

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Theoretical Framework

1. Popular Literature

Popular literature is work created for the general public. It reflects the social, cultural, and ideological dynamics of society. Popular culture is formed by less powerful groups of society by utilizing the sources of the existing social system (Fiske, 2010). Therefore, Saptawuryandari et al. (2024), popular literature not only serves as entertainment but also reflects social reality and becomes a medium for the internalization of cultural values in society. A text is said to be successful when it can provide space for people to form their own meanings of identity and social relations. In line with the development of popular literature, movies have emerged as a widely consumed form of media, serving not only as entertainment but also as an important medium for reflecting on and examining complex social issues, including those related to identity conflict.

Movies, as one of the most widely consumed forms of popular literature, play a crucial role in reflecting social reality for their audience. In contrast to other forms of media, a movie conveys messages not only through language but also through visuals, narrative structure, and character portrayal. Turner (cited in Jatuporn, 2023) argues that a

movie is a medium of imagination that involves creating representations. This view is supported by Hall (1997), who emphasizes that the media play a vital role in shaping meanings closely tied to individuals or communities. Through their characters and stories, movies often depict the experiences and real struggles individuals face in society (Jatuporn, 2023). Therefore, movies serve not only as a source of entertainment but also as a cultural phenomenon that can be critically examined. Through such analysis, movies provide insight into how individuals experience various social issues, including identity conflicts, making them a relevant subject of study in popular literature.

The issue of identity is a common theme in popular literature, including movies. Movies present characters not only as fictional figures but also as representations of individuals undergoing identity development in real life. Through movies, it is possible to observe how a character's identity development is depicted (Zheltukhina et al., 2023). This involves how individuals respond to the pressures placed upon them. Additionally, it explores how individuals navigate issues when their identity conflicts with the surrounding community's expectations. Identity development cannot be separated from the influence of social interactions and external pressures (Rahmasari and Nugroho, 2025). This phenomenon is captured in the movie *Red, White and Royal Blue* (2023). The movie tells the story of Prince Henry, who is struggling with two conflicting identities.

In conclusion, popular literature serves not only as a medium of entertainment but also as a means of portraying various social and cultural realities. As a form of popular literature, film can depict various human experiences, including the process of identity formation and the identity conflicts individuals face, through character, plot, dialogue, and visual elements. Therefore, *Red, White, and Royal Blue* is considered a suitable subject of study because it portrays Prince Henry's identity conflict, which can be analyzed in greater depth through the concepts of identity and identity conflict.

2. Identity and Identity Conflict

Identity is an important aspect of every individual's life, formed through interaction with the social environment. Since identity conflict arises as part of the identity formation process, it is necessary to first understand the concept of identity before exploring identity conflict. This subsection discusses the concept of identity and its formation, followed by a discussion of identity conflict.

a. Identity

Identity is a unique characteristic of every individual or group. Identity serves as a symbol that distinguishes one individual or group from another. Identity encompasses many aspects of a person's life, ranging from the values they hold and the social roles they play to how they understand and define themselves. Identity is not fixed; rather, it evolves with the

individual's life journey. This is in line with Galliher et al. (2017), identity is shaped through a lifelong psychosocial process affected by culture and life experiences. Furthermore, identity is also influenced by the people with whom the individual interacts. This is because environmental factors – such as family, friends, school, and society – play a role in shaping an individual's identity (Pratama et al., 2025). Therefore, identity is understood as an ongoing process that is continually shaped and reshaped by experiences, social interactions and cultural influences throughout an individual's life.

The process of identity development does not occur instantly but unfolds gradually throughout an individual's life. Identity development is influenced by various factors in an individual's environment, such as family, friends, school, and society. These environments provide values, experiences, and expectations that help shape how individuals understand themselves. The family, as the primary environment, plays a crucial role in helping individuals recognize themselves through the values and behavioral patterns it instills. A warm and supportive family relationship helps an individual become more confident, have a clear identity, and minimize identity confusion (Crocetti et al., 2023). In addition to the family, friends, school,

and community, other factors also contribute to how a person forms their identity. The school environment helps an individual develop their identity by fostering discipline, social skills, and relationships with teachers and friends (Pratama et al., 2023). Therefore, identity development can be understood as a continuous, evolving process shaped by social interactions and experiences an individual undergoes throughout their life.

b. Identity conflict

In the process of identity development, an individual does not always proceed without obstacles. Individuals may experience identity conflict when discrepancies arise. This mismatch can occur when the identity being developed differs from social expectations. This aligns with research by Leung (2021), which found that during identity development, an individual may experience confusion stemming from conflicting sexual, cultural and familial identities. This situation creates internal conflict when faced with the choice between remaining true to oneself and conforming to societal norms and expectations. Society judges certain identities differently: if an identity is held by the majority, it is generally considered normal, whereas identities held by minority groups are more vulnerable to discrimination, forcing individuals to struggle to build self-confidence and self-acceptance (Galliher et al., 2017).

Consequently, individuals may experience confusion in determining the direction of their lives and hesitation in making decisions. This is known as an identity conflict – a condition that not only causes inner turmoil but also impacts an individual's psychology and quality of life.

Unresolved identity conflicts can affect an individual's psychological well-being. Individuals with identity conflicts often experience continued feelings of confusion, anxiety, and emotional instability. This aligns with research by Galliher et al. (2017), which states that a person may experience a conflict between two different identities, leading to stress, confusion, and social pressure. This occurs because the individual is unable to find a balance between the various aspects of their identity. In some cases, individuals choose to separate various aspects of their identity to prevent them from conflicting. Although this may reduce pressure in the short term, it hinders the individual's ability to understand themselves in the long term. Individuals who separate their identities tend to experience identity conflict more often because they feel divided in their identity (Mosanya and Kwiatkowska, 2023). This harms an individual's mental health and quality of life. According to Rahim et al. (2021), identity conflict can cause an individual to feel confused about their own identity and make them more prone to psychological

issues; conversely, individuals who can accept and integrate their identity differences tend to have better mental health. Identity conflict becomes even more complex when it involves an individual's sexual identity.

Identity conflicts can arise in various areas, one of which is sexual identity. These conflicts are particularly complex because they involve a clash between personal identity and prevailing social norms. Individuals whose sexual identities do not align with societal norms often face significant pressure. Lueng (2021) found that pressure from heteronormative norms in the social and cultural environments can make it difficult for individuals to develop a sexual identity that does not align with heteronormative norms due to discrimination and negative judgments from society. This is in line with Galliher et al. (2017), who found that identity conflict can lead to psychological stress, whereas a more integrated identity supports mental health and social adjustment. Therefore, individuals must balance the demands of social roles in general. However, this process is often not easy because they still have to face negative stereotypes, discrimination, and social rejection attached to their sexual identity. This pressure becomes even more complicated when the individual is in a specific social position that demands they meet high standards and expectations. Thus, social support,

good communication, and identity management skills are crucial for maintaining an individual's mental health and social stability (Ziyi and Kamaruzaman, 2025). It is necessary to adopt a theoretical approach that analyzes identity more critically and in greater depth to understand how such identity conflicts arise and are experienced within the context of pressure from dominant heterosexual norms.

In conclusion, identity is a process that continually evolves through an individual's interactions with their social environment. When this process is confronted with social demands that conflict with one's personal identity, a person may experience an identity conflict that impacts their psychological and social life. Thus, a theoretical approach is needed to explain the process of identity formation and the emergence of identity conflict, which in this study is analyzed using Erikson's psychosocial theory, supported by Butler's queer theory.

3. Psychosocial Theory

Erik Erikson, a developmental psychologist, is known for his theory of psychosocial development, which holds that development continues throughout life and is divided into eight stages. These eight stages are divided into four childhood stages (Trust versus Mistrust, Autonomy versus Shame, Initiative versus Guilt, and Industry versus Inferiority), one adolescent stage (Identity versus Role Confusion), and three adult stages (Intimacy versus Isolation, Generativity versus Stagnation, and

Ego Integrity versus Despair) (Sun and Sun, 2021). Each stage presents challenges that must be faced and resolved. If an individual successfully resolves each challenge, it will form a strong foundation for their development in the subsequent stages. If an individual fails to resolve a crisis in a particular stage, this can delay their development and lead to various psychological issues such as depression and loneliness (Branje, 2022). Among these eight stages of psychosocial development, the Identity versus Role Confusion stage is a key focus because it directly involves exploring and developing one's identity.

The identity and role confusion stage is one of the stages in the theory of psychosocial development. This stage plays a crucial role in the formation of self-identity and will determine the direction of an individual's future development. During this stage, adolescence is a particularly critical phase of development due to the changes adolescents undergo, which lead them to begin questioning their identity (Crocetti et al., 2022). This is what leads individuals to actively explore the various possible identities within themselves. These identities can take many forms, such as social roles, beliefs, career choices, and even sexual identity. Additionally, during this stage, a healthy identity develops when the individual receives strong environmental support, enabling them to become a more confident, capable person with a clearer sense of purpose in life (Pratama et al., 2025). This stage is considered successfully navigated when a suitable and stable identity is

formed in the individual. This can be observed when the individual has a clear understanding of themselves and feels comfortable with the identity they own. Otherwise, if they fail to achieve a suitable and stable identity, the individual may face various difficulties in understanding themselves.

In this fifth stage, if an individual fails to resolve the crisis, they will experience role confusion as described by Erikson. This condition arises when an individual is unable to develop a clear identity that aligns with who they are due to pressure from their social environment. The core issue in this role confusion is that when a person has not yet formed a complete self-identity, they experience uncertainty about the roles they should assume (Sun and Sun, 2021). This pressure stems from the individual's true desired identity conflicting with the demands of the social environment. Individuals experiencing role confusion tend to doubt themselves, lack a strong sense of conviction, and struggle to make decisions. In certain situations, individuals may even choose to conceal parts of their identity as a form of adaptation to the social pressures they face. According to Galliher et al. (2017), compartmentalizing one's identity is one way to reduce tension within the individual. Although this choice may increase the individual's identity conflict, it can help the individual avoid discrimination from their social environment.

In conclusion, Erikson's psychosocial theory explains that identity formation is a process that occurs through interaction between the individual and the social environment. This theory suggests that identity conflict arises when an individual has difficulty forming a stable identity due to social pressure. Thus, this theory serves as the primary framework for explaining the factors that cause identity conflict and for examining how Prince Henry expresses it in the movie *Red, White, and Royal Blue*.

4. Queer Theory

Queer theory rejects the classification of gender and sexuality. This theory questions the binary divide between men and women, or between people who are attracted to the opposite sex and those who are attracted to the same sex. This theory explains that a person's identity is not fixed but can change and depends on experience and social influences. Judith Butler pioneered this idea in the work *Gender Trouble* (1999), where they introduced the concept of performative gender. According to Butler (1999), performative gender is not something inherent at birth but is continuously shaped through the repetition of social behavior. Through this understanding, queer theory not only views identity as fluid but also critiques social norms that limit the diversity of identities and sexualities.

Queer theory rejects the common assumption that people with identities other than heterosexual are considered different or unacceptable. Queer theory challenges the dominant heteronormative

assumptions by emphasizing that identities outside of heterosexuality should not be marginalized or considered unacceptable (Lam-Nguyen, 2025). Instead, this theory affords everyone the space to freely express their true selves without being constrained by rigid rules regarding gender or whom one is allowed to love. According to Butler (1999), gender identity and sexuality do not come from nature but are formed through repeated social construction and influenced by the dominant norm called the heteronormative matrix. Queer theory is used in identity studies to understand how institutional pressures and heteronormative norms shape how people negotiate and express their identities. According to this viewpoint, conflicts between one's own identity and socially imposed norms can lead to identity conflict.

In this study, queer theory is positioned as a supporting framework that complements the analysis of Erikson's psychosocial theory, which serves as the primary approach. Queer theory is employed to understand how heteronormative expectations and royal social norms contribute to Prince Henry's identity conflict and influence the way he negotiates his personal identity. Through the perspective of queer theory, particularly the concept of performative gender, Henry's identity as a prince can be understood as a role he continually performs to satisfy the expectations of the monarchy. Meanwhile, his sexual identity is concealed or restricted because it does not align with the dominant heteronormative expectations within the royal environment. Therefore, Erikson's

psychosocial theory and Butler's queer theory serve as the analytical framework for this study.

In conclusion, queer theory explains that identity is shaped through interaction with the social environment and is not fixed. Through this theory, it can be understood that heteronormative norms and the demands placed on him as a member of the royal family influence the way Prince Henry presents and maintains his identity. thus, this theory is used to support the analysis of identity conflict examined through psychosocial theory.

B. Review of Relevant Research

In conducting this study, the researcher reviewed several prior studies on the topic. These studies were used to understand the findings of previous research. The aim was to identify similarities and differences between earlier studies and the present study. Additionally, the review of prior research aimed to establish the position of this study and identify research gaps that remain unaddressed.

Several previous studies have examined the movie *Red, White and Royal Blue* from various perspectives. Zahira's (2024) study found that the process of shrinking, adding, and changing variations in the translation included the loss of several important characters related to Alex's identity development. Meanwhile, Yocheva (2024) points out that both the novel and the movie adaptation successfully portray a queer relationship that focuses not only on sexuality but also on a profound love story relevant to

sociopolitical issues. Nafalitha (2023) revealed that some readers viewed the representation as positive and relatable; others accepted it but offered criticism regarding certain aspects of the story; while others viewed the representation of queer relationships in the novel as still lacking in realism. Additionally, Mashuri et al. (2024) identified that Henry's courage to accept his identity as a gay man did not suddenly appear but rather because he received support, which made him accept himself and be open to society. Furthermore, Disha (2025) showed that the movie *Red, White and Royal Blue* is not just a romantic story but also a story about the struggle to accept one's identity amid social and media pressure. Therefore, in addition to research focused on *Red, White and Royal Blue*, it is important to review studies that examine identity as a central concept to gain a deeper understanding of the identity dynamics experienced at the individual level.

Several previous studies have used Erikson's psychosocial theory to analyze character identity in movies. Floriani et al. (2025) revealed that the identity crisis experienced by adolescents does not occur instantly but because of neglect and lack of communication with parents, rejection by peers, the influence of social media, and dangerous ideologies. Additionally, Salsabila and Nugroho (2025) analyzed the character Margaret in the movie *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret* and found that identity formation in adolescents is influenced by religion, physical change, family and peers, leading to a clearer sense of identity. In line with these findings, Lathifah and Prastiwi (2025) conducted research on the movie *Clouds* and pointed

out that the character is still able to develop a mature identity through music, social relationships, and a search for meaning despite facing a terminal illness. Meanwhile, Al Fajri and Kusuma (2025) found that psychological conflict, identity development and defense mechanisms played an important role in shaping Elizabeth's leadership, particularly in dealing with political pressure and her responsibilities. These findings suggest that Erikson's theory provides a suitable framework for analyzing the identity conflict experienced by the characters in this study.

Through previous research, the movie *Red, White and Royal Blue* has been examined from various perspectives, including queer representation, sexual identity, character conflict, and audience acceptance of queer relationships. Additionally, several studies have used Erikson's psychosocial theory to analyze the development of characters' identities in various movies. However, there has been no research that specifically examines Prince Henry's identity conflict in the movie *Red, White and Royal Blue* using Erikson's psychosocial theory as the primary framework and Butler's queer theory as a supporting framework. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by analyzing the factors causing Prince Henry's identity conflict and how that conflict is expressed in the movie.

C. Conceptual Framework

This study focuses on the identity conflict experienced by Prince Henry in the movie *Red, White and Royal Blue*. To analyze this conflict, this study employs Erikson's psychosocial theory as its primary framework,

specifically the Identity vs. Role Confusion stage. This theory is used to understand the factors that cause Henry's identity conflict and its impact on his identity formation.

As a supporting theory, this study employs Butler's queer theory. This study views identity as something shaped through performative processes and influenced by social and cultural norms. It helps explain how the social environment surrounding Henry influences the formation and expression of his identity. This study uses both theories to analyze the factors causing Prince Henry's identity conflict and how that conflict is expressed through dialogue, actions, emotions, and behavior in the movie. This study is structured around a conceptual framework for analyzing Prince Henry's identity conflict in the movie *Red, White and Royal Blue*. This conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

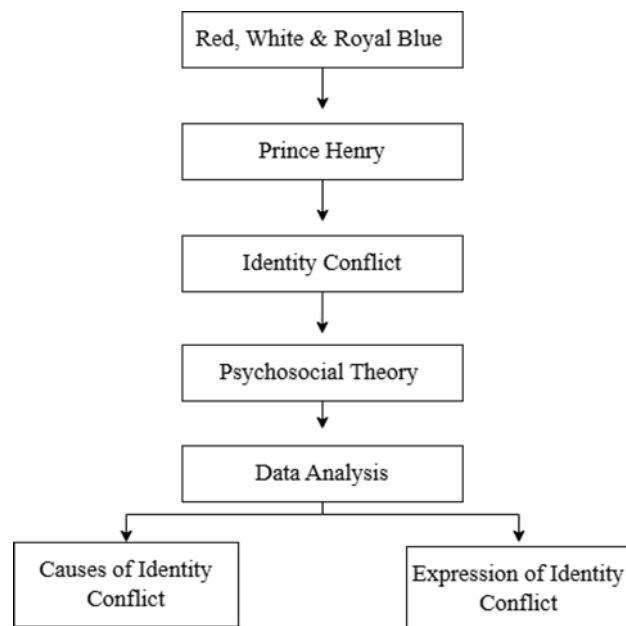


Figure 2. 1 The Concept of Henry's Identity Conflict

The figure's theoretical framework above presents Henry's identity conflict in the movie *Red, White and Royal Blue*. This study focuses on the identity conflict experienced by Prince Henry in *Red, White and Royal Blue*. This identity conflict is analyzed using Erikson's psychosocial development theory as the primary theory and Butler's queer theory as the supporting theory. Through these two theories, this study aims to identify the factors causing Prince Henry's identity conflict and to analyze how this conflict is expressed through the dialogue, actions, emotions, and behavior in the movie.

In conclusion, the conceptual framework of this study illustrates the relationship between the research subject, the theories employed, and the focus of the analysis. this conceptual framework serves as a guide for analyzing the factors that cause identity conflict and the expression of that conflict experienced by Prince Henry in the movie *Red, White, and Royal Blue*. Through this conceptual framework, the analysis is conducted in a focused manner in accordance with the research questions and objectives.