

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Human is a social being. A person is a part of society, and in turn it will have its influence or impact toward a person, good or bad. Society has its own culture, and culture is the specific way in which a community adapts to its environment, and the specific culture that people are immersed in has important and profound implications for our thoughts and behaviors (Heine 28). One thing society has that has an immediate bearing to a person is that it has its own norm and set of rules, and it means that one is expected to be in line with what the society believes to be right. If one is considered to be different than the rest of the members of society, especially in a way that is not viewed highly, it could lead to problems, ranging from just a simple disgruntled look from people in the street, to public persecution to correct society's wrong.

Generally, a person would try not to deviate from what his or her society accepts, so that they could have a sense of belonging into that society and be comfortable while living their life as part of it. The need to belong has been theorized to be as basic to our mind as hunger or thirst to our body. People strive to connect with others even at high cost, and avoid disconnection by all means (Baumeister & Leary 95). However, it is possible for an individual to not be in accordance to what a society says and tells one to do, regardless of whether in which part of moral compass a person is.

The issue of gender and sexuality is one of the factors that could lead a person not to be comfortable while living his or her life in the middle of the society they belong to. There are already sets of norm, written or not, that dictates how one's sexual preference should be in a kind of society. In a heteronormative society for example, the majority of people see that being heterosexual is the right thing to be, that it is normal and every person living on that society should be like that. The view of such kind of society would put people who does not belong or have different sexual preference, people who are homosexual, bisexual, or intersex, to be viewed differently than others, if the majority happen to know about those people's deal. The people who are considered to deviate from the norm could be treated differently, or even if somehow people could accept the difference, there might still be some awkwardness that lingers in the interaction between the people who are considered "normal" and those who are not. Some might ended up become marginalized, or socially excluded, and they might not be considered to be the "proper" part of the society they lives in. Not only does the need to belong shape emotion and cognition, it also influences psychological and physical health: Given the importance of feeling socially included, being socially excluded has painful and stressful outcomes for individuals (Pfundmair et al 2)

In Joe Haldeman's book titled *The Forever War*, which was first published in 1974, an issue that can be further discussed is the marginalization of the main character of the book, William Mandella. The book is set in a science-fiction setting where humanity is at war against extra-terrestrial beings called the Taurans, and that Mandella is a soldier who got send to defend a base of Earth's

forces in space. The issue that will be discussed in this thesis however, is not about Mandella's actions and exploits during the war, but rather about what happens after he gets back from the war. Due to certain issues, he found out that society had changed so much compared to the one he knows before his time at the war. It turned out that the social norm had changed so much that Mandella had a hard time readjusting himself to the society, that he had become the minority in the new society, and because of that, he became somewhat marginalized. At first the society was a heteronormative one, much like what most societies are, but when Mandella came back, the society had become one that encouraged people to actually have relationship with those of the same sex, and that heterosexual people were the ones who considered to be socially dysfunctional, the ones who needed to be corrected. One of the most significant factors that lead to Mandella's marginalization is the fact that he is a heterosexual, but the society had become one that embraces homosexuality society. Some people viewed him as the relic of the past that needed to be re-educated according to the new social norm.

Marginalization is the process where someone is being pushed to the edge of a society, to be made marginal, or to be considered to be a lesser member of a group or society. Marginalization usually occurs on the people who are viewed as the minority of a larger part of society. In *The Forever War*, William Mandella is being marginalized due to his sexual orientation. Later on in the story, Mandella was being promoted and were given a task to lead his own company, but he had his own worries about how would his subordinates act toward him because all but

him are homosexuals. Parts of the novel explores Mandella's struggle to come in term with some set of new social rules and the problems he has in the process.

Joe Haldeman is an American author that has been deemed as one of the most prominent figures in the science-fiction literature scenes. He was born in Oklahoma, 9 June 1943. He got enlisted in the US Army in 1967 and participated in the Vietnam War. Many believe that his experiences in the war influenced him on his writing, for there are several novels that he wrote have war as its prominent theme (<http://www.joehaldeman.com/biography>).

The Forever War is the second novel that Haldeman wrote, and later on it would be followed by a spiritual sequel titled *Forever Peace* (1997) and a direct sequel titled *Forever Free* (1999). *The Forever War* has received critical acclaim upon release, with authors like Joe Scalzi or Steven King who has expressed their praise for the work. The novel has become a classic in science-fiction genre, and it has won several awards such as the Best Novel in Hugo Award (1976), Best Novel in Locus Award (1976), Best Novel in Nebula Award (1976), and winner of Ditmar Award (1976), further showing the recognition and acknowledgment it has.

The marginalization of the character of William Mandella is one interesting issue to explore, because it depicts a homocentric society and the main character is a heterosexual man. Most literary works that have issue about sexual preferences would feature homosexual characters and their struggle in a heteronormative society, but this novel reverses the spectrum and therefore is worth analyzing. Further on, the social norm presents in the book is not always

that way, that before, it was a heteronormative society, and there is a shifting of norm that becomes another issue that Mandella has to deal with.

The writer would like to use Gayle Rubin's concept of charmed which includes the "good sex" and "bad sex" term, where a distinction is made in society between sexual behaviours that are tolerated and accepted and those that are not, to address the issue that become the focus of the thesis, due to how the issue of gender and sexuality have become the primary cause of the struggle of William Mandella after the war, and how he would become marginalized in the new society. This thesis would analyze the significance of the shifts in the social norm before and after Mandella went to the war, its effects on Mandella himself, to further pursue the notion that gender and sexuality is in reality, socially constructed.

1.2. Statement of the Problems

In order to analyze the queer issues present in the novel, the writer would like to propose two research questions:

1. How is marginalization depicted in the novel?
2. What are the causes and effects of marginalization toward the character of William Mandella?

1.3. Objective of the Study

The Objective of the study is to seek the answers to the questions proposed in the statement of the problem:

1. To find how marginalization is depicted in the novel.

2. To find out the causes and effects of marginalization toward the character of William Mandella.

1.4. Scope and Limitation

The writer would like to limit the character that is going to be analyzed to one figure of the character William Mandella, and the experiences he has during the certain parts of the story regarding the new society norm that led to his marginalization. The focus of this thesis is the effects of the societal conditions that are presents after he came back from the war, and therefore the experiences he went through in the war or battle that has nothing to do with the discussion at hand will not be further analyzed, unless it's relevant in one way or another.

1.5. Significance of The Study

By reading the thesis, readers can see queer issues from different perspectives, seeing as how the society in the novel is one that encourages homosexuality, as opposed to societies depicted on most literary works or text that have queer issues. In most circumstances queer issues revolve around gay or lesbian characters' struggle in the world that sees relationship between people of the same sex, but *The Forever War* turn the premise around and therefore it could shed a new light into the issues of queer in literature.

The thesis will also touch the subject of marginalization, and it could raise the awareness of the readers about the issue. The thesis could also show the social construction of sexuality as there is a shift regarding accepted sexuality that happened in the book.

The thesis could also be used as a reference for further study regarding

marginalization or queer issues, and perhaps to provide some information for those who would take similar or related subject in the future.

1.6.Theoretical Background

Gayle Rubin's theory regarding heteronormativity, which also contains the concept of the charmed circle will be used as the basis of the analysis of the thesis, primarily the condition of the society in which the protagonist came back to after the war. Basically, the theory states that there is some kind of social hierarchy where a line is drawn between what considered to be "good sex" and "bad sex", which kind of sexual behaviours that are appropriate and accepted by society and which that are not (Rubin 152). In the theory, Rubin created the sex hierarchy, which includes the charmed circle and the outer limits. The charmed circle contains sexual behaviour that are considered as good, normal, natural, and blessed sexuality, for example heterosexuality, monogamy, or being married. The outer limits on the other hand, comprised of things that are viewed as bad, abnormal, unnatural, and damned sexuality, such as homosexuality, pornography, and cross-generational relationship.

1.7. Method of the Study

The writer will seek to collect the data necessary to the study. The writer will use close reading in order to give proper understanding of the issues present in the novel *The Forever War*, and elements of the novel such as plot, character, settings will also be taken into consideration and serve as the means to achieve the objective of the study.

The data collected will be sorted to find which data are relevant and

therefore will be included in the thesis, and the data that are deemed to be unfit will be discarded.

The writer would like to find the data from the novel that could give some information about the issues that become the focus of the thesis. First the writer would discuss societal norm and social construction depicted in the novel, and how the norm could change into what is depicted in the latter half of the novel. Then the writer would relate those issues with the marginalization of the main character of the novel, how it affect him in some way or another because of how different the society he lives in, before and after he joined the army and went to the war, and what the character does to come into term with the change. Finally, the writer would draw a conclusion based on the analysis of the data gathered using the appropriate theory. The writer would like to use qualitative method to analyze the data that has been collected and classified, in order to be able to answer the objective of the study.

1.8. Definition of Key Terms

Marginalization: feeling of being in the minority and excluded from the masses

Heteronormativity: the assumption, often unconscious, that heterosexuality is the universal norm by which everyone's experience can be understood.

Social construction:

Homosexuality: Sexual preference with people of the same sex

