

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

Literary works keep making new genres for people to enjoy and entertain. The expanded themes are also formed by the new genres. One of the popular genres among readers nowadays is the bring-up of the issues around the LGBTQ community. The increasing number of readers in this one specific genre is exceptional, especially for young adult readers. It is somehow extremely important for people to raise awareness regarding queer literature because so many people in the LGBTQ community want to be heard for once, especially through their works of literature. As Amelia Abraham stated, “queer literature can provide solace, joy, and a lifeline” (2020) which leads to the understanding of why queer literature is crucial for people that growing up LGBTQ to embrace their identity entirely. A novel could be one of the examples for people in the LGBTQ community to express their feelings, thoughts, and opinions as part of the community.

In a novel, it is important to put the intrinsic and extrinsic elements that keep the whole thing as the systematic concatenation of events. Then fiction novels are enjoyable for many people out there to read or even analyze with a particular theory or method. One of the most concerning things that people would find out in a literary work is the depiction of characters. The characters were born in many ways possible from the author. It could be from experiences or simply from a mere imagination.

The increasing level of character development will always be there to shape an interesting plot. Usually, the author tries to relate it to readers' experiences in real life. The topic arising in the literature field right now revolves around several new genres. One of them included an LGBTQ-themed book around the world recently. As stated by Brydsong, "According to sales numbers obtained from NPD Group, queer book sales this year have surpassed those of 2021 to the tune of 39%. This indicates a change in generational attitudes towards the genre, which could be attributed to Gen Z attitudes towards the LGBTQ community" (2022). This clearly shows us how people nowadays, especially Gen Z, gradually embrace the different types of their identities in society through reading fiction books.

Regarding the global issue around the LGBTQ community, we cannot pass the talk about coming out. The term coming out or "came out of the closet" was popular among groups of gay men in the late 19th and early 20th century, where the term itself was supposed to be only used as a "secret" code between the people in the community. Now, the term is widely known to be something related to where LGBTQ people try to reveal their true identities. Of course, there will be a long process to finally express themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

In today's society, people in general tend to have various attitudes toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals. For bisexual people, recently there is a new study on how bisexual people have higher levels of stress and depression on their sexual identity where they fall onto the spectrum of identity denial. "For bisexual individuals, one of these stressors includes interpersonal experiences of identity denial. Identity denial occurs when a perceiver questions or threatens an important identity" (Cheryan & Monin, 2005). Identity denial usually focuses on people with multiple identities like biracial or bicultural people (bisexual people recently added to this group of people). Somehow, it will lead to bisexual people feeling like they don't

belong specifically in the LGB community because of their “biased” preference for their partner’s gender. Binegativity in bisexual people’s Lives over their sexual identity is also an important aspect to be looked up to. Binegativity could be defined as a negative attitude toward bisexuality (Brewster & Moradi, 2010; Mohr & Rochlen, 1999). It includes how hostility and intolerance toward bisexual people from different groups of people (homosexual and heterosexual individuals). Lots of people in general believe that bisexual people tend to “keep their heterosexuality” on their side to avoid homonegativity, it leads them toward the uncertain and uncommitted position where they cannot pick between being “fully” gay or lesbian. Because of this matter, bisexual individuals are regularly marginalized by gays, lesbians, and heterosexuals. It puts them in a vulnerable situation and position in social relationships with other people or finding a partner on their terms.

Casey McQuiston is an American writer whos was born and raised in southern Louisiana, and right now lives in New York City. They openly claim to be non-binary and queer. Most of their works revolve around the genres of romance and comedy with LGBTQthemed stories, with various characters depicted as many sexual preference variations. Their interest in writing arises from the fact that they are alumni of Louisiana State University and have a degree in journalism. Their ADHD disease is also playing a huge role in affecting their work of literature. So writing is one of their getaways to cope with mental issues.

Casey Mcquiston’s novel debut, *Red, White & Royal Blue*, presents the unique love story between two men those are the USA President Son (Alex Claremont-Diaz) and the UK Prince (Henry). In the novel, the main issue is when love collides with politics and public image, they have to hide their love and true selves from the eyes of people around the world who always

hunt them down anywhere they are. Particularly, this matter moves in the depiction of public figures as parts of the LGBTQ community. Linking it to the current situation in our society, which is mainly dominated by Generation Z (Gen Z) where most of them face the same terror and issues for having different types of sexual preferences. Many factors become the biggest suspect. The person's psychological state is in line trying to untangle how a person could come up with a declaration for being gay, lesbian, or bisexual. One of the main characters in the novel *Red, White & Royal Blue* by Case Macquiston, Alex Claremont-Diaz, gives an example of how he is going through stages to find his sexuality.

The novel portrays his struggles with being bisexual. The novel *Red, White & Royal Blue* is one of the good novels for highlighting the problem, especially around coming out issues and the struggles of finding out true identity. The fact that the author is also part of the LGBTQ community, their works are related to the issues faced by the LGBTQ people. These two important facts make this research value the social issue regarding the existence and representation of the LGBTQ community in literary works.

This depiction of internal issues from one of the main characters alongside the process of finding their homosexual identity in the story became the object of this research. This novel recites how Alex Claremont-Diaz is going through the thought that he might be in love and sexually attracted to Henry, the Prince of England. Hence, based on the description above, I am interested in exploring the issue of homosexual identity formation found in the novel *Red, White & Royal Blue*. Therefore, this research will be titled "*Homosexual Identity and the Pressure against the Discourse Power in Red, White & Royal Blue by Casey McQuiston.*"

1.2. Identification of the Problem

This research focuses on the main character's homosexual identity which is used as a way out to escape from the oppressions and go against the discourse power in *Red, White & Royal Blue* novel. He is facing some conflicts in his family due to his image as the First Son, in which he is supposed to show a good image and attitude as a "normal man" (heterosexual) and also from the people who see him as a public figure (politician). Somehow, these things become burdens for him to declare his true identity and the pressure contradicts his identity as a bisexual man.

Alex reveals his identity and finally opens up about being bisexual after all of the things that happened because he also has to go against the discourse power, in this case, is what the society and people around him wanted him to be represented as being "normal" (heterosexual). He faced obstacles and struggles along the way in finding his identity. This whole process of realizing true identity and falling in love centered around Alex's character as the point of view of the novel focuses more on his character. Therefore, this research is going to analyze and explore the homosexual identity formation of Alex in the middle of the discourse power surrounding him that could be found in the novel.

1.3. Review of Related Literature

To strengthen the quality of this research, I do literary research related to psychological and queer studies in the literary work. The previous study could be a medium to do a comparison in terms of understanding and completing this research.

The first article is *Representing Queer in Popular Literature: Reader Analysis on Casey McQuiston's Red, White & Royal Blue* by Denitha Nafalitha, Kastam Syamsi, Talitha Djulia Claresta, and Mira Saputri. In this research, the writers conducted research on queer representation in the novel *Red, White & Royal Blue* with a readers' response approach. They use this approach to look up any evidence related to the queer representation in the novel. Then they found out there are three types of readers through comments they left on an online website, Goodreads. It consists of the dominant-hegemonic position (rather positive feedback), the negotiated position (rather having two points of view, positive and negative), and the oppositional position (totally negative feedback). Overall, this research gives a clear demonstration of how most people react and attitudes critically toward the queer genre. Some of their comments stated based on their experiences and how relatable they are to the representation of queer people in the novel.

The second one is a research the titled *The Analysis of Zach's Homosexual Identity in Shelter (2007)* by Irmgard Papilaya, Surya Sili, and Chris Asanti. The writer researched a film, that uses Cass' model of homosexual identity formation as the theory in the research on a character named Zach. They found that the Zach character undergoes all of the six stages from the theory. They served the data from the film and the film's script as pieces of evidence and supported arguments as well. This research gives a vision of the object of the research going through all of the stages. However, the pieces of evidence and data are objectives rather than supposed to focus on the character's representation of homosexual identity formation.

The research by Nanda Vidyastria, *Homosexual Identity in Alex Sanchez's Rainbow Trilogy*. The writer also uses Cass' theory of homosexual identity formation to identify the characters in the *Rainbow Trilogy* books. Other than that, the writer put a topic related to forms of

victimization of homosexuals from what is depicted in the books through the characters. This issue is still one of the most common issues among the LGBTQ community in their daily basis life in public areas such as school, workspace, and so on. overall, the writer has a good argument on homosexual identity formation and also adds up the issue of queer people's victimization as the supporting argument.

1.4. Research Question

This research focuses on how one of the main characters, Alex Claremont-Diaz, overcomes his true sexual identity shown in his behavior and love interest. Overall, this research was conducted to answer the following questions:

1. What pressures that Alex suffer as a homosexual public figure and how does he go against the discourse power around him?
2. What is the process of Alex's coming out process as a homosexual individual?

1.5. Scope of the Research

This research aims to analyze the novel *Red, White & Royal Blue*, which focuses on showing the process of coming out as a queer individual, and how the main character (Alex) handles the situation regarding people's opinions and attitudes toward his acceptance of being bisexual throughout the storyline. He uses the pressures as proof that he still is himself despite his homosexual identity and presents his eligibility for having a place in the political field. Therefore, this research is going to explore cultural study and also the psychological study of the main character and mix it with some of the aspects of an individual's life as queer.

1.6. Objectives of the Study

The object of this research is to focus on how Alex as the main character shows the tendencies of being *possibly* a homosexual individual at first into fully accepting the homosexual identity as his brand new identity. In addition, this study also related to several internal aspects of this character's life along with his surrounding's responses to learning the new sexual identity, especially comes from the public's opinions (the discourse power) where most of them opposed the idea of the public figure having a same-sex romantic relationship in which involves two people from two different countries.

