay male affect homophobic behavior. From the way she delivers her opinion, it is shown that Carmen sees homosexual in minoritizing view. *“... seeing homo/heterosexual definition on the one hand as an issue of active importance primarily for a small, distinct, relatively fixed homosexual minority.”* (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 1). Here Carmen, as well as her friends, is a representation of

how Californian society sees homosexuality. It can be concluded that even though California is the first state that legalized same-sex marriage, the society is still homophobic and sees homosexuals as minority.

In Wisconsin, homophobic behavior is reflected when Frederick goes to the mall with his old friends. One of his friends, Jim, shows his disgust towards homosexuals by gesturing as if he wants to vomit when they see two men holding hands in the mall. Frederick's friends are a small part of heteronormativity. They represent how heteronormativity sees homosexuals as something unacceptable. For people who experience sexual identity crisis, homophobia oppresses them to hide their sexual identity. Their response makes Frederick feel oppressed. Hence, he hides and denies his sexual identity because he fears his friends will reject him as a gay.

Some people believe that gay people are born that way, including gay people themselves. Iggy discovers his sexual identity as gay "*The same way someone knows if they're straight.*" (p. 198). It implies that he believes he was actually born as gay and it is unchangeable. This is a reflection of Iggy seeing homosexuality in a universalizing view since he sees homosexuality is relevant to anyone (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 1). Hence, being gay is as relevant as being straight. However, gay people are not easily accepted by heteronormativity. Closest persons of homosexuals usually reject them. Xio's mother divorced her husband for being gay and she is traumatized until she does not want to date any man for seven years.

There are two views to see homosexuality; first, universalizing view which sees homosexuality is relevant to anyone with a wide range of sexuality; second, minoritizing view which sees some people are actually born as homosexuals (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 1). Both Wisconsin and California sees homosexuality in minoritizing view. This is because they apply heteronormativity in their society. Their people deny the existence of homosexuals due to the rules, norms, and stereotypes in heteronormativity. Hence, their people tend to be homophobic and make gay people feel being oppressed.

4.2.2 Internal Conflict of the Main Character

In the novel, the conflict is created by the debate between Frederick's external factors and things inside him. In the process of claiming his sexual identity, Frederick's external factors affect his internal conflict. In this subchapter, the writer will explain how the external factors contribute to Frederick's characterization and rejection and denial of his sexual identity.

4.2.2.1 The Main Character's Characterization

Non-masculine or feminine behavior in boyhood has been repeatedly shown to be correlated with later homosexuality (Green, 1987, Zuger, 1988). Frederick is described as a sensitive person. Typically the child who will later develop same-sex attractions is naturally sensitive (Hamilton, 2008, p. 2). It is reflected on his zodiac sign. *“And I learned his zodiac sign is Cancer; the same as Papi's. That means he's gentle, sensitive, moody, and a little bit insecure.”* (p. 18).

Frederick and Xio's father's similarity reflect the same feminine trait that foreshadows Xio's father is gay too.

Frederick likes to cook. Nowadays, there are many great chefs who are males. Even so, cooking is associated with feminine activity, as it is usually done by the mother at home. Moreover, Frederick always organizes his stuff, such as clothes sorted by the color and CDs sorted by genre. "*But his room was actually neater than mine. All his CDs, books, and DVDs were lined up. His desk and dresser were organized. His bed was made.*" (p. 172). It is unusual for boys to have a neat bedroom. Being neat is identical with feminine activity since tidying up is a domestic chore that usually done by female. Cooking and being neat are actions that Frederick repeats and performs as his femininity.

Due to Frederick's feminine traits, he has more girl friends than boy friends. "*It's always been easier for me to make friends with girls. I'm not sure why.*" (p. 8). It is proved when he instantly becomes friend with Xio and her girl friends not long after he moves to California. Furthermore, Frederick and Xio have similarity, such as liking *The Little Mermaid* movie. Liking a Disney Princess movie is uncommon for boys as the movie is intended for girls. Hence, Frederick's femininity makes him easier to be friend with girls as he is more familiar with feminine traits than masculinity.

Being feminine has been stereotyped as being gay. Stereotypes are beliefs about the attributes that characterize a group of people (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981). Accordingly, femininity is not the only stereotype about gay. It includes physical characteristics, behaviors, and attributes related to sexuality (Deaux &

Lewis, 1984). In the novel, masculine straight boy is represented by Victor. Frederick describes him as “... *tall, strong, athletic and popular with the other boys.*” (p. 22). His bedroom is messy and the walls are covered with posters that associated with masculinity, such as racing cars and sexy young women. Victor is the complete opposite of Frederick and Iggy. They have small figure, described as cute by other female characters, neat, and easily befriend with girls. They both have the same hobby, which is drawing. Their similarity reflects that they share the same feminine traits.

However, even though they share the same feminine traits, Frederick’s awareness of gender role is different with Iggy. It is shown when Frederick spends Thanksgiving Day at Iggy’s house.

“The walls of his room were covered with posters of boy bands—some of the same ones I liked. But I would never put posters of them up on my walls. Guys weren’t supposed to do that. No wonder people thought Iggy was gay.” (p. 73).

Even though he likes boy bands, he conceals it to perform his masculinity. Frederick is aware that putting boy bands posters is not a representation of masculinity. Those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished (Butler, 1988, p. 522). In this case, Iggy’s punishment is being called gay at school and at home by his brother. Therefore, Frederick chooses to hide his femininity to avoid social punishment.

Although he has feminine traits, Frederick understands that he is a male and considers his gender as masculine. “*Um, no. I like being a guy. Why would I want to be a girl?*” (p. 33). It shows that Frederick does not experience gender identity crisis. He fully aware that being male must be masculine. Hence, he has to

perform his masculinity through playing soccer and golf. However, he cannot fully hide his femininity as it is constructed and repeated. He performs his masculinity and conceals his femininity when he is around his male friends. However, as he has feminine traits inside him, he performs it when he is not with his male friends. Thus, there is a negotiation between masculinity and femininity performance on Frederick. He can perform both masculinity through soccer and femininity through cooking.

4.2.2.2 The Main Character's Rejection and Denial

It is not easy for male who question their sexual identity to accept that they are gay. They have to deal with the contestation between society's judgment and their sexual identity. Since heteronormativity structurally requires homophobia, people in question tend to deny their sexual identity as gay. In addition, gay people who already accept themselves tend to hide their sexual identity. Hence, homophobic behavior resulted in gay people and/or people in question reject and deny their sexual identity.

Frederick already has the tendency of being gay since grade school, yet he still did not acknowledge it. Frederick never feels any sexual attraction towards girls. *"The fact was I'd never kissed any girl before. When other boys talked about stuff like that, it never really interested me."* (p. 108). Normally, teenage boys tend to see girls as their object of desire (Fathana, 2012). Yet, Frederick does not feel the same. He is not curious about or interested in the opposite sex. He already knows all about the opposite sex (Hamilton, 2008, p. 2). Frederick is already

familiar with femininity due to his closeness to his mother, so he is not interested in girls. He is more interested with boys as his crave for masculinity input is unsatisfied.

This is shown by his first experience of homosocial desire at fourth grade. He publicly admitted another boy 'cute' and he thought that it was a normal thing. It is acceptable for girls to praise other girls. In contrast, when boys do that, it is not normal and considered as homosexual behavior. Frederick then was being called gay a month afterward for that. Since then, he never publicly admitted other boys are cute due to his fear of homophobic behavior. The fear of homophobic behavior resulted in homosexual panic. Homosexual panic is a 'legal defense' to avoid hatred from homophobes (Sedgwick, 1993, p. 698). His act of hiding his attraction towards boys is needed as heteronormativity sees it as a violation of its norms and values. It is also a performance of masculinity as he hides his femininity.

Further, Frederick's experience on homosexual panic is depicted on his first meeting with Iggy. "*Suddenly I wanted to leave. But why? Hadn't I wanted to talk to another guy? Yeah, but there was something about him. I wasn't sure what.*" (p. 10). Later, he knows that people at his school accused Iggy as a gay and avoids being near him. For heterosexual, fear of being near homosexual can be identified as homophobic behavior; but for homosexual, it is an anxiety that people will identify him as homosexual too (Sedgwick, 1990). Furthermore, being associated with homosexual is considered as an embarrassment in heteronormativity.

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. When girls holding each other's hands are normal, but when boys do it, they will be considered as gay. When Frederick spends Thanksgiving with Iggy's family, Frederick has to hold Iggy's hand to pray. *"I took Iggy's hand and silently uttered my own prayer. Please, God, don't let anyone at school find out."* (p. 72). Frederick afraid his friends will find out that he spends his Thanksgiving Day with Iggy.

As the rumor spread at his school about Iggy, Frederick fears he will be accused of being gay after being close with Iggy. In addition, Carmen has stated that she is disgusted by gay people. Carmen's disgust is a sign that being gay is unacceptable by the society. Thus, he does not want to lose his friends for being associated with gay. Moreover, he is a new student in San Cayetano Middle School and he cannot easily make friends with people.

Hence, when Carmen asks him if he is gay after finding out he spends Thanksgiving Day with Iggy, he loses his temper.

"He hesitated an instant, his eyes darting between Carmen and us. Then he sat up and shouted at her, "No!" I'd never really seen him mad before, but I couldn't blame him. Everyone knows calling somebody gay is just about the worst thing you can say to them. And asking someone if they're gay is like telling them you think they are gay." (p. 83-84).

Homosexual panic has two meaning. 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). Frederic's anger implies the second meaning of homosexual panic. Further, it is his 'legal defense' to

avoid hatred from homophobes because patriarchy structurally requires homophobia (Sedgwick, 1993, p. 698). He questions his tendency of being gay, yet he is afraid of heteronormativity punishment of being gay.

However, he cannot deny his admiration towards Victor. He experiences homosocial desire when he is with Victor because he has masculinity traits that Frederick longs to have. Homosocial desire is the social bonds between persons of the same sex without being judged (Sedgwick, 1993, p. 696-697).

“We walked down the hall like that. People stared at us, but I didn’t mind a bit. In that moment I felt as if every single part of me, from my teeth to my toenails, was like, happy. I’d never felt that way with anyone— not with any of my friends back home ... nor holding hands with Xio.” (p. 68)

Frederick knows that this physical closeness is uncommon for boys. However, even though people see his closeness with Victor as an unusual thing, he considers his closeness with Victor as a normal thing. Furthermore, Frederick does not realize that his admiration towards Victor develops into sexual attraction.

The development of Frederick’s sexual attraction on Victor is depicted at Xio’s party. At the party, Frederick takes photos with both Xio and Victor by using Polaroid camera. Compared to Xio’s photo with Frederick, “*Our photo came out great, except Victor had provided Xio a set of horns behind her head.*” (p. 104) Frederick prefers his Victor than with Xio by saying “*The photo of Victor and me was awesome.*” (p. 104). *Great* has the lowest intensity or strength; while *awesome* has higher strength than *great*. The different dictions the author chooses to describe their photos indicate that Frederick does not deny his feeling towards Victor.

Later on, he starts to realize that he is sexually attracted to Victor on Xio's party. When Xio kisses him in the closet, Frederick suddenly imagines that he is kissing Victor instead of Xio. Here Frederick starts to realize his sexual attraction on Victor. However, he denies it as he knows that it is wrong. The closet is the representation of Frederick is being in the closet for hiding his sexual desire towards Victor. "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, p. 3). Frederick also hides the fact that he never kiss any girl before as he is afraid of his friends calling him gay. By pretending to enjoy his kiss with Xio, Frederick performs masculinity since kissing a girl is labeled as a sign of masculinity.

However, Xio finds out that it is Frederick and Victor's photo being framed instead of Frederick and her. She starts wondering why Frederick does that even after she claims that they are already in a romantic relationship. Frederick says that he forgot to buy another frame for his photo with Xio. Frederick's reason does not make sense because Polaroid photo is made of stiff material paper and it does not need to be framed. Frederick's different way of displaying photo shows that Victor is more special than Xio and it indicates his sexual attraction towards Victor instead of Xio.

As his tendency of being gay becomes more developed, Frederick's rejection and denial also becomes stronger. "*Please God, don't let me be gay. I'm weird enough as it is.*" (p. 133). He repeatedly rejects and denies his desire

towards Victor. Further, he repeats this prayer every time he experiences homosexual panic. Moreover, he utters this prayer every time he realizes that being gay is unacceptable by heteronormativity. This is an implication of Frederick's fear towards social sanction.

It can be concluded that the external factors contributes on how Frederick deal with his internal conflict. Since his society has critical role on seeing homosexuality, he chooses to reject and deny it. Frederick fully acknowledges that his society is homophobic. Therefore, he chooses to be in the 'closet', hiding his sexual identity. The state of being in the 'closet' is chosen to avoid homophobic behavior performed by heteronormativity.

4.2.3 The Claiming of Main Character's Sexual Identity

Claiming a gay's sexual identity is known as the act of coming out. There is no homosexual in the closet without the act of coming out (Sedgwick, 1990). Coming out itself is considered as a process rather than an event. The process starts with the acceptance from a homosexual himself. Self-acceptance is an important process for a gay to be able to come out. The process of self-acceptance is not easy. It takes a lot of courage for homosexual in question to stop denying his sexual identity.

Frederick's external factors contribute to his external conflict while he experiences sexual identity crisis. Since his family, religion, and society reject homosexuality, Frederick confuses on how to accept himself. *"But how could I tell him how mixed-up I felt inside—how I'd thought about Victor when I was*

kissing Xio, how I'd looked up gay on the Internet, how I feared I might be weirder than I'd ever thought." (p. 134). He cannot come out to his friends due to the existence of homophobia in the society. Hence, it implies that Frederick is in the 'closet' as he hides his sexual identity.

He also cannot talk about his confusion to his parents. *"But how could I tell Mom about that?"* (p. 161). His father has stated his implicitly negative opinion on homosexuality. However, Frederick is more afraid to admit his sexual identity to his mother. It is because he is closer to his mother than his father. Moreover, his parents as a part of the society apply heteronormativity in his family. In addition, Frederick's parents already consider Xio as his girlfriend. Talking about his tendency of being gay will reveal his failure on performing masculinity. Therefore, he chooses to stay in the closet by not talking about his sexual identity from his friends and parents.

In the novel, the state of being in the closet is symbolized by Iggy's parakeet. Parakeet is a symbol of lack of freedom and caged love. It is a representation of homosexuality and its relationship that must be hidden from public in order to avoid homophobic behavior. For Frederick, he associates himself with the parakeet as the caged parakeet symbolizes Frederick 'closetedness'. He feels like being in a cage as he cannot publicly come out since he knows the consequences of being homosexuals due to homophobia in the society.

At first, Frederick does not want to come out to Xio. However, he is confronted by Xio and he cannot avoid it. *"I think, urn ... I'm gay."* I'd actually

said it.” (p. 181). Xio cannot accept Frederick’s act of coming out and rejects him. Xio becomes angry and tries to deny the fact that Frederick is gay. Even though Frederick already comes out to Xio, he still denies his sexual identity. To overcome this problem, Frederick sees Iggy while hoping he mistakes himself as gay.

Here both Frederick and Iggy come out to each other. Frederick learns that even though Iggy has accepted his sexual identity, he cannot publicly come out. He chooses to hide his sexual identity from his family, church, and school peers. He knows that he will not be accepted them as they are part of heteronormativity. Yet, he chooses come out on an online homosexual community where he can be accepted. Frederick starts to accept his sexual identity as he kisses Iggy. *“And in that kiss all my doubts and uncertainties seemed to vanish, replaced by a million possibilities.”* (p. 200). Here he realizes that being gay is relevant to him. Frederick is also no longer sees being gay as a mistake. The kiss answers his questions on why he cannot be attracted to any girl, including Xio.

Iggy’s opinion on homosexuality and acceptance affect Frederick’s perspective. He believes that being gay is not something bad as he never hurt anyone. Iggy’s view on homosexuality makes Frederick fully accepts himself as a gay. His acceptance encourages him to talk to Xio about his sexual identity. After Frederick tells her that she helps him figures his sexual identity out, she starts to understand and accepts Frederick. Xio responds, *“There’s nothing wrong with you either. You know that, don’t you?”* (p. 212). Xio’s opinion shows that being gay is

not wrong. She knows that Frederick is a good person and being gay does not change anything from Frederick.

Xio's mother also accepts Frederick even though she has a trauma related to coming out of her husband as a homosexual. *"I guess not. Did you notice she actually left us alone with the door closed? She probably figures you're now as safe as one of the Sexies."* (p. 214). Xio and her mother learn to accept that homosexuality is relevant for everyone and an issue of continuing, determinative importance in the lives of people across the spectrum of sexualities (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 1). Their acceptances towards Frederick is the representation of the author's hopes of heteronormativity, especially in the USA, to accept homosexuals and do not consider homosexuality as negativity anymore.

Even though Frederick already comes out to Xio and Iggy, he is still afraid anyone in his school knows that he is gay. He fears he will be humiliated if people at his school find out that he is gay. Later, his friends accuse him for being gay when he stands up for Iggy. This act makes his soccer teammates associate him with gay and considers Iggy as his girlfriend. However, Victor, who usually picks on Iggy, does not show any rejection towards Frederick and Iggy. He stops calling people gay afterwards. Although Victor is not explicitly states that he accepts gay, this action is an implication of Victor's acceptance towards Frederick.

The acceptance from Xio and her mother, Iggy, and Victor encourage Frederick to fully accept himself as a gay. Even though most of his friends still cannot accept him, Frederick believes that they need some time to accept him. It is

because acceptance of homosexuals is a long journey, as well as his process of accepting himself. Acceptance is important for gay people. From sexual identity crisis Frederick experienced, the author shows the contestation between being homosexual and heteronormativity can frustrate people who questions their sexual identity. By accepting homosexuals, it helps gay people to ease their burden as questioning their sexual identity is a hard and long journey.