DEBUNKING THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SEXUAL IDENTITY IN JODI PICOULT’S SING YOU HOME (A QUEER STUDY)

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Tethy Cahyati Pesoa
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ABSTRACT


Sexual identity is an important constituent in understanding human nature. However, it has been restricted under the binary of heterosexuality and homosexuality because of the hegemonic power of heterosexual narrative. Sing You Home is a novel which portrayed the binary structure and the discrimination against homosexual people. Hence, this thesis employs queer study to allow the necessity in revisiting the boundary of sexual identities.

Three main objectives of this thesis are to scrutinize the characteristics of character and the social setting, the charge against the homosexuals and finally the overturn of social construction of sexual identities.

In achieving these objectives, the library research is used to collect the primary and secondary data from related books and websites. Afterward, the first step taken is to read closely the novel and related theories and studies. The second step is to analyze the elements of the novel by using theory of characters and characterization, social setting and queer approach and finally to draw the conclusion.

The result of the analysis suggests three things. First, the characteristics of characters show different sexual identities and not a fixed one but rather fluid. The social condition depicts the ideology upheld by religious community which adheres to the traditional heterosexual norm. Second, the discriminations and prejudices addressed to homosexual are the significant consequences of social construction of sexual identities. The social construction creates structure of power in which homosexuality is considered as a violation of heteronormative ideal. Third, the accusation against homosexual is challenged by illustrating the positive characteristics of lesbian characters. Furthermore, under queer criticism sexual identity is proven fluid rather than innate as claimed by heteronormative society. Each individual has different journeys which shapes his or her sexual identity. Queer criticism allows an individual to free from the constraints of heteronormative discourse.
ABSTRAK


Tiga tujuan utama dari skripsi ini adalah untuk meneliti karakteristik dari setiap karakter dan latar sosial masyarakat, prasangka terhadap homoseksual dan yang terakhir adalah memutarbalikan konstruksi sosial mengenai identitas seksual.

Dalam mencapai tujuan tersebut, penelitian pustaka digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data primer dan sekunder dari buku-buku dan situs pendukung. Setelah itu, langkah pertama yang dilakukan adalah membaca secara mendalam mengenai teori dan studi pendukung. Langkah kedua adalah menganalisis unsur-unsur novel dengan menggunakan teori karakter dan karakterisasi, latar sosial dan pendekatan queer dan akhirnya menarik kesimpulan.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The growing of studies on human sexuality has become an exclusive topic from time to time. In its progress, there are already several theories or scholars examining fundamental questions about sex. As Foucault explains in *The History of Sexuality*, the history of sex in questioning social construction has produced a great demand to human being in understanding its principles, natures and implications. Foucault asserts that

For two centuries now, the discourse on sex has been multiplied rather than rarefied; and that if it has carried with it taboos and prohibitions, it has also, in a more fundamental way, ensured the solidification and implementation of an entire sexual mosaic (1990:53).

The discourse upon sexual identity is driven by humans’ critical need to define the important constituent of one’s self. In a more specific sphere, homosexuality has arisen plenty questions upon the boundaries of one’s sexual identity. Society’s values create prohibitions on what things that can be accepted or not. Things are accepted based on majority decorum. In this situation, homosexual is suppressed and often under-represented in human experience. Clearly, the ground of such rejection is based on what considered ideal or accepted in sexual relation. Majority of society is heterosexual therefore, it signifies the pernicious of other’s sexual orientation.

Homosexual, constructed as the opposite of heterosexual, is not only depicted unfairly but also treated inequitably. They do not have much
privileges to possess a profound right to live lives as they want it to be. Society has internalized a ground objection to them by programming the compulsory heterosexual identity as the utmost authentic sexual orientation of human being.

Typical homophobic stereotypes given to homosexual are sinful, evil or deviant (Tyson, 2011:199-200). The portrayal surely is one sided and disregard qualification of homosexual as an equal human being. This furthers the question on what sexual orientation is and why it creates a deep social injustice. If truly human being is capable to define his own sexual identity then why society’s boundaries have to intervene such private matter.

Several theories have been developed to seek the factual definition of sexual orientation. What is meant to be heterosexual or homosexual? Is sexual intercourse the only parameter to define sexual identity? These questions are challenged in the constellation of queer theory. It finds out that there is an irrelevancy to identify one’s sexuality based on the sex of one’s spouse. Queer theorists believe human sexuality in its intricacy cannot be simplified by “biological fact” of one’s desire in particular sex (Tyson, 2011:173). Therefore, it perpetuates the criticism on the implication of being a homosexual. The issue of discrimination is addressed as the important discussion on social value.

In the relation with literary work, such issue is often outlined throughout stories as it is functioned to reflect society condition (Langland, 1984: 4). Specific to this study, Jodi Picoult’s novel entitled *Sing You Home* is situated
to society in Rhode Island, New England, USA. In her novel, Jodi Picoult tries to elucidate the complexity of the implication on being homosexual through an eloquent story of a main protagonist character named Zoe. She is a heterosexual woman at the beginning of the stories. She is married to Max Baxter and has a trouble to get herself pregnant. For ten years of their marriage, Zoe has undergone four unsuccessful cycles of IVF and two miscarriages. In the third times of pregnancy, Zoe was pregnant to the longest term she has ever been. It has been twenty-eight weeks and she has a baby shower for the first time. However, the happiness does not last longer, Zoe has to lose her baby again and this time it is harder to face the reality for herself and her husband because the doctor says that Zoe will not be able to ever get pregnant again. Eventually, they lose everything in their saving for the cost of IVF and Max decides to get divorced from Zoe. During this difficult time, Zoe meets a lesbian woman named Vanessa. Their relationship starts from friendship and grows into the blossom of romance feeling and eventually they decide to get married.

The problem in this story starts when Zoe becomes a lesbian and marries Vanessa. Further, the problem gets bigger when they want to have a baby from the frozen embryo of Zoe and Max therefore, Vanessa can grow the baby inside her womb. This perpetuates the conflict for people around them, especially from religious community where Max is now belong to, the Eternal Glory Church. Zoe and Vanessa have to struggle against prejudices and discriminations to have the right to adopt. This issue reflects the fear of
homophobia in United States, when discrimination toward homosexual is sporadic in many spectrums such as hate crimes, job opportunities and right to attain custody of children (Tyson, 2011:174).

It is interesting to examine this conflict in the realm of queer theory. To analyze society condition in which homosexual is not well-invited to be treated equally with other, queer theory provides a suitable approach for critical reception of society’s discrimination. It is also suitable with the aim of this study which is sought to prove how Jodi Picoult tries to debunk the stereotypes of homosexual and defend their rights.

B. Problem Formulation

To be able to draw conclusion, there are three main questions that guide the writer through the process of analysis.

1. How are the characters and setting described in Sing You Home?
2. How does social construction of sexual identity define homosexual in Sing You Home?
3. How do lesbian characters debunk the construction of sexual identity in Sing You Home?

C. Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is aimed at proving first the figurations of homosexual characters are depicted to against the portrayal that society gives. It is meant to give counter depiction against all stereotypes that society puts on
homosexual people. Second, the objective is to prove the discrimination and prejudices experienced by homosexual. Sexual identity creates limitations for homosexual to pursue their rights in society and this study is aimed to prove it. Third, it tries to show how sexual identity is a mere social construction and how homosexuals debunk the assumption.

D. Definition of Terms

There are several related terms which need to be defined in order to gain comprehensive analysis within this study.

First is debunking. According to Longman Dictionary it means to show that something such as a belief or theory is false. In the realm of queer study, debunking is prominently used to invalidate the myth of stable sexes, genders and sexuality development. In the context of this thesis, debunking means to disprove the theory of social construction in defining sexual identity of a person. (Mayor in Longman, 2011: 436; Jagose, 1996: 3)

Second is heterosexism. The terminology is conceptualized in the realm of sexual orientation discrimination. It spreads the belief that to be heterosexual is the only nature of sexual orientation. The attitude of society constructs a heterosexist world in which other form sexual orientation such as homosexual is treated with hate crime. The hate crime is embodied and structured in many social foundations such as family, education, religion and law enforcement system. (Smith, Oades and McCarthy, 2012:7-8)
Third is homophobia which is an individual experience to irrationally feel fear or disgust when interacting or perceiving homosexual. It is supported by cultural belief that shapes traditional sex identity and creates stereotypes toward homosexual. (Morin and Garfinkle, 1978: 29-47).

Fourth is prejudice. An oversimplified and inaccurately description of one’s traits in class, gender, occupation, race, religion, or sexual identity. Mainly, the depiction is created by one side party which applies a blanket policy to assume one’s quality and disregards personal’s right to define one’s self (Hudson and Ricketts, 1980: 537-571).
CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL REVIEW

A. Review of Related Studies

There are several researches conducted with similarities in this study. The similarities are found in two main subjects which are the use of queer theory to examine the discrimination on homosexual and the topic about sexual identity formation, specifically in women. The importance to discuss these researches is to create comparison and to find the exclusive contribution that this study offers in the spectrum of literary analysis.

The first research is an undergraduate thesis (2015) entitled “A Queer Study on the Struggle against Homophobic Prejudice and Discrimination in Dustin Lance’s Milk” conducted by Christiani D. Putri. The main goals of this thesis are to prove gay people get discriminated because of their sexual orientation and to prove how at the end these gays choose to fight against all the odds to claim their rights. Setting on Castro Street, San Francisco, the researcher analyzes a powerful homosexual character named Harvey Milk in his attempt against minor characters named McConelly, Anita Bryant, John Briggs, and Dan White whom represent a heterosexual community which believes their personal and religious opinion have determined that homosexual was an act of sin and shall be banish. Putri finds different sexual orientation other than heterosexual, in this case is gay, does not enjoy the same civil rights. She problematizes the hierarchy of sexual orientation which subjugated gay people as the sinners and denied from the right in job field and politics.
Harvey Milk as the central story’s character is described as “charismatic”, “perceptive and smart”, “empathetic and sympathetic”, “brave” and “optimistic” person (Putri, 2015: 26-40). He moves from New York to San Francisco and opens a camera shop in Castro Street. Milk comes out of the closet since then. Upon realization that gay people do not achieve equality yet, he aspires to be politician.

Then Milk involves in local politics and runs for public office to encourage equality and enhance the lives of working-class San Franciscans and minorities (Putri, 2015: 52).

Milk’s camera shop is filled with gay people and their hopes to make San Francisco a better home for everyone. Gay people gather, share ideas and listen to Milk’s speech which keeps inspiring them to come out from the closet and to support him to be a politician.

Upon her finding, Putri concludes that Harvey Milk has successfully pushed further the acceptance toward gay people into public sphere and make them comfortable to accept themselves. In a support to queer study, Milk proves that discrimination on sexual orientation is something that should be challenged and rejected. He becomes the first openly gay politician in America and stands against the “offensive words, violent threat and discrimination in employment” (Putri, 2015:78) to gay people.

In contrast, this study is no longer meant to analyze discrimination experienced by homosexual per se. In a more specific realm of queer study, the study scrutinizes the fluidity of sexuality. Discrimination issue is used to portray how society constructs the idea of sexual orientation and creates the
dichotomy or segregation. This study engages more to the current concern of queer theorists on the fluidity of sexual orientation formation.

The second reviewed research is an undergraduate thesis (2010) entitled “The Formation of Stevie’s Sexual Orientation in April Sinclair’s Coffee Will Make You Black” conducted by Ratri Sarwaningtyas. Its purpose is to narrate how sexual orientation is shaped by several factors. Sarwaningtyas argues that homosexuality is caused by several life events instead of natural self-realization.

In Sarwaningtyas’ thesis, Stevie is analyzed as a smart girl who has broad knowledge about school’s subjects but has no knowledge of virginity. Her lack of knowledge in this particular matter is the result of the prohibition to talk about adolescence topic by her mother. It is considered as a taboo. Her mother also uses rude words to address boys and it is planted to Stevie’s mind. In accordance to James C. Coleman’s theory, this family’s pattern later becomes a factor that shapes sexual orientation (Sarwaningtyas, 2010: 19-20). Stevie grows up lacking of knowledge about sex because of her mother.

Another factor to consider is a traumatic sexual experience. Stevie is asked by her friends Yusef Brown to pee together. It turns out, Brown makes Stevie peed and watched by entire friends in school. Stevie is traumatized by that event and Sarwningtyas believes this becomes the factor that also leads Stevie to be homosexual at the end.

The changing of Stevie’s sexual orientation happens later when she meets Nurse Horn. Backward, during eleven until sixteen years old, Stevie likes
boys. Her first crush is Michael Dun at the age of eleven (Sarwaningtyas, 2010: 36-37). Later at the age of thirteen, she likes Yusef Brown (Sarwaningtyas, 2010: 37-39) and has the first kiss with him. When she is sixteen, Stevie meets a school’s nurse, Nurse Horn who is in charge to help the kids with health problems. Stevie becomes closer with Nurse Horn and she shares a lot of stories and even voluntarily becomes Nurse Horn’s helper. She feels comfortable with Nurse Horn the way she feels when she is around her grandmother. The difference is, she also fantasizes Nurse Horn in a sexual way when she daydreams to be rescuing from being drown (Sarwaningtyas, 2010: 41). She dreams more about Nurse Horn than her own boyfriend named Sean. From that point, Sarwiningtyas states that Stevie changes her sexual orientation from “a normal sexual orientation or it is called heterosexual” (2010: 42) into homosexual at the age of sixteen.

In this study, the similarity to Sarwiningtyas’s thesis is the topic about sexual orientation. It analyzes a female character who is heterosexual at the beginning of the story and becomes homosexual later. However, this changing is not seen from the lens of a cause and effect process. Rather, this study examines sexual orientation as a journey of sexual identity. The approach used to analyze the issue is also different. Sarwacingtyas uses a psychoanalysis approach to address the changing of sexual identity while this study uses Queer approach. This study refuses the argument to see heterosexual as the “normal” sexual orientation and argues that the fluidity of sexual orientation is
actually normal. The notion of “normal” sexual orientation is seen as a result of society construction that should not be accepted.

The third research is a dissertation of Nashae Yvonne Julian (2012) titled “Sexual Identity of Women Who Love Women”. She evaluates life experiences of ten women who love women to understand the formation of their sexual identities. She comes up with the result of four themes that conclude the process of sexual identity formation. There are “I Was Just Different, Information Seeking, View of Self as a Woman, and Contextual relationship” (Julian, 2012: 82-87).

The analysis begins by examining the prejudices and stereotypes endured by these ten women. It is believed that the oppression has impacted the way homosexuals develop their sexual identity (Pearson in Julian 2012: 1). She addresses the potential of the oppression to cause a negative impact on the needs of the women to come out as homosexual. Julian also recognizes the lack of traditional models to analyze this problem and to recognize the different context of culture and historical background of non-heterosexual women (2012: 4). Therefore, it becomes the priority of her research to take into account the matter of “life experience, such as race, culture, and oppression, in how one chooses to sexually identify” (Julian, 2012: 6).

Their life stories are told from childhood up to adulthood moments. Julian analyzes the meaning of each story and how it is told from different subjective point of view of the women. From ten participants, the emerging four themes explain the similarity of sexual identity formation despite of any differences in
backgrounds or life experiences. To put it in a simple portrayal, the table below explains the result of the interview.

Table 4.2. List of Themes (Julian, 2012: 82)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>SUB-THEME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I WAS JUST DIFFERENT</td>
<td>Acknowledgment of some perceived differences between self and other women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFORMATION SEEKING</td>
<td>Actively seeking knowledge about sexual identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIEW OF SELF AS A WOMAN IN THE CONTEXT OF CULTURE</td>
<td>Meaning of being a woman, changes in self-perception over time strongly relates to culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTEXTUAL RELATIONSHIPS</td>
<td>Family, friends, partners, co-workers that have impacted sexual identity, fitting in.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The finding proves that sexual identity is dynamic and a growing process. This is the similarity between Julian’s dissertation and this study. Although in this study the fluidity of sexual identity is further argued as an act to reject the compulsory heterosexual identity.

B. Review of Related Theories

There are three theories discussed in this part which are used later to answer the questions in problem formulation. The first theory is theory on character and characterization. This theory used to scrutinize characters presented in Sing You Home. The second reviewed theory is the theory of queer discourse. It is functioned to show the position and value of each character upon the issue of sexual construction. The third theory is sexual
identity development. This theory is used to explicate the fluidity of sexual identity and how a person can change from heterosexual into homosexual.

1. Theories on Characters and Characterizations

a. Theory on Characters

A character is a person living in a story. As Abrams states, characters are presented with specific values of moral, rational, intellectual, and emotional attached to them (1993: 33). It means characters are the persons narrated by the author with distinctive personality to enrich the way the story is built. Andrew Bennet and Nicholas Royle in Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory also declare “characters are the life of literature: they are the objects of our curiosity and fascination, affection and dislike, admiration and condemnation” (2004: 60). So real the characters are that people can easily be fond of and affected in a way they perceive themselves.

To create such living characters, they need to possess certain characteristics that people are easily related to as human being. Abrams says the diverse characteristics are represented uniquely through the way a character speaks or “the dialogue” and things that they do or “the action” (1993: 32-33). These characters through “the dialogue” and “the action” are presented specific personality traits or ideology with the complexity of their inner thought and emotion. As supported by Bennet and Royle theory, these characters are named and “say and do things that seem convincingly like the kinds of things people say and do in so-called real life” (2004: 62).
Furthermore, Abrams argues that characters can be “stable” or “undergo a radical change” throughout the story (1993: 33). If a character is stable, it indicates that he or she stands on the same conditions or values from the beginning up to the end of the story. If a character is changing, it signifies a process in which a character undergoes certain life events that triggers him or her to be a different person in any aspects at the end of the story. The more popular term to this distinction is the flat and round character explicated by E.M Foster in Aspect of the Novel (1927).

A flat character appears with “a single idea or quality’ (Foster in Abrams, 1999: 33). There is not much inner complexity of traits and he or she remains static all through the whole story. A round character is obviously possessing the opposite values of a flat character. She or he possesses a number of complex traits and “therefore is as difficult to describe with any adequacy as a person in real life, and like real persons, is capable of surprising us” (Abrams, 1993: 33).

A round character is endowed with life-like personality whose words, actions or perspective can transform just like an actual person lives in a story because of her or his complexity of traits. It means, the character is a person whom resembles the real person in real world. The way they speak, act, behave are full of contradiction just like human being. They are changing from time to time depends on any life time event occurred in their lives.
b. Theory of Characterization

Characterization is a process by which the author explicates the personality of a character. There are two possible ways to reveal characterization, first is showing or indirect characterization and second is telling or direct characterization (Abram, 1993: 33-34). Showing means the author brands the personality traits through pieces of information in a way a character speaks or acts. Not only that, the way a character thinks, feels and responses on other’s feeling are presented as well to develop inner quality. This idea is also supported by Holman and Harmon in A Handbook to Literature that assert the basic method of characterization is by presenting a character through action and values within a character without the intervention of the author. The example of the later is through the impacts of actions and emotions on a character’s inner self (1986: 81).

In conclusion, the means of showing or indirect characterization relies on the capacity of a reader to understand each trait of characters by observing closely their performances. A character needs to be examined thoroughly from the way he is presented, acted, behaved or felt. Reader is responsible to identify and further interpret the hidden motives from each character.

In telling or direct characterization, Abram states as follow:

*the author intervenes authoritatively in order to describe, and often to evaluate, the motives and dispositional qualities of the characters”* (Abram, 1993: 34).

A character’s values of being are vividly stated through the words from the author. As Holman and Harmon argues that the explicit presentation is
manifested in a character’s action both in the introduction and throughout the story. The conclusion is, it gives authority to the author to give the reader direct distinction from one character’s traits to another therefore, reader is not in charge to guess the hidden motives or desires possessed by a character.

2. Theory of Setting


- the places in which characters appear
- the social context of characters, such as families, friends and class
- the customs, beliefs and rules of behavior that give identity to a society
- the particular location of events
- the atmosphere, mood and feel that all the above elements create.

To understand the function of a setting, Gill suggests to look at the location where the actions take place or the occasions which influence the mood, personality, situation or identity of a character or a society. He further argues that setting functions as a tool for the author to create a particular view about life. The setting shows what kind of society that the characters live in inside of the story. The identity of a society is analyzed through the practice of “customs, beliefs and rules of the behaviors.” Society can be diverse depending on the world that the author wants to build.

According to Abrams, setting in literary works is divided into locale, historical time, and social circumstances of a story (1993: 284). It means, the circumstances and places are necessary information to give general portrayal on when and where the actions occur. Therefore, in different time, place and
social setting, the society presented in the story can be different. These elements are provided for the readers to have a sense of the world where the characters live in. It also perpetuates a nuance that the type of a society is very dynamic and never static. An author can depict a different identity of a society even if the location of the story is similar to another story but distinctive in the historical time.

3. Queer Theory

Turning back at 1960s and 1970s, the word queer perceived as a disparaging term to address non-heterosexual people. The term queer was combined with ‘bashing’ to denote (and doubtless to help legitimize) verbal and physical violence against those who were, or who were perceived to be, homosexual. (Bennet and Royle, 2004: 188).

The nature and development of sexual identity discourse has brought the term queer for the first time in the 1990 conference on “queer theory” at University of California, Santa Cruz (Barry, 2002: 143). In this matter, the term queer is used by homosexual to reclaim pride and renounce self-recognition to counter the negative prejudice once given by society. Tyson states that LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) used the term queer “is a way of taking power away from heterosexist society” (2011: 177). In a pursuit to deeply understand about queer theory, lesbian and gay criticisms are important to be discussed.

Lesbian and gay theory which emerged firstly before queer theory has established the importance on sexual orientation discourse. Particularly, it is
successfully triggered social and political change to create opposition to the discrimination experienced by homosexual or so called homophobia and to counter the construction of heteronormative culture (Barry, 2002: 140). Further, lesbian theorists contest the idea on how a woman can be self-identified as lesbian. Tyson asserts that lesbian theorists problematize the definition of sexual orientation if it depends on “genital contact” then to say a heterosexual virgin is a heterosexual woman without any sexual engagement is not a valid claim (2011: 173). Therefore, for lesbian theorists the definition of sexual orientation needs to be revisited to comprehend the process of how someone becomes lesbian.

Another lesbian criticism according to Barry is called lesbian feminism. A related issue emerged from lesbian feminism around 1980s is the critique towards feminism at the peak of its momentum which is failed to accommodate difference, whether racial, cultural, or sexual, and tended to universalize the experience of white, middle class, urban heterosexual women (Barry, 2002: 140).

Lesbians are left out from the canopy of feminist movement. Zimmerman argues there are few discussions in feminist essays about lesbian problems because it only focuses on the lens of heterosexism (Barry, 2002:141). Further, lesbian feminism argues that feminism in its utmost whole form should be rewarded to lesbianism. Wittig’s response to the claim of Beauvoir “one is not born a woman but becomes a woman” is saying that “instead of becoming a woman one (anyone?) can become a lesbian” (Wittig in Butler, 2002: 162). This concept leads to the decision to separate from the relation
with heterosexual woman. Of course, this exclusion is obsolete for today’s status quo. The battle between feminism and lesbian feminism is resolved previously by Adrienne Rich in her essay “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence”. She introduces the notion of “lesbian continuum” which broaden the life experience of a woman not only the desire for sexual intimate relation but also friendship and support (Barry, 2002: 141-142). Later, it perpetuates the notion of one’s capability to choose both gender and sex therefore, to say sexuality is something that can change which this thinking fosters into the realm of queer theory.

Gay theory is more or less similar to lesbian theory. In addition to make sexual orientation as its axis of criticism, Tyson adds that gay theorists also examine the relation between culture and definition of heterosexuality and homosexuality (2011: 173). It finds out the meaning of heterosexuality and homosexuality is highly depending on culture. The given example is the difference of culture in United States today and South American culture in perceiving the notion of homosexuality. In United States, if a man has sexual relation or desire for another man is identified as a gay. By contrast, in some South American cultures the man is still defined as heterosexual man given that he maintains the traditional masculine role, to behave in “aggressive” and “dominant” manner (Tyson, 2011: 173). Therefore, it is necessary to say the validity of sexual orientation is not purely a natural law but a culture acceptance.
Withstanding the importance of gay and lesbian theories, the advanced growth of study on sexual orientation owes to queer theory. Its essence derived from post-structuralist work in 1980s with necessity to reverse or “deconstruct” the binary opposition since the polarity is depending on the definition of other which makes the term is not supreme hence, to identify the rank of paired contradiction is something that can be reversed (Barry, 2002: 73-74, 143). Queer theorist like Sedgwick also denotes the flaw of sexual essentialism and uses the word queer as

the open mesh of possibilities gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically (Sedgwick, 1994:8).

Therefore the notion of heterosexual as the normal sexual orientation is false as the term itself emerged eleven years after the term homosexuality is used for the first time in 1869 in Germany (Barry, 2002: 144). Further elaborated by Butler in her support to Foucault’s theory of genealogical critique, which is important to reject the indulgence in searching for the authentic identity of gender, female desire and sexual orientation for such identity is not stable and therefore a subject to be reexamined. Her analysis is further developed as follow:

genealogy investigates the political stakes in designating as an origin and cause those identity categories that are in fact the effects of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin. The task of this inquiry is to center on—and decenter—such defining institutions: phallogocentrism and compulsory heterosexuality (2002: 29).

Authenticity is nothing but merely the product of society construction and the result of repetitive acts. Just like Sedgwick, Butler refuses the idea of
essentialism in the existence of innate and permanent differences in gender and sex. Hence, she expects the discourse to disturb the comfort of masculine privileges and heterosexist society. It opens the perspective to see sexual identity as something fluid as its meaning is defined differently depends on the way society constructs the value.

Jagose also argues that sexual identity is a cultural formation rather than natural trait (1996:8). Human beings have been conditioned to believe that heterosexuality is an innate identity. However, it has been proven that sexual identity is more dependent on cultural meaning because the way human beings acts on their sexuality are different across time and place (Jagose, 1996:9). As Foucault argues how institutions in eighteenth century, to be exact are canonical law, the Christian pastoral, and civil law, established society’s decorum in its own condition. They governed the law of marriage and sexual desire. The natural sexual identity was based on heterosexual monogamy or to say that people are born to be heterosexual hence, homosexual was a sin, a physical imbalance, and a crime as it broke the natural law of procreation and rules of marriage (Foucault, 1990: 38-39). It was until nineteenth century homosexual started to be recognized as “a life form”, further elaborated by Foucault as follows:

Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodisim of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species (1990: 43).

The fact that the understanding upon homosexual can change signifies the authentic sexual identity is nothing but a mere social construction. It is
embodied in cultural and civil law which governed society’s sexual acts. Society controls people’s sexual identity under the compulsory heteronormative framework.

Tyson explains heteronormative framework create a heterosexist society which constructs heterosexual as the natural sexual orientation. It is embodied in family, education, religion, and law enforcement system and therefore such institution promotes discrimination against homosexual (Tyson, 2011: 175). The discrimination occurs within hate speech or hate crimes, rights in jobs and housing, the use of public facilities and the right to have children’s custody (Tyson, 2011: 174). Even more, the construction of sexual identity gives the privilege to heterosexual to define homosexual from their side. Typical stereotypes given to homosexual are deviant, dangerous, sexual predators, which are degrading and devaluing sexual identity of homosexual. These stereotypes are the result of homophobia or the feeling of disgust and irrational fear against homosexual (Tyson, 2011: 175). Barry states, it is within queer theory’s agenda to “expose “homophobia” of mainstream literature and criticism,” and to show how social construction of sexual identity degrades the homosexuals’ aspect of human being (2002: 149).

To summarize, queer theory pertains a beginning realization that there is no such thing as a natural sexual identity and takes a step forward to shake the boundary of pairing opposite between heterosexual/homosexual hierarchies. Heterosexual should not be considered as the naturally-given sexual identity or essential trait at the time one is born, which dictates “normative ‘self’ of
heterosexuality and rejected ‘Other’ of homosexuality” (Barry 2002: 145). Therefore Barry says the act of “liminal moments mirror” or the momentum of sexual awakening as lesbian or gay is important to negate the construction of sexual identity under compulsory heterosexist society (2002: 148). Queer theory embraces sexual identity as a fluid force, able to change and therefore homosexual should not abide by any should create under compulsory heterosexism framework.

C. Theoretical Framework

The first theory on character and characterization is used to identify and comprehend the characteristics of character in the story. The theory functions in scrutinizing the standing point of sexual identity and religious belief of each character. The second theory is setting. It is used to identify the place, time and society values inside the novel. Analyzing these elements determine the type of society, the rules and the point of view about sexual identity. The third theory is queer which is utilized to establish the understanding about sexual identity. It is meant to explicate how sexual identity is actually nurtured or constructed from heteronormative perspective. This helps to see homosexual as a sexual identity instead of a derogatory being. Furthermore, the queer theory is functioned to answer the question upon fluidity of sexual identity as a form of resistance toward compulsory heterosexual identity.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

A. Object of the Study

The novel is entitled *Sing You Home* written by broadly known as one of New York Times best author, Jodi Picoult. The novel was published in 2011 by Atria Book. It consists of 466 pages and divided into 10 tracks accompanied by different soundtrack composed by Ellen Wilber. Therefore, instead of the traditional chapter, Picoult divides the novel into tracks. *Sing You Home* debuted at #1 on the USA Today book list, and at #1 on the NYT print and eBook list. It has been nominated for Goodreads Choice Awards Best Fiction and Goodreads Choice Awards Favourite Books. It was also a finalist for NH Literary Award.

*Sing You Home* is Picoult’s 18th novel since her first novel was published in 1992. There are approximately 40 million books in print in 35 countries, put her as the best-selling author of twenty three novels including *Sing You Home* (2011). Picoult has received numerous outstanding awards throughout her carrier. She was awarded as the New England Bookseller Award for Fiction (2013); a lifetime achievement award for mainstream fiction from the Romance Writers of America, the Book Browse Diamond Award for novel of the year (2013), Cosmopolitan magazine’s ‘Fearless Fiction’ Award (2007), Waterstone’s Author of the Year in the UK, a Vermont Green Mountain Book Award, a NH Granite State Book Award, a Virginia Reader’s Choice Award,
the Abraham Lincoln Illinois High School Book Award, and a Maryland Black-Eyed Susan Award. She has also been the recipient an Alex Award from the Young Adult Library Services Association, sponsored by the Margaret Alexander Edwards Trust and Booklist, one of ten books written for adults that have special appeal for young adults and the 2013-14 recipient of the New Hampshire Literary Award for Outstanding Literary Merit.

The story in *Sing You Home* is narrated from three major characters; Zoe, Max and Vanessa. It is about the modern life about being lesbian in Rhode Island, USA. The marriage of a heterosexual couple, Zoe and Max, stumbles after failed series of personal tragedies in the attempt to have a child. The story continues with Max being an alcoholic but eventually changed by accepting Jesus and became a part of an evangelical church. Zoe continues to work as a music therapist and finds a new friendship with Vanessa which later blossoms into romantic love. Zoe and Vanessa gets married and decides to ask Max the right to implant the remaining of Max and Zoe frozen embryos into Vanessa. However, it contradicts with Max’s new religious belief and his pastor supports Max against the plan. *Sing You Home* explores the provocative issues about sexual identity in today’s world. It questions society’s view on homosexual’s right to love, to have children and basically any rights enjoyed by heterosexual people.
B. Approach of the Study

This study uses queer criticism as the approach to analyze *Sing You Home*. It is functioned to scrutinize the binary opposition of sexual identity. It serves as a tool to examine how society constructs the notion of sexual identity and how they react on homosexual.

Queer criticism broadens the scope on the question about sexual identity. As Tyson says the word queer is used as a turning point to celebrate the inclusive category which concedes the shared life experience of non-strictly heterosexual people, be it gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender (2011:177). As discussed in previous chapter, Barry suggests (2002; 145-149) that queer criticism focus on destabilize the binary opposition of homo/hetero and seeks the proof that sexuality is constructed by society therefore it is a force fluid and able to change. He also states that in relation to literary works, queer criticism exposes homophobia towards homosexual people.

In accordance to queer criticism, *Sing You Home* portrays the life of lesbian and the struggle to live in heterosexist society. It exposes social construction of sexual identity through institutions such as church, marriage, and family. Therefore, it creates law and moral value which degrading and denying rights of homosexual. It also creates homophobia or fear of homosexuality. Of course, homophobia is the result of social construction of sexual identity based on compulsory heterosexual. The main character, Zoe shows that sexual identity is fluid for she once married to Max in a happy heterosexual relationship and later finds a new love with a woman, Vanessa.
C. Method of the Study

The method used in analyzing the work is library research. The primary source used in this study is *Sing You Home* by Jodi Picoult. The secondary sources are taken from books and internet articles related to the study, theory, and approach.

There are five steps taken in the process of analyzing this study. The first step was close reading to get comprehensive understanding about the book. The second step was collecting references and supporting data from books or internet articles. The third step was analyzing the elements of the novel; the characteristics of the character and its social condition. The fourth step was using queer criticism to approach the elements of the novel. The fifth and last step was pinning down the conclusion of the analysis.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

This chapter is divided into three parts to answer the problem formulations discussed in first chapter. The first part is an analysis on characteristics of characters and social setting presented in the novel. It analyzes how social construction dictates sexual identity and heterosexist society. The second part is a discussion about how social construction of sexual identity creates discrimination and spreads homophobia of homosexual. The third part is an analysis on lesbian characters whose characteristics prove that heterosexual is not the only natural sexual identity as the major character, Zoe’s sexual awakening from being heterosexual and becomes a lesbian in the end of the story.

A. The Characters and Social Setting of Sing You Home

1. Zoe Baxter

Zoe is one of the narrators in the story and also major character. According to Abrams and E.M Foster, Zoe is a type of round character who undergoes radical changes. She is presented with complex traits or as a human-like character whose personality can transform from time to time as she undergoes several life events throughout the story. Zoe changes from a heterosexual woman into a lesbian after she divorces from her husband, Max. She is forty years old and works as a music therapist, which means instead of using
physical therapy Zoe plays music to connect with her patients. To be more specific, Zoe characteristics are explicated below using theory from Abrams and Holman and Harmon. Zoe’s traits are analyzed through direct and indirect description from narrator and other characters.

a. Zoe as a Music Therapist

From the beginning of the story, Zoe is described as a smart person (Picoult, 2011: 21) and not only because she has a master degree in musicology (Picoult, 2011: 21) but also because she is good at her job as a music therapist.

When she works at the burning unit of the hospital, her first patient named Serena is a girl with a severe burned skin. No one believes what goods music therapy can bring to Serena. But eventually, Serena engages with Zoe and starts to open up her feeling which helps a lot in a process of trauma recovery (Picoult, 2011: 39-41).

Vanessa also admits Zoe’s capacity as a music therapist. She hired Zoe to do music therapy for an autistic boy who never said a word to a single teacher in Vanessa’s school district for six years. Vanessa says:

I am the first to admit I wasn’t expecting much when I met Zoe. She looked a little misplaced, a seventies child who’d been dropped into the new millennium. But within a month, Zoe had the boy playing improvised symphony with her. The parents thought Zoe was a genius, and my principal thought I was brilliant for finding her (Picoult, 2011: 90).

Zoe also works with group of teens in a diversion program which is meant to integrate adolescence gangs in the inner city. She teaches them to play with the collection of percussion instruments and fruitfully results into “the
inappropriate ways of expressing anger can be channeled into the movement of beating drum instead in a safe, controlled setting” (Picoult, 2011: 139). The music therapist also helps the teenagers to cooperate, at least when they play the music together and enjoy it, even without realization that they do it together. She successfully calms down a little boy named Carl who fights when a nurse when to take an IV out of him. She sings a made up song about his favourite figures, Power Rangers, and within ten minutes the IV is out without the boy realizes his fear of the process.

Zoe knows that her job should focus on the patient and because of that what she cares the most is to make her patients feel better. She does everything necessary for her patient to recover even when no one believes in what she is doing. Zoe is a person who helps other not only because it is demanded in her job but because it is something that she loves to do.

As her patient, a teenager who suffers from depression and has attempted to commit suicide several times, Lucy explains how Zoe cares for her. Lucy protests how the special ed room, where their therapy session takes place, makes everyone thinks she is a freak and also retarded. Hence, Zoe takes her into the school’s cafeteria so she can plays a little crazy concert with Lucy using kitchen utensils.

‘She knew she was going to get in trouble. But she didn’t care. Instead of making me do what I’m supposed to do, or be what everyone wants me to be, she did something totally crazy. It was’ . . . Lucy stumbles, trying to find her words. ‘It was fucking brave, is what it was’ (Picoult, 2011:276).

On her sexual orientation, Zoe does not openly talk about it since she believes it is her personal life and does not related to her job as a music
therapist. When Zoe and Vanessa meet Wanda, the shift nurse who works at Shady Acres Assisted Living where Zoe works as a music therapist, Zoe introduces Vanessa as a friend instead of her partner as what is expected by Vanessa. Zoe explains that “My business associates don’t have to know the details of my personal life-” (Picoult, 2011: 171). Further, when Vanessa gets angry with this fact, Zoe says that labeling their relationship is not something big to care about. Zoe realizes that it does not matter what people called her relationship as long as she and Vanessa are happy together.

Lucy is the only patient who ever asks Zoe about her wedding ring (Picoult, 2011: 320-321). Even if Lucy insisted because she considers Zoe as not merely her music therapist, Zoe says to Lucy that she is not her friend which unfortunately hurts Lucy’s feeling. The reason being why Zoe does not want to discuss her personal life to Lucy is because Lucy’s parents are conservative and members of Eternal Glory Church. Zoe realizes it is hard in the first place to convince Lucy’s mother to let Lucy meets a music therapist instead of relying on God’s help. Zoe wants to remain professional as a music therapist as she fathoms the negative consequence of her personal life towards their therapy session.

At the time Zoe and Vanessa go to the court for the battle of custody of the embryos, her sexual orientation affects her job as a music therapist. Pastor Clive mobilizes a mass to Wilmington High to protest about homosexual’s right to be the educator of students. They claim that homosexual are immoral
people who try to recruit students to follow their deviant lifestyle (Picoult, 2011: 394-396).

The unexpected event happens when Lucy attacks Pastor Clive. It leads to a more private conversation between Zoe and Lucy. When Lucy asks “Can someone stop loving you because you’re not who they want you to be?” (Picoult, 2011: 398), Zoe realizes the reason why Lucy resents people badly probably because she blames herself when people leave her. Shortly, Zoe asks if Lucy gets her heart broken by a boy and Lucy answer it is not a boy, then Zoe thinks it can be a girl. Therefore, Zoe decides that now her situation as a music therapist is changing. She tells Lucy before that their relationship is a professional one but then now Zoe’s life is a public consumption. Zoe quietly asks Lucy “You know I’m gay, right?” (Picoult, 2011: 400) which she continues to explain that “I don’t know what you’re thinking or feeling, but you need to understand it’s completely normal” (Picoult, 2011: 400).

Unfortunately, Zoe’s relationship as a music therapist for Lucy becomes a tool for Pastor Clive and Wade Preston, Max’s lawyer, to charge Zoe as “someone who sexually abused a kid” (Picoult, 2011: 445). It turns out that Pastor Clive is Lucy’s stepfather and he hates Lucy for attacking him at Wilmington High School. Within this allegation, the judge will not give the custody right for Zoe and Vanessa therefore, Max will win the case. This allegation is supported with a photograph showing a moment when Zoe hugs Lucy, which is actually an act out of compassion. It threatens Zoe’s carrier as
a music therapist because it affirms the prejudice to lesbian person as a sexual abuser.

As a music therapist, Zoe knows what to do with her patient. She assess thorough the pain level of the client, the state of anxiety and the facial expressions to make her clinical document and adjust the treatment to the patient (Picoult, 2011: 141-142). Her professionalism at work is undoubted, proves that her degree is not just a title. However, her career trajectory as a music therapist is turned upside down as she becomes a lesbian. She needs to undergo the pains of life because her sexual orientation becomes a public’s scrutiny thus affects the boundary between her personal and professional life.

b. Zoe as a Member of Society

In Sing You Home, majority of society is religious. Therefore, it is important to describe Zoe characteristics as a member of society since it affects the way she sees homosexual and the way she accepts the change of her sexual orientation from heterosexual to homosexual person.

Zoe is not a religious person. It can be seen from Zoe’s relationship with Max’s brother, Reid. At the time Max’s brother, Reid, prays so he and his wife Liddy can have a child, Zoe says to Max that their doctor has a better success rate than God. It is true that both Max and his brother struggle to have baby but the way is different. Zoe is not a religious person so she and Max chooses to take IVF and ICSI program to be able to conceive.

When Reid criticizes Zoe’s choice to sing Green Day song entitled “Anarchist” to one of her burn victims, Zoe says “This may be news to you,
Reid, but God doesn’t vote Republican” (Picoult, 2011: 75). Of course, the reference to the political party is because of its conservative values which mostly rooted from Christian point of view. Max describes Zoe as follows:

She wasn’t—as she put it—a Jesus person. She said religion preached unconditional love by God, but there were always conditions: you had to believe what you were told, in order to get everything you ever wanted. She didn’t like it when religious folks looked down on her for being an atheist; (Picoult, 2011: 76).

Zoe also personally states that she is not a religious person. Not that she hates religious person but she firmly believes on her own and does not like to be preached.

Full disclosure: I’m not a religious person. I don’t begrudge people the right to believe in whatever they believe, but I don’t like having those same beliefs forced on me (Picoult, 2011: 129).

The statement is Zoe’s thought when she meets Max at the movie theater with his Eternal Glory Church members who spread pamphlets written with gay bashing words because the theater displays a homosexual movie. Zoe hates the fact that religion intrudes people to accept their values and discriminate others, i.e. homosexual, simply because they think their value is the right one. She is shocked when Max says that he is now a religious person.

“I heard you were part of Eternal Glory, now.” I say.

“Actually, it’s part of me,” Max replies. “I let Jesus into my heart.” He says this with a brilliant white smile, the same way he’d say, I got my car waxed this afternoon or I think I’ll have Chinese food for dinner-as if this part of normal everyday conversation instead of a statement that might give you a pause. I wait for Max to snicker—we used to make fun of Reid and Lily sometimes for the glory-be snippets that fell out of their mouths—but he doesn’t (Picoult, 2011: 128).

It is hard for Zoe to believe the fact that Max has changed into a religious person and helps such movement in spreading hate toward homosexual. Zoe
does not uphold the value of religion, she does not see homosexual as a sin or a perversion.

At the time Zoe embraces her love for Vanessa, she does not see herself as a sinner. In fact, she is outrageous when Max and Pauline, a woman from Eternal Glory Church who thinks herself is cured from the deviant lifestyle of being lesbian, come to her house in an attempt to convince Zoe to be saved by Jesus from her newly degenerate lifestyle.

I wonder if Pastor Clive, who runs the largest gay-bashing fraternity in these parts, has ever considered what Jesus would think of his tactics. Something tells me that a progressive rabbi who ministered to lepers and prostitutes and everyone else society had marginalized -someone who recommended treating people the way you wanted to be treated- wouldn't exactly admire the Eternal Glory Church’s position. But I have to give them this: they are smooth. They have circular rhetoric for everything. I find myself fascinated by Pauline, who won’t even call herself a former lesbian, because she sees herself as so blatantly heterosexual now. Is it really that easy to believe what you tell yourself? If I had said, in the middle of failed pregnancies and miscarriages, that I was happy, would I have been?

(Picoult, 2011: 211-212).

Zoe sees Eternal Glory Church embraces religious value and marginalizes homosexual in the process. She refuses to accept the notion that being homosexual is a wrong identity. Therefore, at the moment Vanessa comes home and meets Max and Pauline, Zoe intentionally gives Vanessa a kiss. She means it to show to Pauline and Max that she has done nothing wrong in her life and she is fully accepted herself as a lesbian.
c. Zoe as a Partner in Relationship

Zoe is a daughter of a straight couple. Her father died when she was seven years old. Her mom reinvented herself as a life coach with her own company she called “Mama Knows the Best Life Coach” (Picoult, 2011:14).

In the story, Zoe is not always described as a lesbian woman. She is married to Max Baxter whom she met at Reid’s wedding. For ten years of their marriage, Zoe and Max have been trying to get a baby. She suffers from several miscarriages and the last time she is pregnant, she has a stillborn baby boy. As a straight couple, Zoe and Max do not have a lot of friends. Zoe explains that her friendship is dwindled as she and Max dedicate themselves to get a baby.

Some relationship I’d ended, because I didn’t want to hear a friend talk about her baby’s first words, or to go to a couple’s home for dinner and be confronted with sippy cups and Matchbox cars and stuffed bears- details of life that eluded me (Picoult, 2011:14).

Therefore, Zoe isolates herself from friendship because she cannot take her friends talking about a life that she deeply wants. On the other hand, Zoe says that she wants a girlfriend to confide in, to quote her words: “Someone who would nod and say all the right things when I complained about my husband” (Picoult, 2011:13). At her baby shower, instead of close friends she only have acquaintances. They are Isabela the bookkeeper, her mother, her cousin Isobel, Wanda and another nurse from Shady Acres where Zoe works, and Vanessa who is a school counselor that gives Zoe a job to work with an autistic ninth grader (Picoult, 2011: 19).
The trajectory of her marriage is full of hurdles and it vanished when Max wants to get divorce. It is a horrendous time for Zoe to lose both her baby and her husband. Her mother describes Zoe’s life at the moment as follows

“I’d go over her place, and she’d still be wearing the same clothes I left her the day before. She didn’t eat. She didn’t clean. She didn’t work. She didn’t play guitar. She just slept even when she was awake, she seemed to be sleeping” (Picoult, 2011: 435).

Things start to change when Zoe meets Vanessa by the pool. Vanessa offers Zoe another job as a music therapist which is to work with Lucy, a depressed teenager who tries to commit suicide for couple of times. They become friends and spend a lot of time together. They start to realize that they have a lot in common.

We’d grown up in households with single parents (her father deceased, mine running off with his secretary); we had always wanted to travel and never had enough money to do it; we both were freaked out by clowns. We had a secret fascination with reality TV. We loved the smell of gasoline, hated the smell of bleach, and wished we knew how to use fondant, like pastry chefs. We preferred white wine to red, extreme cold to extreme heat, and Goobers to Raisinets. We both had no problem using a men’s room at a public venue if the line for the ladies’ room was too long (Picoult, 2011: 98).

They find another similarity in Shakespeare play, Romeo and Juliet which is a play that Max dislikes. When they go to the theater to watch, they are trapped because of the storm and they cannot go back to home. They stay at a hotel and that is the first time Vanessa asks if Zoe knows she is a gay. Zoe makes a joke and responds by saying she is a Pisces. She does not think it make any difference for their friendship if Vanessa is a gay. Later, their relationship grows stronger and Zoe falls in love with Vanessa.
Zoe kisses Vanessa, she says that up to that point she does not realize how bad she wants someone like Vanessa (Picoult, 2011:153).

The early time when they are finally in relationship, Vanessa describes Zoe as a real gay.

Zoe is so, so gay. She reads all my back issues of Curve. She calls her cable company and gets Logo. She starts talking about Provincetown: if I’ve ever been, if I’d ever go again (Picoult, 2011: 158).

The challenge for Zoe is when she comes to her mother and explains that she is now with Vanessa (Picoult, 2011: 167-169). At first, Dara cries and says to Zoe that this is not herself. Zoe says if her mother is false if she thinks that Zoe is going to drive Harley and wear leather just because she is a lesbian now. She admits that “This isn’t what I thought was going to happen to me” (Picoult, 2011: 168). It means, Zoe does not plan at all to become a lesbian. After the little shock, Zoe’s mother finally calms down and she is okay with Zoe is together with Vanessa now.

“I couldn’t love you any more if you told me right now you were straight,” she says. “And I don’t love you any less because you told me you aren’t” (Picoult, 2011: 16).

As time goes by, Zoe’s mother realizes that her daughter is much happier now compare when the time Zoe was married to Max. As for herself, the realization of being lesbian makes Zoe knows what the difference is between her marriage with Max and Vanessa. With Max, Zoe feels the force to be a person who always entails to the need of her husband (Picoult, 2011: 204). With Vanessa, Zoe can truly live her life as she is.

It’s different from being with a man, for all the obvious reasons, and many more that you’d never imagine. For one thing, it’s more emotional, and
there’s less to prove. There are moments that are soft and tender, and others that are raw and intense—but it’s not as if there’s a guy to play the dominant role and a girl to play the passive one. We take turns being protected, and being the protector. (Picoult, 2011: 203).

Vanessa and I have to invent the dynamic between us, because it’s not the traditional husband-wife deal. The result is that we’re constantly making decisions together. We’re always asking each other for opinions. We assume nothing. And that way, we’re a lot less likely to get our feelings bruised (Picoult, 2011: 204-205).

The bottom line is Zoe does change when she was with Max and then with Vanessa. She used to love Max and does not plan at all to fall in love with Vanessa. Most important, it changes the way Zoe feels in a relationship. She is happier with Vanessa and feels more balance in relationship.

2. Max Baxter

The story of *Sing You Home* begins with Max as the husband of Zoe. He owns a small landscaping business; he prunes plants in the summer, rakes in the fall and snowplows during winter. Max is categorized as a round character because his personality changes as the story goes on. His characteristics are observed from his narration and others comments.

a. Max as a Brother and Husband in family

In the story, Max is portrayed as the complete opposite of his brother. Reid is the ideal son graduated with honors and work as a portfolio manager with Monroe, Flatt & Cohen with wealth net worth around four million dollars. Since Max was young he wanted to have everything Red had. However, he ends up as a college dropout and has problem with alcohol. Hence, Max reaches for support on Reid -financially and psychologically-, Zoe and religion. He is a broken man and dependent on others to save him. Max longs
for other to be recognized as a man and a husband. It is hard to forgive himself for everything that happens in his life.

In Max’s conversation with Pastor Clive, he narrates the story as follows:

I told him that it felt like a hole inside me, and I was trying to fill it up. He said the hole was quicksand, and I was sinking fast. He asked me to list all the things that made that hole bigger.

- Being broke, I said.
- Being drunk.
- Losing clients.
- Losing Zoe.

Vanessa also states to Zoe that Max was already a broken man when they two met. Therefore, no matter how hard Zoe tried to patch him up, the situation would not change, means they will still stay divorce.

When Max failed in college he lived in Reid’s apartment. After he divorced, Max also moved to Reid’s house. At the time he was married to Zoe, Max borrowed money from Reid to pay for the fifth cycle of IVF. Max also wants to be recognized by her brother and “be part of whatever club” his brother belongs to (Picoult, 2011: 362).

The car accident makes Max realize how much he depends on God to save him. He calls God out when he fears the thought of dying alone on the road. After that, Max joins the Eternal Glory Church and finds how the church accepts him the way he is. Since then, Max depends on God’s plan and follow whatever Pastor Clive suggest him to do, including when he suggests Max to forbid Zoe and Vanessa to conceive the frozen embryo. Max sees Pastor Clive as a role model even he wishes that Clive were his father (Picoult, 2011: 180).
Only then at the end of the story, Max is able to make his own decision by giving Zoe and Vanessa the right to get the frozen embryos.

It is the fact that Max is dependent on others; on another hand he is also supportive towards other. He offers encouragement and emotional support. When he marries to Zoe, Max always supports her during all the process of IVF so they can have babies. He even borrows money from his brother without telling Zoe because he does not want to give her more trouble to bear. When Zoe tells him that she is a lesbian now, Max, on his religious point of view still cares for Zoe. His attempt to convert Zoe to a heterosexual orientation is based on his concern for the sin of being homosexual that Zoe may be punished for. Deep down his heart, Max even does not sure about him thinking Zoe is committed a sinful act.

*(Even if it hurts me)*
*(Even if it makes me feel like a less of a man)*
*(Who am I to say that she’s wrong?)* (Picoult, 2011: 188).

It all becomes clear after the battle in court to get the right for the embryos. Max apologizes to Zoe for having through all the misery during the court process and even though Max wins the right to have the embryos, he does not give them to Reid and Liddy, instead he gives them to Zoe and Vanessa (Picoult, 2011: 461).

When Liddy miscarriages, Max drives a ten hours round-trip from Rhode Island to Jersey and back just to buy a 1958 B-movie because Liddy likes it and it sure does cheer her up. In the moment when Reid downs and afraid of not being a good father for the pre-born children, Max articulates how great
Reid is and believes that Reid is absolutely a good role model for the future children.

b. Max as a member of Eternal Glory Church

Max is not a religious person, at least at the beginning of the story. Although his mom used to take him to church, Max does not accept Jesus into his heart until he gets a car accident. Before that, Max describes himself as a not religious person but more believing in to each his own. Even when he moves to Reid’s house after the divorce, he refuses every time Reid asks him to join men’s Bible group study. At the time Reid invites Pastor Clive to his house to talk to Max about accepting Jesus, Max still declines it. Yet he gets angry because he thinks Pastor Clive tries to convert him. He says “I don’t bake pies or cookies,” I say. “And with all due respect, I don’t need to get religion” (Picoult, 2011: 78).

The moment Max gets accident, he yells out for God’s help and eventually he ends up safe and sound and it changes his mind to accept Jesus. He joins Eternal Glory Church and is baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Soon after that, Max believes that his live is worth living for.

It’s a feeling I’ve never had before — strangers who didn’t judge me for the mistakes I’d made but just seemed happy I’d showed up. I didn’t have to be embarrassed about dropping out of college or getting divorced or drinking myself into a ditch. I didn’t have to measure up at all, actually (Piccoult, 2011: 83).

Practically, Max becomes the family member of Eternal Glory Church. He joins every activities, from praying up to annual church chicken pie
summer. He searches guidance of God through Pastor Clive. He joins a protest against the movie entitled July which tells about lesbian love story. Therefore, it is understandable when Max feels the horror when Zoe tells him that she is together now with a woman, Vanessa.

Under the suggestion of Pastor Clive, Max brings Pauline, who once living a gay lifestyle but now holds Christian belief, to convince Zoe to make the right choice or in another word to become a heterosexual. It is also under the suggestion of Pastor Clive to give the embryos to Reid and Liddy instead to Zoe and Vanessa, although Zoe asks for the embryos first and she is the biological mother of them. It is all because being religious means Max has to stand on the ground point that lesbian is a sin and as a Pastor Clive emphasizes, children should not be influenced in a derogatory lifestyle.

3. Vanessa Shaw

Vanessa is the third narrator in the story. She is depicted as a thirty four year old woman, “tall, with short platinum blond hair and piercingly blue eyes” (Picoult, 2011: 19).

a. Vanessa as a school counselor

She works as a high school counselor at Wilmington High. It is her duty to deal with troubled kids, to deal with their problems and help them get through it. She needs to deal from the personal problems at home, the pressure on being teenagers and the academic expectations. That is the reason why she is the one who connects Zoe to work with the autistic kid and Lucy at her school. In addition, she works as an adviser for the students’ Rainbow Alliance, which
advocates homosexual rights and helps students who feel insecure with their sexual identity as homosexual.

At her work, there is not a complete tolerance for homosexual.

We’ve come a long way from the days when being gay and being an educator were incompatible, but there’s still a don’t-ask-don’t-tell policy in place at my high school. I don’t actively hide my sexual orientation from my colleagues, but I don’t go out of my way to broadcast it, either (Picoult, 2011: 106).

To be homosexual is still a sensitive issue. Vanessa has experienced several rejections on her work. Her car is painted DYKE and some parents withdraw their children to be counseled under Vanessa’s supervision because of her sexual orientation. Even after the law allows the right of job to Vanessa, some parts of society is not yet upholding acceptance and equal perspective for homosexual.

b. Vanessa as a Partner in Relationship

Unlike Zoe, Vanessa recognizes herself as a lesbian since she was a kid.

At the age six, I fully believed that Katie Whittaker, with her sunshine hair and constellation of freckles, would one day marry me and we’d live happily ever after (Picoult, 2011:92).

However, when Vanessa realized that this was not what other girls felt then she pretended to her friends that she had crush on Jared Tischbaum. Her love story does not always picture a lesbian relationship. She lost her virginity to her first boyfriend Ike whom she loved (Picoult, 2011: 93). She described the sex was sweaty and mechanical that she felt something was missing. Vanessa had another boyfriend when she was in college and at the time she learned that Matthew Shepard, a gay student from University of Wyoming, was beaten to
death. She learned that it could be herself and for the first time she admitted to herself that she was and always had been gay (Picoult, 2011: 93). When Vanessa came out to her boyfriend, she was surprised to know that he too was a gay and they were relief for knowing they were no longer needed to fake attraction to each other.

On her sexual identity, Vanessa narrates

Part of me worried that I didn’t fit into either camp. I’d never been with a woman, and was afraid that it would be as uneventful for me as fooling around with a guy. What if I wasn’t really gay—just totally, functionally asexual? (Picoult, 2011: 94).

She also states that her being gay does not necessary mean he cannot have sex with man, as she had few boyfriend and had sex with them back then, it is just not her priority (Picoult, 2011: 109). Vanessa also, during her childhood, had crush on straight girlfriends. She had a short romance relationship with them before they go back to their boyfriend. It is also the reason why Vanessa afraid of losing Zoe because she thinks Zoe’s feeling on her only temporary.

4. Pastor Clive as a homophobe priest in Eternal Glory Church

Pastor Clive is the antagonist in the story. He works at Eternal Church Glory and strongly believes in traditional Christian worldview. He first approaches Max to convert him to become a Christian, although it does not work, he was the first person Max calls when he gets a car accident.

Clive strives to preserve Christian’s stand point on sexual orientation. He believes that relationship should only be between man and woman and family should consists of mother and father. It prompts him to go against homosexual from the protest of a lesbian love story movie (Picoult, 2011: 129), the
determination to convert Zoe back to heterosexual through Max and Pauline (2011: 189), the suggestion for Max to give his embryos to Reid and Liddy instead of Zoe and Vanessa (2011: 247), the initiative to find Max a lawyer, Wade Preston, who fight against the right of homosexual to get children (2011: 251), the preaching on homosexuality (2011: 341-342), the mobilization of mob to Vanessa’s work place to preach on homosexuals deviant lifestyle (2011: 393-394), and the testimony, how God hates homosexual and how homosexual corrupts children, during the custody over the three embryos between Max and Zoe (2011: 380-388).

B. Setting

The setting in Sing You Home is scrutinized based on the place where and when the story takes place, and the “customs, beliefs, and rules of the behaviors” as suggested by Abrams and Gill.

Even if there is no exact date of time when the story occurs, there are several things which can help to narrow down the time frame. First, there is a mention of Zoe watching a show of Ellen DeGeneres (Picoult, 2011: 213). Although there is no mentioned of which episode she watches, but it indicates that the setting of time is in 2000 since the first time Ellen DeGeneres show airing was in 2005. Second, there is a reference to ASPCA commercials (Picoult, 2011: 310) which in fact was first broadcasted at 2010. Third, Zoe and Vanessa read Curve (Picoult, 2011: 160), which is a lesbian magazine firstly published approximately early 1990s. All of these suggest that the
setting of time is in 21th century and probably around 2000s where homosexual is not yet legal throughout all states in United States of America.

The story takes place in Rhode Island, New England, United States of America, which is “a predominantly Catholic state” (Picoult, 2011: 74). Therefore, the rules applied in this story are strongly attached to religious belief. Society exercises religious belief through the way they create the foreground of law establishment. It stands for the reason that same-sex marriage is illicit, consequently homosexual couples need to cross the border into Fall River, Massachusetts to get their civil right in legalization of family union (Picoult, 2011: 96). Marriage is highly considered as a sacred union in Christian and Catholic society. It is believed that God intends the opposite sex to be blessed in a marriage union in accordance to the story of human being which begins with Adam and Eve.

The fact Pastor Clive gets many supporters who against homosexual prove that society still holds religious dogma. He preaches to the congregation in Glory Eternal Church about God’s will on marriage. It amplifies the thing that society believes in since Pastor Clive is trusted to delivers God’s words and guidance to live life. In the job field, although Vanessa is now compatible to be an educator, there is still policy don’t-ask-don’t-tell. Sexual orientation is seen as taboo and even problematic for a person to willingly admit as homosexual. Her car once painted “DYKE” (Picoult, 2011: 95) and even some parents do not want their children be educated under Vanessa’s counseling jurisdiction because it against their “educational philosophy”. The word
“DYKE” is a common derogatory slang given to a lesbian. It is intended to insult a lesbian as a butch, masculine or tomboy person. The parents who do not wish their children to be educated by a lesbian show a type of society which against homosexual. They relate one’s sexual orientation to the capacity of teaching or what they called as “educational philosophy.” For this type of parents, homosexual are not acceptable in the job field especially to become a role model for their children. Sexual orientation becomes a sole determiner to see one’s quality as an educator instead of the experience, educational background of personal traits. When Max and Zoe go to the court for the battle over the custody of three embryos, there is a number of Westboro Baptist Church folks wearing yellow T-shirts written “GOD HATES FAGS, GOD HATES AMERICA, FAG = SIN, YOU’RE GOING TO HELL”, another man is wearing a t-shirt that says “CLOSETS ARE FOR CLOSETS” (Picoult, 201: 346, 382). The same type of people also gathering and protest at Vanessa school for not allowing gay teacher recruit students into their deviant lifestyle. Obviously, the reason of religious followers to reject homosexual is constructed from what they believe about God’s will. The rules of behaviors are derived from God as the omnipotent creator of human being. It is a communal purpose to uphold religious doctrine. Therefor it is easier to mobilize a mass to object the right of custody for homosexual. The reason being is for the protection of the innocent pre-born children to not be corrupted by the sin of homosexual. It portrays how society imposes the set of parameter of accepted custom based on religious dogma and generalizes it to
be implemented for everyone. The word “hell” is intended for homosexual as a punishment for against the religious rules. “Hell” is a place for eternal reprimand for those who do not obey God, including homosexual. Religious society believes in this concept of hell and heaven. If you obey God then when you die you will be placed in heaven with God but if you reject God’s will then the penalty is to suffer in hell.

All of these facts prove how majority of society still hold Christian belief deeply. Although homosexual people are not harmed physically, society still has not shown enough tolerance. It is embodied in a way they treat homosexual and how the law is created.

C. Discrimination and Prejudices on homosexual in SingYou Home

It is now clear that Sing You Home takes place in a society which embraces religious value. As explained by Foucault (1990: 38-39), religious institution views sexual identity through the lens of heterosexual monogamy, hence homosexual is a sin and a physical imbalance or da ecease. It results into discriminations against homosexual projected in hate speech, prohibition of rights and stereotype images (Tyson, 2011: 174-175). In Sing You Home, religious institution define homosexual as described below.

1. A sinful act

Pastor Clive makes it crystal clear that “there are no biological homosexual-we’re all heterosexual” (Picoult, 2011: 186) hence homosexual is a problem that a person struggles with. In his testimony during the trial, he
reads two verses from Levictus to which he interprets “homosexuality is an abomination. A sin.” (Picoult, 2011: 382). He believes that homosexual is similar with another immoral and sinful act such as abortion, pornography and sex scandal. He believes queer is made and not born which makes a homosexual is a flat sinful act. That is to say, instead seeing homosexual as a person, Clive believes homosexual is “a lifestyle” that should be changed (Picoult, 2011:189).

When protesting against lesbian movie, Clive, Max and Eternal Glory Church members bring signs printed:

GOD HATES FAGS
GAY: GOD ABHORS YOU

Max also believes in “God’s opinion of a gay lifestyle” that they do not belong to “the kingdom of God” as stated in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (Picoult, 2011: 183). In another chapter, Clive also says that “Homosexuality- it’s a perversion. Something to be punished for”, this too is based on the holy bible scripture in Romans 1:26-27 (Picoult, 2011: 256). Clive and demonstrator also conduct a protest on Vanessa school against gay rights on the name of protecting the children. They chant their signs that say gay rights are only STD, AIDS and Hell (Picoult, 2011: 393).

As Barry explains, these acts derived from the normative ‘self’ of heterosexuality which views homosexuality as ‘Other’ and rejects it. Clive and religious protestor in the story represents a society which dictates heterosexual as the naturally-given sexual identity thus homosexuality is a violation of this
norm. The definition and understanding about homosexual is derived from the scripture of holy bible as they translate in literal meaning. What is written in bible becomes the foundation for these people to conduct hate speech on homosexual.

2. A Violation of Traditional Family Value

In *Sing You Home*, religious society establishes the notion that the ideal family should consists of man and woman, “a heterosexual, God-condoned constitutional marriage” (Picoult, 2011: 262). Pastor Clives says this when Zoe asks Max why he bothers to protest on lesbian love story Movie:

“We wouldn’t be here if the homosexuals weren’t promoting their own agenda, their own activism. If we sit back, who’s going to speak for the rights of the traditional family? If we sit back, who’s going to make sure our great country doesn’t become a place where Johnny has two mommies and where marriage is as God intended it to be—between a man and woman?” His voice has escalated. (Picoult, 2011: 128).

Believing in this norm, Pastor Clive calls a lawyer, Wade Preston to file a case into the court to prevent Zoe and Vanessa from getting the frozen embryo. Preston believes innocent children should be protected from being victimized by homosexual; that children should only be in a family of a mother and a father “in a loving Christian households” (Picoult, 2011: 252, 260).

Preston appoints a guardian ad litem, a person whose job is to decide the best interest of the children and presents it to the court, to explain how homosexual family is not suitable for children to grow up. The guardian ad litem is Dr. Genevieve Newkirk. She suggests four reasons why it is within children’s best interest to be raised by two heterosexual parents. First, she
points out that different sexes have different loves, mother with her unconditional and father with his conditional love, which make it easier for children to interact with the world. Second, heterosexual parents provide better psychological growth of the children. For example how both sexes respond better to the care of mother but eventually a boy should learn to control his emotion and to shape his masculine identity therefore, the figure of a father is important. She states also the identity of femininity is secured with the presence of father figure only. As an additional note, Clive also emphasizes this to Max when he says that Zoe can actually be a good mom but Clive says that children should still be in heterosexual family because then Max’s son cannot learn to be a man under a same-sex marriage (Picoult, 2011: 256) Third, same-sex parents will cause social confusion and promiscuity or the indiscrimination in choice of sexual orientation for children. Fourth, same-sex parents unlocks to more socially unacceptable relationship such us polyamorous couplings (Picoult, 2011: 375-376).

This assumption on heterosexual family as the ideal environment where children should grow up is of course based on the point of view on the construction of heterosexual identity. As Tyson states, it affects the way society perceives a family, which in heterosexist society it should be man and woman, and it affects the way society view homosexual. As homosexual breaks the nature of sexual identity and rules of marriage therefore, society especially in *Sing You Home* discriminates their right to have children’s custody.
3. Stereotype Images

It is repeatedly mentioned in the story that homosexual is deviant. In the legal paper serves to Zoe, written

3. *Since the final judgment the defendant has engaged in a meretricious, deviant, homosexual lifestyle.* (Picoult, 2011:263)

Another similar point is when Pastor Clive gives testimony during the trial says, or every time Wade Preston compares Reid and Liddy to Zoe and Vanessa, they always refer homosexual as a deviant lifestyle.

But it is not just one thing, homophobes also thinks homosexual “will ravish any female in close proximity” (Picoult, 2011: 100). Eternal Glory Church even believes that homosexual corrupts and recruits children to be homosexual therefore, they are eagerly against allowing homosexual teacher in schools (Picoult, 2011: 246). Pastor Clive claims that students are “the prey of homosexual”, that homosexual teachers brainwash students to normalize “having two mommies” (Picoult, 2011: 395-397). Another typical stereotype is narrated by Max as follow

When I think of lesbians, I picture women who look tough and scrappy, with spiked hair and baggy jeans and flannel shirts. Sure, this is a stereotype . . . but still, there’s nothing about Pauline Bridgman that suggests she used to be gay. Then again, nothing about Zoe tipped me off, either (Picoult, 2011: 189)

Because of the construction of sexual identity to which puts heterosexual in the highest rank of hierarchy, Tyson argues that it also constructs the image of homosexual. Heterosexist society sees homosexual as the ‘Other’ therefore, the projection is always negative and discriminative.
D. Queer Criticism on Sexual Construction of Sexual Identity

In this section, the discussion covers the criticism on social construction of sexual identity. It shows how the novel through the characters portrays the complete opposite of what heterosexist society thinks of them. Lesbian characters are presented with positive characteristics and fluidity of sexual identity.

1. Positive Portrayal of Lesbian Character

The major lesbian characters in *Sing You Home* are Zoe and Vanessa. The heterosexist society represents by Pastor Clive, Max and Wade Preston define lesbian with deviant lifestyle, sinful act and derogatory intention to brainwash children to become homosexual. However, the real portrayal of lesbians’ characteristics is the complete opposite of these claims.

First, both Zoe and Vanessa have jobs and they are good at it. Zoe works as a music therapist and Vanessa works as the school counselor. Throughout the story, Zoe shows her professional skills as a therapist. She works with autistic children, burning victims, adolescence gangs, and depressed teens. All of them shows good response to the therapy, the patients who never talk finally able to interact through music and depressed teens can channel their emotion into positive ways. Vanessa’s job entails counseling student with problems and help them to solve it so they can keep their academic performance up. To clear the prejudice of homosexuals recruit students to be homosexual as well, Vanessa, not like another counselor, always opens her office door to prove she is professional and does all counseling session legally.
(Picoult, 2011:106). All of these point out to nothing but positive qualities. Vanessa and Zoe both have jobs which aiming at helping people, they both know it does not earn them a lot of money but they love it and money is not their priority.

Second, Zoe and Vanessa are caring person. Zoe cares about what others feeling and tries to hurt no one. She rather loses what she wants rather than hurting a person in the process to achieve it. Just like how she doesn’t want Vanessa to term the embryos because she does not want Vanessa feels a lot of pain during the custody battle, no matter how obvious it is that she wants to have babies. Vanessa’s instinct is to help people or as she calls herself as “a pathological fixer” (Picoult, 2011: 91). Therefore, even if she does not know much about Zoe, except she has hired Zoe once for therapy sessions with a boy in her school, she offers Zoe a job to do a music therapy for Lucy even if she does not plan it beforehand. Vanessa offers Zoe this job because she knows Zoe lost her stillborn baby and at the day she meets Zoe at the pool, she sees Zoe tries to drown herself. She knows Zoe is broken and needed help. Zoe also describes Vanessa as an “observant and attentive” person, which make her thinks if Max had been half like Vanessa maybe they would still be married (Picoult, 2011: 127).

Third, at the end of the story there is a short narration from Samantha, the baby which born from the frozen embryos, which depicts Zoe and Vanessa as great parents. The narration tells at the age six Samantha knows

That inside Mommy Zoe’s arms is the place in the world where she feels the most safe.
That when she was riding on Mama Ness’s shoulders once she actually touched the sun, and she knows for sure because she got a blister on her thumb. (Picoult, 2011: 465)

Samantha states that she is the luckiest girl in the world for she is not mot people who have a mother and a father only, but she has two moms and a daddy. She is so happy how her mother, Zoe and Vanessa, take a really good care of her and always attentive for her well-being. These are enough to prove that Zoe and Vanessa are capable to be build a family with a good environment for a child to grow up.

Based on these three reasons, the stereotypes claims on homosexual are debunked successfully. As Tyson and Barry explain, these stereotypes are not inherent characteristics of homosexual people, because they are merely the result of the construction of sexual identity in heterosexist society.

2. Fluidity of sexual identity

It is severely claimed by Pastor Clive that heterosexual is the natural sexual identity and homosexual is a perversion. People are born heterosexual hence, to be homosexual is to commit sin and to live in a deviant lifestyle. This believes in the idea of essentialism becomes the foundation of heterosexist society to create the hierarchy between homosexual and heterosexual.

In Sing You Home, lesbian characters, Zoe and Vanessa narrate the story of their sexual identity. Zoe is a forty year old heterosexual woman when she meets Vanessa. While Vanessa at the age of six already shows the interest in girls and at college openly admits herself as gay. However, her relationship
during her lifetime is not strictly with lesbian women only, Vanessa loves her first boyfriend and has relationship with straight women as well. In short, both Zoe and Vanessa shows how the binary opposition of definition between heterosexual and homosexual is blur and not stagnant. As Sedgwick and Butler argue, that sexual desire and sexual orientation is fluid and not strictly innate.

In *Sing You Home* there is no depiction that Zoe is not attracted to Max both emotionally and physically. Zoe says to Vanessa when she asks why Zoe had married to Max “Because,” I say finally, “when you love someone, you don’t see the parts of him you don’t like” (Picoult, 2011: 133). In hypothetical question with Lucy on how they picture the perfect way to die, Zoe thinks if it would be a plane crash, she wonders if she could have enough time to text Max telling she love him (Picoult, 2011:311). It is Max’s half smile that makes Zoe also falls in love with him (Picoult, 2011: 130). They have intense love making and Zoe stays marriage to Max until he decides that he is no longer capable to bear the pain of losing babies. They do not divorce because suddenly Zoe realizes that she is lesbian and wants a divorce from Max. Max once narrates their love making as stated below.

Still kissing her, I slipped my hands under the edge of her pajama top. Her skin was so hot it burned my palms. She dug her fingers into my hair and wrapped her legs around me. I sank to the floor and tugged her down with me. I knew every scar on her body, every freckle, every curve. They were markers on a road I’d been traveling forever (Picoult, 2011: 297).

In a time when Zoe was a kid, her best friend, Ellie, unexpectedly kissed her and she kissed her back. However, since that moment up to the time Zoe
meets Max, she does not have any romantic relationship with woman. When Zoe meets Vanessa, she describes her future spouse as a person who can understands her better than herself and understand music (Picoult, 2011: 134). And although she uses pronoun him to describe the person, at the time Zoe realizes that Vanessa is a perfect match towards that quality she just described.

Vanessa’s sexual identity is also not strictly as a lesbian. She has loved her first boyfriend Ike and lost her virginity to him. She falls in love with straight women, a gay college boyfriend Teddy, and lesbian women. She even admits that being a lesbian does not imply that she cannot have sex with men, but it is just not her priority. She says (Picoult, 2011: 11) you fall in love with a person, which sometimes the person can be a man and another time the person can be a woman. At the time Vanessa openly accepts herself as a gay she worries that she cannot fit into either camp, she was never been with a woman before and she doubts herself if she is “really gay” (Picoult, 2011: 94).

These very facts that Zoe and Vanessa can love and have sex with straight man, straight woman and lesbian show how the distinction between heterosexual and homosexual is not a crystal clear line. As queer theorists believe that sexual identity cannot be simplified by “biological fact” of one’s desire in particular sex (Tyson, 2011:173). As Zoe portrays how the biological fact or the label of sex is not enough to narrow down the distinction between hetero/homo hierarchies.

“Zoe, had you ever had a same-sex relationship before?”
“No,” I say, carefully picking my words. “I know it seems strange, but when you are attracted to people, it’s because of the details. Their kindness. Their eyes. Their smile. The fact that they can get you to laugh
when you need it the most. I felt all those things for Vanessa. The fact that she was a woman—well, it was unexpected, but it was really the least important part of the equation.” (Picoult, 2011: 407)

This supports what Butler (2002: 29) claims that sexual identity is fluid and the notion that heterosexual is the authentic sexual identity, as what Pastor Clive believes in, is merely the product of heterosexist society. In Sing You Home, Eternal Glory Church represents heterosexist society who believes relationship as God intended should only happen between man and woman, hence homosexual should be condemn.

In the highlight of fluidity of sexual identity, Barry says “liminal moments mirror” or the momentum of sexual awakening as lesbian or gay is important to negate the construction of sexual identity under compulsory heterosexist society (2002: 148). Zoe’s sexual awakening as a lesbian is categorized as “liminal moments mirror”. She does not plan to become a homosexual but her sexual identity is process of discovery. She loves a man before and she love Vanessa who happens to be a woman. Her sexual awakening is narrated below

It is not like kissing a man. It’s softer. More intuitive. More equal. She puts her hands on either side of my face, and the room falls away. I have never gotten so lost in a kiss before.
And then, the space between us explodes. My heart keeps missing beats and my hands cannot bring her close enough to me. I taste her and realize I have been starving.
I have loved before, but it didn’t feel like this.
I have kissed before, but it didn’t burn me alive. (Picoult, 2011: 152)

Her sexual relationship is a new experience for Zoe. It is her first time to discover how to love a woman. Zoe was a heterosexual woman and when she discovers herself as a lesbian, she debunks the notion that natural sexual identity is based on heterosexual, that a person born as a heterosexual
therefore, you cannot be a homosexual and choosing to become one is a sin (Foucault, 1990: 38-39). She breaks the construction of sexual identity, and the claim of Pastor Clive saying that homosexual is only a deviant lifestyle, a sinner of the traditional family sacredness. Zoe and Vanessa are both good persons, they do not become evils or sexual predator at the time they discover themselves as homosexual. It also implies that stereotype given to homosexual should not be taken for granted and discrimination on homosexual should no longer be sustained.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The result of this study exemplifies three major. First, it describes the characteristics of Zoe, Max, Vanessa, Pastor Clive and social setting in *Sing You Home*. Second, it illustrates the discrimination and prejudices of heterosexist society towards homosexual people. Third, it narrates the queer criticism on sexual construction of sexual identity by analyzing the positive portrayal of Zoe and Vanessa and the fluidity of sexual identity.

There are several conclusions to be captured within these findings. First, the characteristics of characters and social setting show the standing point of sexual orientation and type of society in *Sing You Home*. Zoe and Vanessa are lesbian and Max and Pastor Clive are heterosexual people. The society which they are living are religious given the context of Rhode Island is a predominantly Catholic state. Therefore, Pastor Clive and Max are categorized as majority of the society since they are members of Eternal Glory Church and are practitioners of traditional Christian belief. Noticeably, Zoe and Vanessa as lesbian persons are not belonged to the group of religious people. Given the fact their sexual orientations are not blessed by religious belief, Zoe and Vanessa are characterized as the sinners.

Second, the decorum of sexual orientation is capsulated within religious dogma therefore, perpetuates discrimination and prejudice toward homosexual people. It creates the hierarchy or the fixed boundaries between heterosexual and
homosexual. The “Self” heterosexual and the “Other” homosexual are notions created by heterosexist society. It views heterosexual as the “normal” sexual orientation or as the one bestowed by God. Homosexual is seen as a sinful act, a violation of traditional family value. Furthermore, the prejudice is translated into stereotypes images. Zoe and Vanessa, as the representation of homosexual people, are labeled with derogatory terms. They are labelled as deviant and corruptors of children’s life. Being lesbian, Zoe and Vanessa suffer as “Other” because they are living the lowest hierarchy of heterosexist society. The identity of homosexual is robbed by heterosexist society. The qualities of Vanessa and Zoe as equal human beings are dismissed simply because heterosexist society limits the scope of authentic of sexual orientation as being heterosexual.

Third, related to the characteristics of Zoe and Vanessa, queer criticism overturns the assumption of sexual orientation’s rigid boundaries created by heteronormative discourse. It challenges the accusation of homosexual’s images by inverting the hierarchy of “Self” and Other”, thus liberating sexual identity from the construction of society. Pastor Clive, Max and other religious society punish and disgrace Zoe and Vanessa who do not adhere with the expectation of normative sex. However, contrary to the prejudice and stereotype, Zoe and Vanessa are attributed with positive characteristics which prove that homosexual is neither a sin nor a crime. They both have jobs and are professional in their fields. Zoe has master’s degree in musicology and that is translated to her work as a music therapist. During her career, she helps a lot of patients to recover from their trauma or difficulty in conveying emotions. Vanessa works as a school
counselor at Wilmington High and an advisor for the students’ Rainbow Alliance. She helps troubled children to keep up with their academic grades and also helps students to accept their identity as homosexual. They are caring persons who understand other’s feelings and help people in need. They are also great parents as described by Samantha, their daughter. These qualities are all the opposite of what homophobes claim to be truth about being homosexual.

The journey of sexual orientation of Zoe and Vanessa is a proof that sexual orientation is not strictly innate as claimed by heterosexist society. As narrated throughout their life, Zoe and Vanessa have fallen in love and have sex with straight man, straight woman and lesbian. Zoe was married to Max before she meets Vanessa. Zoe loves Max emotionally and physically. Vanessa states that one is falling in love with a person, which stands in the possibility it can be a man or a woman. She admits also that her being lesbian does not mean she cannot have sex with men, whom she actually did in the past with her boyfriend, but it is just not her priority. It proves that the “biological fact” is not a singular determiner of sexual identity. Queer criticism allows the necessity to revisit the boundaries of heterosexual and homosexual, which is proven vague than rigid. The “liminal moments mirror” is a process of discovery when Zoe divorce from Max and then married with Vanessa. Zoe was in love with a man and she discovers a new love with a woman, Vanessa. Her sexual awakening is tangible to support the discourse of queer which aims to break the construction of sexual identity. It gives the legitimacy to the focal point of queer criticism in liberating a person to discover
his or her sexual identity and refuses to imitate the expectation of heteronormative society.

At last, this study allows queer criticism to explore the complexity of sexual identity. The analysis of *Sing You Home* suggests that sexual identity should remain a contested arena, a human right issue in which binary constructs is not supposed to limit the expansion of sexual identity category. It shows the fluidity of sexual identity and necessity to disentangle from the expectation of heteronormative society. Queer discourse empowers the further investigation upon understanding humans’ sexuality and opposes homophobia as a violation of human right to reclaim sexual identity. It provides a platform to challenge the stigmatization of homosexual and transforms homosexual from the marginalization to liberation of acceptance.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX

The Summary of Sing You Home

Zoe is a music therapist who works regularly at Shady Acres Assisted living with various patients. A music therapist is quite similar like physical therapist, except the tool used to heal the patient is music which is scientifically proven to trigger a strong response to a particular memory. When Zoe works with an Alzheimer patient named Mr. Docker, she is pregnant for twenty-eight weeks. It is a big deal for Zoe since she has a trouble of getting pregnant and already experienced four miscarriages. For ten years, Zoe and Max have tried IVF because they both have infertility issues. However, later when Zoe has her baby's shower for the first time, she has miscarriage and the baby died. Afterwards, Zoe makes another appointment with her doctor, Dr. Gelman, with a hope to try another in vitro fertilization since she still has three frozen embryos. Dr. Gelman explains the high risk of another placental abruption and Max strongly disagree with Zoe’s plan of getting pregnant again. He says he cannot handle another misery of Zoe’s pregnancy hence he asks for divorce.

Max is a dropout college who owns a landscaping business. He meets Zoe at his brother’s wedding. He does not think a woman with a master’s degree in musicology wants someone like him. On the other hand, Zoe also does not think a handsome man, a big, broad, blonde hair surfer finds her attractive. Their marriage is full of hurdles of getting Zoe’s pregnant. Max feels like a loser
because he thinks even in the twenty-first century being real man is still tried to being able to procreate. It adds to his long list of being a failure.

After he files a divorce petition, he has to wait for seventy-seven days before he has to meet Zoe in court. Max moves to his brother’s house and he spends his time by sleeping, staying out late, and drinking alcohol. Max’s brother is Reid who married to Liddy. They are a religious family. In the past, it had sparked several problems with Zoe since they had the opposite polar of belief. Zoe is not a religious person and she has history of debates with Reid about his Christian’s way of living.

Max is introduced to Pastor Clive by Reid in order to persuade max to become Christian. At first, Max is angry because he thinks it is rude that Pastor Clive tries to convert him therefore, he says to Pastor Clive that he does not need religion. One day, on his way from a bar, Max gets a car accident. In his crisis, Max asks for God’s help and eventually the policeman come and he is saved. It is a life changing moment for Max and he becomes a born-again Christian by joining Eternal Glory Church. Max feels the warm welcome from the congregation and for the first time he does not feel judged for his failures.

In her recovery from the traumatic experience of divorce, Zoe meets Vanessa Shaw, a lesbian, at a pool. Vanessa thinks Zoe wants to commit suicide since she finds her floating at the bottom. Zoe says she just looking at the light from the bottom of the pool. They have met before because Vanessa once asked Zoe to work with an autistic student. Vanessa as a high school counselor has an instinct to always help people. She even describes herself as a pathological fixer.
She knows Zoe is in deep pain from losing her baby and her husband. Vanessa lies and says to Zoe that she has been planning to call Zoe to offer her another job which is to work with Lucy Dubois who has attempted suicide twice. Later, Vanessa and Zoe become close friends and finally fall in love.

It is a whole new experience for Zoe as she never thought before that she is a lesbian. At first, Zoe does not openly talks about her relationship with other people. When she meets Wanda, the nurse at Shady Access Assisted, and also Max, then Zoe introduces Vanessa as her friend. It makes Vanessa angry and afraid that Zoe probably does not take their relationship seriously because she is ashamed of Vanessa. Eventually, Zoe tells Max that she is now together with Vanessa. On the other hand, Max is shocked with this news. With the encouragement from Pastor Clive, Max brings Pauline, a member of Eternal Glory Church who calls herself as a cured lesbian, to meet Zoe with a hope to change her sexual orientation. Max believes that being a lesbian is a sin thus, he tries to save Zoe from the punishment in hell.

Soon after that, Zoe and Vanessa get married. Vanessa wants to support Zoe to have a baby. Therefore, Vanessa wants to get pregnant from the three frozen embryos of Zoe and Max. However, the hospital needs the approval from Max since he is the biological father of the frozen embryos. Zoe asks Max to grant his agreement to Zoe and Vanessa plan. Max is confused because he still thinks it is wrong to be a lesbian. Later, he consults his problem to Pastor Clive who immediately rejects the plan and says that children should not be corrupted in a lesbian household. Without Max’s permission, Pastor Clive hires an infamous
lawyer, Wade Preston, to sue Vanessa and Zoe for the right to raise the children. Pastor Clive convinces Max that if he wins then Max can give the children a life that God’s condoned which is through Reid and Liddy family.

The battle in court soon changes the life of Zoe and Vanessa. Their relationship becomes a public consumption. Pastor Clive and Wade Preston launch massive attack to show how deviant lesbians are and why they do not have the right to raise children. They even conduct a protest at Vanessa’s school to forbid lesbians to have the right for jobs. Vanessa and Zoe ask the help from Angela Moretti who specializes in gays and lesbians cases. However, Pastor Clive who was the stepfather of Lucy DuBois gives the evidences of false allegation that Lusy was sexually assaulted by Zoe. Knowing that this allegation can destroy Zoe’s entire life, there is no option for Zoe and Vanessa except to give up the case to Max.

Max is having an affair with his brother’s wife. They fall in love and Max realizes that it will be unbearable to see his own children raise by Reid and Liddy. Deep down, Max also knows that Zoe can be a great mother and he doubts that his decision to sue her was the right one. Eventually, when Max wins the case he gives the right of the three embryos to Zoe and Vanessa.

Later, the story reveals that Zoe and Vanessa have a daughter named Samantha. She tells the story of her life as the luckiest girl in the world because unlike most people, she is blessed with two moms and one dad.