

**IN DEFENSE OF HOMOSEXUALITY RIGHT REFLECTED IN GREG
BERLANTI'S *LOVE, SIMON* MOVIE**



**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Bachelor degree in
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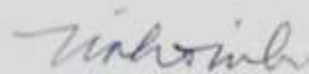
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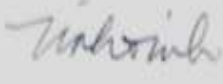
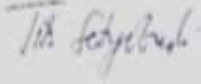

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The Researcher



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Abstrak

Penelitian ini berkaitan dengan representasi homoseksual yang digambarkan dalam film *Love, Simon*. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah (1) Untuk mengetahui indikator pembelaan homoseksualitas dalam film dan (2) Untuk mengetahui alasan Greg Berlanti membela hak orientasi seksual dalam film. Metode kualitatif digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Teori Queer digunakan untuk menganalisis penelitian ini. Temuan penelitian ini adalah (1) indikator pembelaan terhadap homoseksualitas ada empat, yaitu Berjuang untuk Keluar sebagai Homoseksual, Meningkatkan Penerimaan Homoseksual, Mengubah Perspektif Negatif Tentang Homoseksual, dan Mendukung Homoseksual dari Keluarga dan Teman. (2) Alasan Greg Berlanti membela hak orientasi seksual dalam film adalah Untuk memberikan representasi tentang gay kepada masyarakat. Mengadakan penggalangan dana untuk mendukung komunitas LGBTQ, Memperkenalkan karakter LGBT melalui Serial TV dan Film.

Kata Kunci: melindungi homoseksualitas, representasi homoseksual, film 'coming out', teori queer

Abstract

The research dealt with the representation of homosexuality depicted in the *Love, Simon* movie. The goals of this study were (1) to find the indicators of the defense of homosexuality in the *Love, Simon* movie and (2) to know the reason why Greg Berlanti defended the right of sexual orientation in the movie. A qualitative method was used in this study. Queer theory was used to analyze this study. The findings of the study were (1) there are four indicators of the defense of homosexuality, namely the struggle to come out as a homosexual, increasing the acceptance of homosexuals, changing negative perspective about homosexuality, and supporting the homosexuals starting from family and friends. (2) the reason Greg Berlanti defended the right of sexual orientation in the movie was to give the representation about gay to society, hold a fundraiser to support the LGBTQ community, and introduce the LGBT characters through TV Series and Movies.

Keywords: protecting homosexuality, the representation of homosexuality, coming out movie, queer theory

1. INTRODUCTION

Homosexuals are the person who has sexual attraction to same-sex or gender. Homosexuals could be divided into two kinds namely gay and lesbian. 'Gay' is a term to refer to males who are sexually attracted to same-sex or gender (male), whereas 'lesbian' is the term to refer to females who are attracted to same-sex or gender (female). Otherwise, heterosexuals, mostly known as 'normal' people, is a term to refer to the 'straight' people who are sexually attracted to different sex or gender (Lehman, J.R., et al., 2019, p. 5).

Homosexuals, especially gays, still become a socially sensitive issue in society (Oetomo, 2001, p. 43). Numerous individuals assumed negatively to gay culture. Due to that, many gay people endeavored to conceal their identity (Anderson, 2002, p. 873; Marcus, 2005, p. 38). However, some homosexuals struggled to fight for their identity and countered around negative assumptions. Society still thought homosexuals were a crime, abnormal, and deviation (Davis and Rentzel, 1993, p. 189).

Homosexuality was represented in the *Love, Simon* (2018), directed by Greg Berlanti. The movie represented a gay perspective in high school life. Eleven previous studies used the same movie with this research entitled *Love, Simon* and based on the novel *Simon vs. Homo Sapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli.

However, based on the eleven previous studies, it can be divided into four classifications based on their perspective. The first category is a semiotic perspective, with the survey from (Pirera, 2019). The second category is a teaching perspective, the studies are from (Rognerudengen, 2018) & (Lopez-Barrios, 2020). The third category is a psychological perspective, and the studies are from (Putri, 2020) & (Wijaya & Rahman, 2021). Forth category is the sociological perspective, the studies are from (Fedorov, 2018), (Haley, 2018), (Gading & Marsih, 2019), (Martinez, 2019), (Rauchberg, 2019), & (Dye, 2020). From those previous studies, none of them discussed the topic of the defense to the right of homosexuality. Most of them discussed the representation of homosexuality in the movie, the process of the coming out and the factors that trigger the coming out of the homosexual characters, also the implication of the sexual orientation towards the learning and teaching activities in the school.

This study discussed the defense of homosexuality in the movie. The defense of homosexuality is to protect homosexuals from any negative attitude such as violence, discrimination, oppression, stereotype, racism, bullying, and others that are harmful. This negative attitude toward homosexual people could be categorized as homophobia (Vural-Batik, 2019, pp. 59-70). Because of the negative attitude towards homosexual people, the LGBT movement was created to defend it. LGBT movement aimed to support liberation, freedom, and the right of LGBT people. The other aim was to get acceptance and equal rights from society (Rhoades, 2011, pp. 47-64).

According to Britannica, the indicators of LGBT movement/liberation were: 1) LGBTQ community had an equal position in society, 2) Emphasizing the coming out of LGBT, 3)

Increasing the acceptance of LGBT community, 4) Changing the negative assumption of LGBT community, and 5) Eliminating the homophobia.

This study dealt with the two problem statements. There were (1) the indicators of the defense of homosexuality in the *Love, Simon* movie and (2) the reason why Greg Berlanti defended the right of sexual orientation in the *Love, Simon* movie.

Queer theory was used to investigate this study. Queer theory was used to analyze sexual identity and gender created by the social environment (Downing, L., 2008, pp. 104-117). The theory dealt with non-normative sexuality and gender. According to Hendri Yulius, this theory was not just about LGBT. This theory could be used for dismantling our sexual identity, both for heterosexuals and LGBT (Cited in Wardhani, 2019). The theory aimed to defy heteronormativity (Warner, M., 1993, p. 16). Heteronormativity referred to heterosexual (straight) as the only normal sex (Harris, J., White, V., 2018, p. 335).

2. METHOD

This study was categorized as a literary study. The study aimed to find the relation between society and literary work. A qualitative method was used to analyze the data. Two data sources were used in this study. The primary data was the movie entitled *Love, Simon* (2018) by Greg Berlanti. The secondary data were the interviews of the film director, the autobiography of the film director, the journal, article, blog, news, and others. There are six steps to collecting the data. 1) Watching the movie, 2) Note-taking the important information 3) Finding the information based from the internet such as article, books, journal and interview that related to this film, 4) Identifying the issue that depicted in the movie, 5) Interpreting the dialogue by using the subtitle of the film, 6) drawing the conclusion based from the data that has been taken.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

The results of this study were divided into two namely the indicators of the defense of homosexuality and the reason why Greg Berlanti defends the rights of sexual orientation in the film entitled *Love, Simon*. In the first result found four indicators of defense of homosexuality in the film, namely 1) struggling to coming out as a homosexual, 2) increasing the acceptance of homosexual, 3) changing the negative perspective on homosexual, and 4) supporting to homosexual from family and friend. The second result found the reason Greg

Berlanti defended the right of sexual orientation. There were 1) to give the representation about the homosexual to the society, 2) to held a fundraiser to support the LGBT, 3) to introduce the LGBT character through TV Series and Movie.

3.1.1 The Indicators of the defense of homosexuality in *Love, Simon*

There were four indicators of defense of homosexuality depicted in the film. The indicators are struggling to come out as a homosexual, increasing the acceptance of homosexual, changing negative perspective about the homosexual, and supporting the homosexuals from family and friends.

a. Struggling of Coming Out as a Homosexual

Coming out was a sexual confession to other people. Daring to come out was the basic of LGBT movements (Cover, 2000, p. 80). The struggling to come out as a homosexual was divided into three. There were: Daring to come out as homosexual to Family, Daring to come out as homosexual to Friends, and Daring to come out as homosexual to society.

1. Daring to come out as homosexual to family

The biggest issue of facing coming out was family. The impact of coming out to family was very big. It was very important for the LGBTQ mental. The parental figure had a very crucial influence when they dealt with LGBTQ children (Bregman et al., 2012, pp. 417-430).

The family had a big influence on developing identity in children's growth through social interaction (Larossa & Reitzes, 1993, pp. 135-166).

The decision, acceptance, attitude, and reaction of a parent when the children were coming out was very important to their mental health such as their self-esteem, self-recognition, and their confidence (D'Augelli, et al., 2008, pp. 95-115).

Homophobia can shaped the negative attitude towards LGBT people. Due to that, it might trigger LGBT people to have weak self-esteem, shame, afraid, and they always think that society only has a negative stigma over LGBT people (Thomas et al., 2014, pp. 155-162).

a) Simon's Coming Out to his family

One day, Simon's secret leaked to the school blog by Martin (Simon's friends). Simon's sister namely Nora was the same student in Simon's school. She knew about the news in the school's blog that Simon was gay. It could be seen in minutes 01:12:38,365 - 01:13:14,834. At first, she did not believe that news, and she was trying to deny the news. Until Simon said that the news was true, and he was coming out to his sister. She was still denying the news and she looked disappointed at Simon because he never wanted to tell their family. Then she was crying and she tried to leave him.

Simon was trying to disclose his sexuality to his parents in minutes 01:15:14,054 - 01:15:18,156. He told to his parents that he was still the same person they've known, but the first reaction that came out was horrific. Simon's parents looked so shocked and Simon's father was trying to deny by making a joke of it. He was mad, disappointed, shocked, sad and he could not believe that was true. So, he left Simon to calm his heart.

b) Ethan's Coming Out to his Parents

The first time Ethan coming out, he disclosed to his parents. It could be seen in minutes 01:23:26,046 - 01:23:35,652. But the reaction that came out was terrifying, his parents was denying it. It was because Ethan's family was religious. So, they never accepted Ethan's sexuality. Ethan's mother even lied to the grandmother that Ethan was straight and he had girlfriends.

Due to family who was strict to their children, it could be caused by cultural and religious perspective. They might not tolerate their children for having non-heterosexual sexuality (Malpas, 2011, pp. 453-470).

c) Blue's (Bram) Coming Out to his Father

Blue was trying to come out to his father on Christmas weekend it can be seen in minutes 00:58:38,394 - 00:58:44,932. He decided to confess his sexuality because Simon gave him support. He inspired Blue to come out. After Blue tells his dad the first reaction that came out was a silence; no

word came out of his father but then it changed to a warm atmosphere, his dad was gladly accepted Blue/Bram coming out.

2. Daring to coming out as homosexual to Friends

a) Simon coming out to his best friends

Simon was telling his best friends Abby it could be seen in minute 00:56:51,087 - 00:57:42,806. She didn't surprise at all and she accepted Simon's decision.

b) Ethan Coming Out to His Best Friends

Ethan not only told his sexuality to his parents, but he also told his school friends. It could be seen in minutes 00:20:10,257 - 00:20:26,936. His best friends who most of them were females support his sexuality and openly accepted Ethan.

3. Daring to coming out as homosexual to society

Simon dared to take big action by confessed his sexuality on the school blog. So that the public would be more open-minded. With his action, he hoped that society will respect and support homosexuals it represented in the minutes 01:35:18,023 - 01:37:24,048.

Simon encouraged himself to make a clarification and a confession about his rumor in the school blog. He wrote on the school blog; he admitted the rumor was true. And he explained the reason why he hid his sexuality.

At first, he complained about the injustice of homosexuals. Why do homosexuals have to confess while heterosexuals don't? Then he realized that he was just afraid to come out of his shell. He realized that being yourself was something more beautiful in this world. Being confident, brave, and just being whatever you're was something worth to do.

Then, he also convinced Blue to come out too. He said that he loved Blue and he wanted to share happiness with him. Simon wanted Blue to reveal his identity. He wanted Blue to deserve a great love story too like him. So, he invited him to the Ferris wheel. Then Simon waited for him to show

up to his identity and to reveal his identity. He was Bram. He dared to come out after hearing the confession Simon made on the school blog.

After Simon confessed in a school blog, six students also confessed themselves. Simon accidentally encouraged the other students to be themselves. They deserve to love themselves.

b. Increasing the Acceptance of Homosexual

Society had a negative stigma over the LGBT community. The LGBT people often faced discrimination, stereotype, racism, violence, and prejudice (Herek, 1984, pp. 1-21).

Due to the homophobia act, LGBT people could develop the devalue themselves. They could feel the lack of acceptance of the people around them. So, that they lowkey coming out in public (Herdt and Boxer, 1996, p. 205).

Parental role had a big impact on homosexual children. The acceptance of the coming out can increased the mental and physical health of homosexuals. The positive benefited of acceptable parents on homosexuals coming out was decreasing depression, preventing suicide, and increasing self-esteem (Ryan et al., 2009, pp. 346-352).

However, to determine the oppression over the homosexual people. One way of defended homophobia was to boldly convinced people that they were still themselves. They didn't changed their personalities and attitudes.

Simon tried to convince his family that he was still the same person they've known. And it wouldn't change the fact that he was their warm-hearted son, he always helped his father, he always complimented his sister's cooking even though it didn't taste good. It could be seen in scene on minutes 01:15:14,054 - 01:15:25,163.

c. Changing Negative Perspective on the Homosexual

At first, Simon's father (Jack) is disgusted by the homosexuals. Because He often made negative jokes about homosexuals. Due to that, it could be categorized as a homophobic act.

It could be seen in the scene on minutes 00:09:10,931 - 00:09:27,412 when Simon's father (Jack) argued with Simon's mother (Emily) about the homosexual character in the movie. He opposed the homosexual love relationship. He preferred the male character to have a love with a female character.

After Simon confessed that he was gay, Simon's Father (Jack) was shocked but then he accepted Simon's sexuality. He changed his negative perspective about homosexuals. Changing the negative perspective of homosexuality from people's mindsets can eliminate homophobia. Eliminating homophobia would increase the acceptance of the LGBTQ community.

d. Supporting The Homosexuals from Family and Friends

According to the study from CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) support from family, friends, relatives and other close people could increase the self-esteem, self-confidence, and positive mental health of homosexual people.

1. Abby (Simon's best friend) accepted Simon as a gay

In the first attempted coming out, Simon told his friends Abby. It could be seen in the scene on minute 00:56:51,087 - 00:57:42,806. She did not surprise at all and she accepted Simon's decision.

2. Simon's family accepted Simon's sexuality

After hearing Simon's coming out and he convinced his parents that he was still the same as the person they've known. Simon's mother looked calm. His father still thought that it was a joke. So, he made a joke. But, Simon's sister with a high tone broke the joke. Then, Simon's father left them. He tried to calm his heart. Then Simon just left out. At that day he was broke. He tried to avoid talking to his parents.

Several days later, his mother tried to have a deep conversation with him in minutes 01:28:00,853 - 01:28:55,372. She wanted to dismantle everything that Simon has been hiding alone. She wanted Simon to open up himself, cause he looked like he has been holding his breath for the last several years.

She began to give him comfort by accepting his sexuality. She tried to explain her opinion about his decision. She supported the decision he has made and she wanted him to be himself.

In minute 01:32:44,669 - 01:34:25,535, Simon's father asked Simon when he knew his sexuality. Then Simon answered when he was thirteen Y.O. Simon's father replied the last four years that they have spent together, he did not know about his son. He was sorry for all of the jokes that might hurt Simon's feelings. Then he accepted Simon as he was, he did not treat Simon any difference. He also wanted to support Simon by joined the LGBT parent's club in the FB.

3. Leah and Nick (Simon's best friends) accepted Simon's sexuality and they support him

After they made up and resolved their misunderstanding problem. They began to help Simon in finding the identity of an anonymous person named Blue alias Bram. They knew that Simon was in love with him. So they went to the carnival together.

4. Simon High school friends support Simon finding his love

In the carnival, Simon's friends were cheering Simon for waiting for his lover. They wanted Simon to successfully find his lover and they hope Simon deserves great love stories.

3.1.2 The reason Greg Berlanti defend sexual orientation right in *Love, Simon*

LGBT issues in society still became a phenomena. Many people still gave a negative stigma to LGBT. Discrimination, stereotype, violence, bullying, and racism were still rampant. Especially against minorities such as LGBT people. Due, many negative stigmas received by the LGBT people, Berlanti as a film director wanted to emphasize the defense of LGBT through the movie.

Greg Berlanti as a film director of *Love, Simon* has openly revealed his sexual identity as gay (homosexual). *Love, Simon* (2018) represented homosexual issues in the movie. The following are some of the reasons Greg Berlanti defended the LGBT community.

- a. To give representation about gay to the society

The first reason he defended the sexual orientation was he wanted to give the representation about gay that was related to his experience when he was a teenager.

In the MTV interview, Greg Berlanti was given a question about his reaction to making the movie based on Albertalli's novel. And he said when he read the script he can felt the emotion. He was being so honored to make the movie.

Then he was given another question about the similarities between him and Simon in the movie. Then he answered that on developing the story, he added his several experiences through the movie. He saw the similarities between him and the main character.

- b. To held a fundraiser to support the LGBTQ community

Greg Berlanti with his husband, and the other gay Hollywood players funding money to help the LGBT through the presidential election in America in 2020. The candidate of the president was the first gay named Pete Buttigieg. By using the power, he can be the co-host of the fundraising event.

- c. To introduce the LGBT character through TV Series and Movie

As a film director, TV showrunner, writer, and film producer his position had a big impact on TV and screenplay. In the Vanity Fair, Berlanti has interviewed. He said the LGBT love stories; his love stories had not much represented in the movie. He had many times watched other people's love stories but he could not find his love stories represented in the movie.

He said that the representation of LGBT in the movie lacked. According to GLAAD, in 2018 only 20% of LGBT characters featured in the major studios. Due to that, as a film director, he tried to use his power to represent LGBT. Began with the casted transgender superhero in TV *Supergirl*, cast lesbian character in superheroes movie *Batwoman*, then in the other work namely *Dawson's Creek* he struggled to represent the scene where the two men kissed.

3.2 Discussion

Love, Simon represented homosexual issues in the school environment. To analyze the movie, the researcher used Queer Theory. Queer theory was used to analyze sexual identity and gender created by the social environment (Downing, L., 2008, pp. 104-117). The theory dealt with non-normative sexuality and gender. According to Hendri Yulius, this theory was not just about LGBT. This theory could be used for dismantling our sexual identity, both for heterosexuals and LGBT (Cited in Wardhani, 2019). The theory aimed to defy heteronormativity (Warner, M., 1993, p. 16). Heteronormativity referred to heterosexual (straight) as the only normal sex (Harris, J., White, V., 2018, p. 335).

The findings of the study were (1) there are four indicators of the defense of homosexuality, namely the struggle to come out as a homosexual, increasing the acceptance of homosexuals, changing negative perspective about homosexuality, and supporting the homosexuals starting from family and friends. (2) the reason Greg Berlanti defended the right of sexual orientation in the movie was to give the representation about gay to society, hold a fundraiser to support the LGBTQ community, and introduce the LGBT characters through TV Series and Movies.

The position of this study was to add to the previous study. Because the content of this study doesn't exist in the previous study. There are eleven previous studies that used the same movie with this research entitled *Love, Simon* and based on the novel *Simon vs. Homo Sapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli. However, based on the eleven previous studies, it can be divided into four classifications based on their perspective. The first category is a semiotic perspective, with the survey from (Pirera, 2019). The second category is a teaching perspective, the studies are from (Rognerudengen, 2018) & (Lopez-Barrios, 2020). The third category is a psychological perspective, and the studies are from (Putri, 2020) & (Wijaya & Rahman, 2021). The fourth category is the sociological perspective, the studies are from (Fedorov, 2018), (Haley, 2018), (Gading & Marsih, 2019), (Martinez, 2019), (Rauchberg, 2019), & (Dye, 2020). From those previous studies, none of them discussed the topic of the defense to the right of homosexuality. Most of them discussed the representation of homosexuality in the movie, the process of the coming out and the factors that trigger the coming out of the homosexual characters, also the implication of the sexual orientation towards the learning and teaching activities in the school.

4. CLOSING

The defense of homosexuality was very important to be discussed in this study because of many negative stigmas toward the LGBTQ. Society played an important part in social life. As a part of society, the phenomena of homosexuality were still seen to be abnormal, deviation, and false. Many people were still doing the negative act towards the LGBTQ such as discrimination, oppression, racism, bullying, stereotype, and the other that harmful. This act could be categorized as harassment to the LGBT community. Homophobic people might undermine the self-confidence of LGBT people which could violated their human rights. It could raid a person's freedom right of expression and decide according to their decision freely. Human rights meant to love their life without fear or deprivation. So, this study represented the defense of the homosexual through the movie entitled *Love, Simon*. The result of this study found four indicators of the defense of homosexuality that delineated in the movie. There were: (1) struggling to coming out as a homosexual, (2) increasing the acceptance of homosexual, (3) changing negative perspective about the homosexual, and (4) supporting the homosexuals from family and friends. The role of the film director was important. Since the relation between film director and their work were very crucial. They may had a reason that movie is created. And also they may uttered some messages that was important to open the social perspective. Here are some reason why Greg Berlanti defended the sexual orientation rights. (1) To give representation about gay to the society. (2) To held a fundraiser to support the LGBTQ community, (3) To introduce the LGBT characters through TV Series and Movie.

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