



Homosexuality in Robbie Couch's *The Sky Blue*

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Abstract. This study is about homosexuality in Robbie Couch's *The Sky Blues*. This thesis aims to analyse the phenomenon of homosexuality in the novel. Qualitative research is used in this study. The problem statements are about homosexuality theory, causes, effects, and relationships between them. In the research, the analysis is conducted by using the homosexuality theory. The writer also finds that factors cause homosexuality, which covers genetics, hormonal, non-social environment, and social environment. This research also uses a psychological approach, which aims to reflect the homosexual behaviours in the main character. This study focused on Sky Baker's sexual orientation as homosexual. Boysen claims that gay men even tend to behave similarly to women, both in their interests and personality. The theory is reflected in Sky Baker's character because he has a crush on Ali Rashid, his friend at school. The factors that make Sky Baker's gay are caused by genetics. This study also focuses on the effects of Sky Baker's homosexuality can be rejected by the environment and can be accepted by his friends. Cook explained that an over-homosexual boy has a heterosexual brother in his family. The result of habitus as homosexuality is Sky Baker has an attraction to same-sex, acts feminine, falls in love with same-sex, and fantasizes about the same sex. Homosexuality has effects on someone's social life, including Sky Baker has been rejected by family and his school friends.

Keywords: homosexuality, psychology, causes, effects

1. INTRODUCTION

Sex is a biological term used to explain differences in the reproductive organs in humans based on anatomy, such as the ovaries being the reproductive organs of women while men have testes as reproductive organs (Lehmiller, 2014). Sex refers more to biological aspects, such as biological physical characteristics possessed by men and women. Sex and gender are important pawns in a human's sexual identity (Lehmiller 2014). Apart from sex and gender, another component that forms a person's identity is sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is a pattern of emotional attraction, sexual romanticism, to men or women, or both sexes. In other terms, sexual orientation refers more to physical and emotional attraction to the opposite sex, whether the same or opposite sex (Dembroff, 2016).

Sexual identity, which is determined based on sexual orientation, must therefore also be understood in a social and cultural context because ideas like homosexuality are also regarded differently in different cultures (or not recognized at all). Sex orientation is concerned with primary sexual behaviour. Orientation to sexuality is typically defined as having a preference for the same or a different kind of person, or the single or both of

them, and as such, categorizing each person as homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual (Cook, 2021). Butler (in Gading & Marsih, 2019) explain that connection between sexuality and gender lies in the understanding that gender is not simply an extension of chromosomal or biological sex, but rather an ongoing discursive practice shaped by the concept of heterosexuality as the standard for human relationships

Expression of sexual orientation has many variations. A brief description of the definitions of sex and gender shapes the diversity of individual sexual orientations. Sex refers more to the differences between men and women in terms of biological characteristics which include sexual anatomy, genetics, and hormones. A person's sexuality is determined when they are born because it is visible according to the physical characteristics that describe their sexuality. However, there are also cases beyond the determination of a person's sexuality that they may not be aware of, such as changes in hormone levels and body anatomy made by transgender or transsexuals which reflect their gender identity. Heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual are lay terms that many people know. However, as time progresses and is accompanied by sexual experiences experienced by the community, many ancient terms are rarely used, and new terms appear that are often used in a community. The public no longer uses the word homosexuality, but the trend of people's sexual identity is more popular with the terms gay and lesbian. Where gay is a term for men who like the same sex, while lesbian is a nickname for women who also like the same sex. In addition, many terms have arisen due to socially shaped developments, such as polysexual, pansexual, and omnisexual (Hall, 2014). Even though there are many types and names of new terms in terms of sexual orientation towards individuals, this research focuses on homosexuals, especially on men who like the same gender or are better known as gay.

The homosexual stigma is still a problem in the social structure. Apart from being considered a deviation, homosexuality is starting to be discussed nowadays. The issue of homosexuality is even raised in a story written by the 'gay' actor himself and even heterosexual people. Several book and film titles began to appear and amaze connoisseurs of literary works and were popular in several circles (Rudy, 2016). Like Robbie Couch's *The Sky Blues*, this is one of the novels in which the main character is a homosexual or more commonly called gay. Robbie Couch's *The Sky Blues* is a teen-lit novel that talks about a high school teenager who realizes that he is gay. Sky Baker lives in Rock Ledge, Michigan, United States of America. He is a student who hides his identity as gay from his schoolmates except for his best friend, Bree. Sky Baker realized that he was attracted to a boyfriend at his school, Ali Rasyid, who is of Middle Eastern and Muslim descent. Coinciding with the Prom Night, Sky plans to invite Ali to the Prom by doing a promposal to find out if Ali is gay or straight. In the novel, Sky is one of the images of a teenager who admits that he is gay because he is attracted to his male friends. (Couch, 2021).

The writer wants to examine further the homosexual phenomenon that occurs in teenage boys. In this thesis, the writer uses Robbie Couch's *The Sky Blues* as material for analysis which has a similar flow to the theme of the thesis. This thesis concentrates on discussing the phenomenon of homosexuality, especially the gay experience experienced by the main character, Sky Baker as a teenager at his school. It is hoped that the writing of this thesis can be carried out in detail and can become a reference for further research.

2. METHOD

The method used in this research is qualitative. Qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of speech or writing and the

behaviours of people are observed. Qualitative research aims to understand something that is not determined in advance but obtained after analysing the social reality focus of research. This type of research refers to the meaning, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things that will explain why and how a certain phenomenon may occur (Berg, 2012). The purpose of using a descriptive type of research is to find the answer to the question which appears as a hypothesis of a study.

In this study the writer uses a psychological approach. Literary psychology can be applied to identify the homosexual phenomenon in the character Sky Baker in Robbie Couch's *The Sky Blue* novel. The use of id, ego and superego is related to the theory of homosexuality which is used by the writer to identify the actions of the main actors in the novel.

A research instrument is one of the most important keys in research. In this research, the key instrument is a human instrument. This means that the researcher herself becomes the main instrument. It states that the researcher instrument is the tool to support data collection. When the researcher is the human instrument, he or she must take part in the whole process of collecting data, interpreting the data, analysing the data, and reporting the result of the research.

Data collection techniques using novel by Robbie Couch's *The Sky Blues*. This novel becomes the main data source in this study. This literature review was conducted with direct appreciation and understanding of meaning. For doing so, library research study signs were developed which functioned as research instruments. The library research study technique is applied with the following steps:

(1) Researchers read critically the data source in *The Sky Blues* novel. This reading is intended to understand the meaning contained within the data source. (2) Researchers read once again the data source to mark the parts of the text section of *The Sky Blues* are novel that are lifted into data and further analysed. This designation is adjusted to the data source. With these steps, it is hoped that data and an understanding of meaning can be obtained.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Sky Baker's Homosexuality

Homosexuality is a condition in which men or women have attracted to the same sex. Homosexual is still taboo for some people because, basically humans are attracted to the opposite sex. Just like Sky Baker, a teenager who has a homosexual sexual orientation, while Sky is attracted to a male friend at school, Ali Rashid. Sky Baker experiences several problems when he realized that he was homosexual. It is not easy for Sky, a student at Rock Ledge, to admit that she was gay, but had to hide this fact because she was worried about the response from his surroundings.

Sky Baker knowingly stated to himself that he was homosexual. It is very clear that Sky is homosexual because he is attracted to Ali Rashid, who is a schoolmate. This was consciously revealed by himself, but Sky has not stated this because he knows that being homosexual is not necessarily accept by his environment. "... I'm in love with Ali Rashid. I'm not proud of it. I'm anything but proud of it" (Couch, 2021). Sky Baker declare to himself that he liked Sky Baker. But at that point, Sky said that he was not proud if he liked Ali Rasyid, on the other hand, he was proud. Sky Baker worry about his feelings for Ali Rasyid, who on the one hand could not be rejected by him, and the environment did not accept him because he knew that this was wrong.

Sky Baker admits that this is the first time he likes someone and is aware of it. For him, the first experience of liking men was very confusing for him. "... Ali's the only boy that's ever made me feel this way" (Couch, 2021). Ali is the only man who make him feel in love now, even though he realizes that his actions were wrong because he likes the same sex, not the opposite sex. In Sky Baker's statement, if he consciously likes Ali Rasyid, he realizes that what he is doing is wrong, which is a form of id in the theory of id as a personal structure. He likes Ali Rashid consciously and has the ambition to express it.

Sky Baker's sexual behaviour is the same as that of other heterosexual teenagers when they feel in love. "Every time he acknowledges my existence, butterflies fill my gut"(Couch, 2021). Sky Baker feels tickled by a butterfly, where the expression is often uses for people who are in love or the feeling of pleasure when liking someone else. Sky does not deny that she likes the same sex, but he hides this from her school environment. Having an interest in the same sex makes Sky Baker tend to only crush him and doesn't even know Ali Rasyid's feelings about him and does he is a homosexual or heterosexual man. "... it melts a whole lot. I really like this boy" (Couch, 2021). Sky Baker likes small things even when Ali greets him and looks at him and, Sky pays attention to the way Ali Rasyid talks to his other schoolmates. Because no one has ever declared that there are students who are homosexual, Sky tends to cover it up and only trusts Bree, his best friend. Sky did not want to be exposed as a homosexual to make him exclude from the school environment as if he was considered to have committed a crime. This push the superego as a personal structure within Sky, he knew the worst possibility if everyone at school found out he was homosexual. For that, he chose to keep it and didn't want anyone at his school to know.

3.2 Causes of Sky Baker's Homosexuality

Having a sexual orientation as a homosexual is not an easy thing, especially for Sky Baker. There are consequences that he gets when he declares that he is homosexual. Moreover, an environment that is not open to homosexuals often causes acts of discrimination against homosexuals in their environment. Homosexuality itself occurs due to several factors. Homosexuality can occur due to the influence of genes, hormones, non-social environmental influences, and the social environment. Meanwhile, the effects felt by Sky Baker are concluded through several actions mentioned in the novel, such as family rejection, discriminatory actions from friends and schools, and self-denial for not wanting to reveal that he is homosexual because of this fear.

The influence of genes from previous male relatives is the cause of a person becoming homosexual. Sky is the second son, and he has an older brother named Gus. In a family study, men who have heterosexual brothers or relatives and brothers are certain he is homosexual. "Gus was at a friend's, or his girlfriend's parents' house .."(Couch, 2021). Sky Baker talks about the situation at his house when Christmas Eve arrives. Where his family used to watch the family movie Together. However, his older brother, Gus, always has many reasons to spend Christmas Eve with his girlfriend's family. This is enough to prove that Gus is not a homosexual, but rather a heterosexual. Most homosexual siblings are heterosexual. This proves that genetic factors make Sky homosexual. Another factor that might trigger homosexuality is the non-social environment. Where the role of the mother or mother's hormones is found more in homosexual boys. However, this is not mentions in the novel because since her father died, Sky doesn't have too many stories with her mother, but instead spends more time with the Brandstone family.

3.3 Effects of Sky Baker's Homosexuality

Homosexuals have always had a negative view of society. Even the existence of homosexuals within Sky Baker is still not fully accepted. Although there are some friends who support that homosexuality is not guilty, there is also a stigma that judge homosexuality as a disgrace. Sky Baker's family, especially Sky Baker's mother acted decisively on Sky's choice to become homosexual. Though homosexuality can occur due to several factors.

3.3.1 Reject in Social and Family

If there are factors, of course, there are also effects that occur when someone claims to be homosexual. Homosexuality is still taboo to be discussed by society at large, even within the Sky Baker environment. Sky Baker lives in the small neighbourhood of Rock Ledge, where not many people accept the notion of same-sex relationships. Sky Baker tends to be secretive about his sexual orientation. This happened because he had received a strong rejection from his family, especially his mother. Sky revealed his sexual identity as a homosexual to his mother, but his mother did not respond and seemed to have any expressions. "She wasn't angry. Just devastated in the disappointed parental way that's much .." (Couch, 2021). His mother's face does not reflect an expression of anger or disappointment, it's just that her body and soul are elsewhere. This made Sky worried, and it was better to watch her mother get angry and say all kinds of things than to see her mother expressionless. Sky Baker's mother didn't really express her disappointment, instead, she asked something that was beyond Sky's expectations. "Have you acted on your urges?" (Couch, 2021). Mrs. Baker asks if he's not going his way. Sky answered no because she didn't feel there was anything wrong with what happened to her. Sky Baker's mother then asked what if her father knew about this, and what he thought. Sky didn't want to imagine if his father knew about it, he didn't want the worst possibility, because his father had died, and he might not be proud to have a homosexual son and wouldn't even want it anymore if he knew about it.

Feeling that there is something wrong with him, people who have not declared themselves gay are filled with suspicion. Where he felt that everyone was aware of his existence as a homosexual even though it had been hidden. The same thing happened with Sky Baker who tended to be suspicious of his school environment because he knew that he was homosexual. ".. and feel their eyes judging my every move." (Couch, 2021). Sky is suspicious of her friend, who looks at her with a sharp gaze like a laser beam. In fact, not necessarily his friends have the same thoughts as Sky. This proves that there is suspicion of the environment around him because he is afraid of revealing his sexual identity as a homosexual. If in general, people who have no faults will be relaxed and not worried because they did nothing wrong. On the other hand, if someone has something to hide, they feel someone is treating them wrong.

3.3.2 Acceptance by His Friends

Sky Baker's sexual identity has finally been known throughout the school environment and even to the parents of his friends. In fact, Sky's mother also read messages from the hacked web page. Negative responses began to emerge causing Sky to not be able to come to school because she felt ashamed of her sexual identity as a homosexual. Although some

of Sky's friends and teachers denied the existence of homosexuality, some of Sky's closest friends supported him, including Ali Rashid. Sky locked herself in Mr. Brandstone's basement which is his room since living there. "She doesn't know how to handle me." (Couch, 2021). Mrs. Brandstone tried to calm Sky down, but he felt he could not accept this and still blamed himself. Instinctively, Sky felt that she was not the child of Mrs. Brandstone and that maybe he would not be able to be in the position of Sky or his mother. In addition to the negative stigma against homosexuals, Sky Baker has friends who are supportive. Sky tends to shut herself in her room for days and doesn't interact with anyone. Seeing this, her schoolmates felt that Sky shouldn't have disappeared and blamed herself. "... Don't let whatever asshole did this bring you down, dude!!!" (Couch, 2021). Sky received messages from some of her friends not to be pressured by the problems she is currently experiencing. Sky felt recovered. She read the messages sent by her friends at school. This proves that some people are open-minded about homosexual orientation in their environment. "You can talk to me about anything .." (Couch, 2021). Sky also received support from her male friends. Previously, Sky thought if it was possible for her friends to have male friends if she found out she was gay. Also answered if sexual identity is not a problem for them.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows Sky Baker's life as a homosexual. Sky Baker is one of the homosexuals in his home and school environment. In everyday life, Sky Baker hid his sexual orientation as a homosexual especially in the school environment because he was still afraid of public judgments about homosexuality. The homosexual theory states that homosexuality has similarities with feminine traits or like women. In addition, Sky Baker also likes a boyfriend at school, namely Ali Rashid. Sky Baker does not have the courage to reveal if he likes Ali, because he is unsure about Ali's sexual orientation, whether homosexual or heterosexual.

After analysis, there are theories about homosexuality that are applied in this study. In addition to the homosexual theory, there is a theory that caused Sky Baker to choose homosexuality as his sexual orientation. Sky Baker has an older brother named Gus. Factors that influence Sky Baker's sexual orientation are genetics, hormones, and a non-social environment. In this theory, it is explained that homosexual men have heterosexual brothers. Gus is the oldest brother, and he is heterosexual for dating a girl. In addition, it is not clear hormonally whether Sky Baker has low endogenous hormones, which causes him to become homosexual. Meanwhile, the non-social environment is a biological factor that is influenced by antibodies possessed by homosexual mothers.

In this study, Sky Baker's habitation was also mentioned as homosexual. For example, having an interest in Ali Rashid who is a friend at school. Tends to behave like a girl even though he hides it because he doesn't want his identity as a homosexual to spread in school. Apart from that, Sky Baker has fantasies and obsessions with the same sex, for example, having wet dreams and admiring Ali Rashid for certain things

As an effect of his sexual orientation, Sky Baker was ostracized at school. Her mother didn't even accept this because it was not in line with God's teachings. Sky Baker was thrown out of the house for telling his mother he was homosexual. These consequences must be accepted because he tries to be open with his family and environment. However, Sky Baker finally got support from his friends, Bree, Marshal, Teddy, Dan, and Bree's family who had been providing a place to live for Sky Baker.

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