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**HOMOSEXUAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN EDWARDIAN ENGLAND AS
REFLECTED IN E. M. FORSTER'S *MAURICE***

By

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Abstract

This research is conducted to describe the homosexual identity development of an Edwardian gentleman named Maurice Hall depicted in a novel entitled *Maurice*, and to explain how the identity development helps him confirm his sexual identity while living in a strict heteronormative and homophobic Edwardian England. The findings of this research show that there are five stages of homosexual identity development undergone by homosexuals seen through the life of Maurice Hall in his adolescence period, which are pre-coming out, coming out, exploration, first relationships and integration. The illegality of homosexuality in Edwardian England affects how Maurice surpasses each stage. The fear of being prosecuted and losing his place in society results in negative self-esteem in his early stages of identity development, indicated by serious mental illness such as depression, anxiety disorders, and suicidal thoughts. In the more integrated identity, the self-acceptance of his homosexuality helps Maurice to be psychologically prepared in dealing with social stigmatization.

Keywords: homosexuality, homosexual identity, identity development, Edwardian England, *Maurice*

BACKGROUND

Sexuality is an important part for humans. Beyond the purpose to reproduce, sexuality is about how people see themselves and how they physically relate to others. Sexuality involves a person's feelings and sense of identity, a self-recognition of one's sexual behaviours.

Sexual identity can be challenging for some people because of the stigmatization they receive if their sexuality is considered something "unnatural" by the existing norms. The existence of homosexuality has put the rigid social norms to a challenge. It is regarded as an abnormality. For ages, it has been considered as a horrible sin.

The early 20th century of England was not a friendly place for homosexual people to live. It was punishable by law to perform any homoerotic act. The homophobic attitudes from the society made many homosexuals hide their true sexual identity. They forced themselves to hide inside the closet and lock it tight.

Thus, the issue of homosexual identity in Edwardian England portrayed through *Maurice* is critical to be discussed because of the significance of problem. The discussion about homosexuality in literary study can provide a better understanding and a new perspective for readers to see this phenomenon.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative research. Descriptive-qualitative content analysis is used to analyze the data because the data of this research are non-numeric. The main source of this research data is *Maurice*, a novel written by E. M. Forster. To analyze the work, the researcher used the theory of Coleman's *Homosexual Identity Development*. The research instruments are the researcher himself and the table of data sheet.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Stages of Homosexual Identity Development

There are five developmental stages of homosexual identity development undergone by Maurice Hall, which are pre-coming out stage, coming out stage, exploration stage, first relationships stage, and integration stage.

a. Pre-coming Out Stage

The main feature of the pre-coming out stage is the lack of awareness of same-sex feelings. Individuals usually cannot describe their same-sex feelings and do not recognize what is happening to them.

Where all is obscure and unrealized the best similitude is a dream. Maurice had two dreams at school; they will interpret him. In the first dream he felt very cross. He was playing football against a nondescript whose existence he resented. He made an effort and the nondescript turned into George, that garden boy.

But he had to be careful or it would reappear. George headed down the field towards him, naked and jumping over the woodstacks. I shall go mad if he turns wrong now, said Maurice, and just as they collared this happened, and a brutal disappointment woke him up. He did not connect it with Mr. Ducie's homily, still less with his second dream, but he thought he was going to be ill, and afterwards that it was somehow a punishment for something (Forster, 1987: 23).

Maurice's dream about George can be described as his unconscious manifestation of homosexual feelings. The homoerotic longing towards the garden boy is described from the scene where George, naked, is heading down the field towards Maurice and jumping over the woodstacks. However, Maurice realizes that his homoerotic dream about George is something wrong. Pre-coming out is a very hard stage for homosexuals to surpass, mostly because of the way society perceive same-sex feelings. The negative social attitudes will put homosexuals into a negative self-concept.

b. Coming Out Stage

The first developmental task of the coming out stage is the acknowledgement of homosexual feelings. Individuals have to acknowledge a homosexual thought or fantasy.

Now he had the highest gift to offer. The idealism and the brutality that

ran through boyhood had joined at last, and twined into love. No one might want such love, but he could not feel ashamed of it, because it was he, neither body or soul, nor body and soul, but he working through both. He still suffered, yet a sense of triumph had come elsewhere. Pain had shown him a niche behind the world's judgements, whither he could withdraw (Forster, 1987: 63).

Maurice understands that he cannot feel ashamed of his own sexuality. He was born gay, and will live as a gay man. He feels "a sense of triumph", an understanding as well as a sense of relief to finally be able to accept who he actually is.

Telling others is the next developmental task in coming out stage. It is important so that individuals can gain self-acceptance about their own sexuality.

His voice was feeble but clear, and his face like a sword. Maurice flung useless words about love ... "Durham, I love you." He laughed bitterly. "I do – I have always ... I tell you, I do – I came to say it - in your very own way – I have always been like the Greeks and didn't know" (Forster, 1987: 65).

Disclosure is a very critical point, and others' reactions, whether it is negative or positive ones, can have a powerful impact to one's self-concept. If homosexuals received negative responses, it would confirm the old negative impressions regarding the issue and make them suffer in a state of depression and low-self concept longer. On the other hand, if they received positive responses, it could counteract the

old perceived negative feelings, leaving them to begin accepting their true sexual feelings and at the same time increasing their self-esteem. The ability to tell others about the issue as well as the acknowledgement of their sexual feelings and a better understanding regarding the issue of homosexuality will make homosexual individuals ready to enter the next developmental stage of sexual identity, the exploration stage.

c. Exploration Stage

Exploration or experimentation is the first major experience of sexual and social activity with other homosexuals. The interaction is needed so that individuals can develop a more positive self-image.

Maurice clenched his fist and hit Durham lightly on the head with it "Hard luck", he breathed. "Tell me about your home life." ... Maurice's fist unclenched to reform with a handful of hair in its grasp. "Waou, that hurts!" cried the other joyously. "What did your sisters say about Holy Communion?" "One's married a clerg . No, that hurts ... Hall, I never knew you were a fool- " he possessed himself of Maurice's hand "-and the others engaged to Archibald London, Esquire, of the Waou! Ee! Shut up, I'm going." He fell between Maurice's knees (Forster, 1987: 44-45).

The passage above shows Maurice's affection to Durham by stroking Durham's hair in a subtle way to demonstrate his homosexual feelings. Although the stroking hurts Durham, he does not mind and both

of them keep doing the homoerotic activity, helping Maurice to develop his interpersonal skills. This marks Maurice's sexual and social exploration, and the experience he gains from any physical, sexual, and emotional exploration can fulfill his social and sexual needs with other people with the same sexual preference. It is important to build a more positive self-image as well as to provide more supports for Maurice and to give affection.

d. First Relationships Stage

Individuals want to explore relationships that combine emotional and physical attraction. In this stage, individuals are expected to learn how to function in a same-sex relationship, especially in a society where the acceptable norm is heterosexual relationships. This stage is characterized by intensity, lack of trust, and possessiveness.

During the next two years Maurice and Clive had as much happiness as men under that star can expect. They were affectionate and consistent by nature, and, thanks to Clive, extremely sensible. Clive knew that ecstasy cannot last, but can carve a channel for something lasting, and he contrived a relation that proved permanent. If Maurice made love it was Clive who preserved it, and caused its rivers to water the garden. He could not bear that one drop should be wasted, either in bitterness or in sentimentality, and as time went on they abstained from avowals ("we have said everything") and almost

from caresses. Their happiness was to be together; they radiated something of their calm amongst others, and could take their place in society (Forster, 1987: 98).

The relationships in this stage are expected to provide emotional, physical, as well as sexual attraction. Maurice and Durham are able to maintain their relationship for two years. They both are able to provide affection to each other, something important so that their relationship can work.

Maurice thought seldom about disease and death, but when he did it was with strong disapproval. They could not be allowed to spoil his life or his friends, and he brought all his youth and health to bear on Clive. He was with him constantly, going down uninvited to Penge for weekends or for a few days holiday, and trying by example rather than precept to cheer him up (Forster, 1987: 110).

The need for more intimacy in this stage also shows Maurice's possessiveness towards Durham. Maurice is always with Durham constantly. He visits Durham's suburban home, though uninvited, in Penge for weekends or for a few days of holiday and tries to cheer his lover up.

The first relationships stage is a stage where individuals explore intimacies. For Maurice, it is a stage when, for the first time, he manages to love and be loved by someone from the same sex. In this stage, Maurice is able to show his capability to work in a same-sex relationship, yet at the

same time shows his possessiveness towards Durham, expecting that their relationship may last for long. The first relationships stage marks Maurice's identity development to be better prepared psychologically.

e. Integration Stage

In this stage, individuals incorporate their public and private identities into one self-image (Coleman, 1982). It is an ongoing process of development that will last for the rest of the individuals' life. This stage is characterized by the emergence of new feelings about self concept. Individuals also will find new social networks and explore it. Individuals will make new relationships, create and enjoy more intimacies with their partners.

“When he [Maurice] went out to bat, it was a new over, so that Alec received first ball. His style changed. Abandoning caution, he swiped the ball into the fern. Lifting his eyes, he met Maurice's and smiled. Lost ball. Next time he hit a boundary. He was untrained, but had the cricketing build, and the game took on some semblance of reality. Maurice played up too. His mind had cleared and felt that they were against the whole world, that not only Mr. Borenus and the field but the audience in the shed and all England were closing round the wickets. They played for the sake of each other and of their fragile relationship - if one fell the other would follow. They intended no harm to the world, but so long as it attacked they must punish, they must stand wary, then hit with full strength, they must show that when two are

gathered together, majorities shall not triumph” (Forster, 1987: 201).

The scene above captures that not only Maurice’s opponent is Mr. Borenius’ team, but he also has to fight against the whole world. He has to face and challenge the heteronormative rules, stand watchful, and hit with full strength any obstacle trying to attack his sexual’s rights. He does not want to give up to the societal expectation and he will not let heteronormativity win, that “majorities shall not triumph”. It indicates that Maurice now has a new feeling about himself and his sexuality.

Maurice’s realization about his new self-concept can be seen in how he perceives his relationship with Alec. Alec comes from a lower social order. The class distinction persists in their relationship. The cricket game changes the fundamental class structure of England. As Maurice and Alec play Cricket together, Maurice considers in the possibilities of their union.

In the integration stage, relationships are more successful because individuals are more prepared psychologically. Maurice’s psychology regarding his sexuality is different compared to the ones he had in the previous stages. After managing to fulfil each developmental task in each stage, such as acknowledging his homosexuality, accepting and trying to live with it,

breaking the class barrier and opposing the heterosexual convention, Maurice creates and enjoys intimacies with Alec. It can be seen clearly in the passage below:

“Oh let’s give over talking. Here!” and he [Alec] held out his hand. Maurice took it, and they knew at that moment the greatest triumph ordinary man can win. Physical love means reaction, being panic in essence, and Maurice saw now how natural it was that their primitive abandonment at Penge should have led to peril. They knew too little about each other and too much. Hence fear. Hence cruelty. And he rejoiced because he had understood Alec’s infamy through his own glimpsing, not for the first time, the genius who hides in mans tormented soul. Not as a hero, but as a comrade, had he stood up to the bluster, and found childishness behind it, and behind that something else (Forster, 1987: 226).

Friendship, love, and tenderness are possible because Maurice’s psychology is better prepared. Before the confrontation scene at the British Museum, Maurice thinks that Alec has been blackmailing him. However, Maurice, who has been rejected both by society and by science and with nothing to lose except his friend, Alec, succeeds in keeping his courage and both, Maurice and Alec, manage to end the misunderstanding that has caused the ruckus between the two of them. When they hold each other’s hand, they both “knew at that moment the greatest triumph ordinary man can win”.

Thus, Maurice has managed to fulfill several developmental stages of homosexual identity, from acknowledging his homosexual feelings and trying to accept and live with it to standing up for his sexual right and opposing the existing heteronormative rules.

2. How the Identity Development Helps Maurice Confirm His Homosexual Identity

Maurice manages to complete his homosexual identity development in line with Coleman's theory. Maurice manages to surpass the early critical phases in pre-coming out and coming out stage and eventually is able to embrace the more stable integrated sexual identity.

In the pre-coming out and coming out stages, Maurice suffers from some mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety. The negative perceptions from the society become the primary reason for Maurice to develop these mental illnesses.

The pre-coming out and coming out stage are also the phases where homosexuals are afraid to be themselves. Maurice fears that the public will know about his preference and that it will make him lose his middle class status, which is something important in Edwardian England.

I see you were afraid to tell me, lest it gave me pain, but we've got past sparing each other. You ought to have told me. What else am here for? You

can't trust anyone else. You and I are outlaws. All this he pointed to the middle-class comfort of the room would be taken from us if people knew (Forster, 1971:127).

The fear does not only come from the fact that his middle-class status is in risk if his sexuality is known to public, but also from the fact that it is illegal to be a homosexual, with a threat of being prosecuted by the existing law if someone is proven guilty to perform any homoerotic activity.

Maurice's developmental stages of homosexual identity reach its climax when he eventually manages to accept his true self, and try to live with it and oppose the heteronormative rules. He decides to live with his new lover, Alec, and sacrifice his social status, which is something very important in his early developmental stages. Maurice's sexual integrity is shown by his determination that he and Alec should not be parted anymore.

The boathouse offered itself conveniently for that purpose. He went in and found his lover asleep. Alec lay upon piled up cushions, just visible in the last dying of the day. When he woke he did not seem excited or disturbed and fondled Maurice's arm between his hands before he spoke. "So you got the wire", he said. "What wire?" "The wire I sent off this morning to your house, telling you" He yawned, "Excuse me, I'm a bit tired, one thing and another" "... telling you to come here without fail." And since Maurice did not speak, indeed could not, he

added, "And now we shan't be parted no more, and that's finished." (Forster, 1987: 240)

Maurice is finally able to acknowledge and identify his true sexual identity. He knows with whom he is romantically and sexually attracted to as well as understands his sexual orientation. He is able to share his social and sexual identity with other people, Durham and Alec. Maurice is able to give label to himself about who he really is as a sexual being regarding his sexual orientation.

The homosexual identity development, from the critical pre-coming out stage, which is full of depression and negative self-concept, to integration stage, which is characterized by full acceptance of his own sexual orientation, has been undergone by Maurice Hall. Maurice, who in the beginning considers himself as an abomination, is finally able to perceive himself in a positive way, as well as to live as who he really is.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis, it can be concluded that there are five developmental stages of homosexual identity undergone by Maurice Hall, which are pre-coming out, coming out, exploration, first relationships and integration. In line with Coleman's theory, Maurice manages to complete his homosexual identity development. He is able to surpass the early critical pre-coming

out and coming out stages to gain a more stable integrated sexual identity.

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