# CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Indonesia is a multicultural country consists of many ethnic groups and cultures. Among those groups, there is one big ethnic group in Indonesia like Arabian. It grows faster in this country, statistics show that the number of Arabian population grows from about 2,4% or about 5.000 people in 1940's (Basundoro) to 1,8 million people in 2008 (Khan). Their presence makes the diversity of Indonesia, in terms of culture and the role of the ethnicity.

In Surabaya, there is a huge number of Arabian. People are able to find them in every corner of the city. They sometimes lives in a certain center of the city called Arabian Town or Ampel. People perceive Arabian as role model in society due to their religiousness since most of them are Muslims. Historically, Islam was brought and spread by Arabian by trading and they stayed in several environments in Indonesia to introduce Islam to their surroundings (Rifai). The role model that they brought was illustrated from what they have done to introduce lessons of Islam with the background knowledge that they brought directly from the origin place of Islam itself, Saudi Arabian. Therefore, people assume that their knowledge of Islam is better than the others, and by it, they left a distinctive characteristics to the

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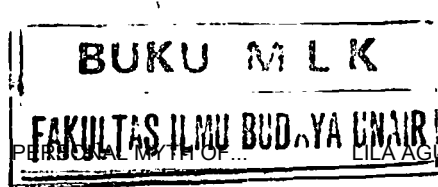
surrounding. In order to maintain their identity, the Arabian family tends to be strict in raising their children in order to keep their image as religious ethnic.

In most of Arabian society, the sexuality belief that they keep is heterosexuality. On the other hand, there is a small number of Arabians that deviate the idea of heterosexual. As well as gender, it is because someone can easily change their identity based on their experience in life, the example is the society that has big impact to our behavioral changes, and unconsciously people will follow the roles in their surroundings which can change their gender and sexuality. According to Judith Butler, gender is a fluid identity which can change through time, there is no single meaning of gender, *"This seems to point towards the conclusion that gender is not something one is, it is something one does, an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun, a "doing" rather than a "being"* (Butler 55). It happens to several people regardless their ethnicity, belief, status and so forth. The fact is, since the gender and sexuality is fluid, there will be possibility that people who are considered to be religious, such as Arabian, could turn from the traditional gender role and sexuality assumption which they believes as a contradiction religion.

Common people in Indonesia, a country with Islam as the major religion, still believe that humans are created as male and female. Moreover, these two creations should reflect their own characteristics, and anything related to their behavior should be based on the existing norms. The norm is a rule that is enforced by society and it makes people to follow it. The rules had been rooted since someone was a kid. There

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is a certain socialization made by parents, education places, friends, and media that lead men and women socially constructed (Boundless). Thus, people who do not conform the norm of the traditional gender and sexuality assumptions will be discriminated and neglected by the society.

In Islam, there is knowledge about sexuality and religion to provide a proper understanding to society. Based on *Fiqh Seksualitas,* sexuality issue from Islamic perspective is a part of *mu'amalah* (relation between human), and it is not *'ibadah* (relation between human and God). That is why, *mu'amalah* principals should be the basis, parameters, and standards in understanding and interpreting the laws related to the issues of sexuality, because of *"fiqh seksualitas"* is an *ijtihady* (result of human interpretation), not *ta'abbudy* (given by Merciful God) (Muhammad, Mulia and Wahid 33-34).

In Indonesia, for lesbians who consider a women who has a relationship with women, sometimes they hide their identity from the society, since it is considered taboo to reveal their identity and society still think based on *ijtihady,* therefore it is saver and fairer for them to not appear in the social life. It is also added by the Muslim fundamentalist that have been responsible in hardening the official and social attitudes against non-conforming sexual behavior in Muslim countries (Kreps). There was massive rejection occurred involving *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI) for organizing a regional conference *"International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Association"* in Surabaya at March 2010. For that

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institution, same sex relationship is abandoned for any religion, especially for Islam, which has strict rules about it (News).

Based on the phenomenon above, the researcher conducted a further research under Personal Myth theory by McAdams. The researcher took three lesbian Arabian with the same age who represents their life based on their religious education when they were a little girl, the reason when they decided to become lesbians, and their future expectations. From the data, it can be determined how they represent the way they think and behave. These three lesbians have different background despite their ethnic similarity. The differences include family, education, and neighborhood, which also play a role in their character building. The expectation of this study is to search for the impact of being lesbian in their daily life. The discrimination of a lesbian will also be the focus of the research. It sometimes affects the psychological and mental of a lesbian because she might have to bear a burden that spurred on the emotional and behavioral changes.

The researcher will further explore whether a lesbian who also wanted her lesbian identity should be recognized explicitly and reveal the desired reaction emerged from the surrounding community, especially families. It is because from the facts that have been widely circulated, disclosure of a lesbian identity is a beginning where she just had to avoid or even disappear from the lives of others because they are embarrassing the family, especially in Arabian culture. Automatically, parents

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have the stages of denial, isolation, and bargaining; and they are unable to progress to acceptance (Kidd).

To gain more information, the researcher tries to connect the lesbian identity with personal myth theory by Dan P. McAdams, which talk about life stories containing the object's experiences through life. The aims are to describe their identity and expectation in the future or anything else related with their live. By collecting the stories, the researcher will find any possibilities for the research about their background or their reasons on why choosing to be a lesbian. The description of life-stories called as personal myth which the person is the creator of the mythology to their own life (D. P. McAdams 11-14)

1.2 Statement of the Problem

1. How is the process of becoming a lesbian?

2. How they negotiate between religion and desire?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The aim of this research is to identify the process of becoming a lesbian and how they negotiate between religion and desire in Arabian women. Furthermore, this research will reveal the problems with their stories and map it into a final finding.

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1.4 Significance of the Study

This research tries to answer the gap from the previous study that will produce new things, where the new things will be very helpful for the readers, both theoretically and pragmatically. Pragmatically, the readers will understand the story of a lesbian from her own perspective. Surely, it will help the readers to dive under her life and also follow her struggle in her life. Theoretically, this study will enrich the other research on Personal Myth by McAdams. It is significant because there is only a small numbers of a thesis that proposes the Personal Myth by McAdams. Moreover, the thesis that proposes the McAdams theory was not telling the story of a lesbian, but from a heterosexual person.

Definition of Key Terms

Ethnicity or ethnic: There are new definitions about ethnicity while first it was considered as "caste" or "race", now it is based on three core elements, namely common descent, a common history, and a common homeland. They are appear in the same culture and behave, and people will recognize them as the same common people (E. D. Green 2)

Arabian: Originally Arabian is a term for people of three kinds; those whose language was Arabic, those who were the children of Arabians, those who lived in the land of the Arabians which is the Arabian peninsula from the Qulzum sea, the sea of

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Basra and from the farthest limit of Yemen up to where Shaam begins. So Yemen is included as their land but Shaam is not included. This was the land of the Arabians, at the time of the awakening and dispatch of the Arabians and before it (Taymiyyah 2)

Islam Religion: It is one of beliefs, an adherence to the commands of Allah without objection, observing His commands, obeying Allah, everything happens in the universe is by the commands of Allah. It is an established fact that everything in this universe follows certain rule, and an unalterable law to which it submits (Al-Lahim 4)

Lesbian: Term to use to describe female who attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other female. Lesbian term is also an identity label to call someone with different perspective of behave (Green and Peterson)

Identity: It is a term that widely used and can mean many different things to different people. It is sometimes used to refer to a sense of integration of the self, in which different aspects come together in a unified whole. Another common use of the term, particularly which are staked out by members of ethnic and nationality groups (Deaux 1)

Negotiation: A term used to define about conflict scenarios between two or more different things in someone's thought. This negotiation's power has by someone who has goals in their life, it is also helpful to say a word about strategies and tactics and how someone fit into different things (Alfredson and Cungu)

Personal myth: According to McAdams, it is a story which shaped naturally to reconstruct the different parts from our lives into whole stories. It is including the beginning, the present life, and the anticipation future, because our story is continues created by mythology of life (D. P. McAdams)

Life stories: It is start with the early childhood as the beginning story, continue with the story of present life, and end with the anticipation future from someone as the mythologist or the one who has the story. It is also include the ups and downs, the goods and bad experiences (D. P. McAdams)

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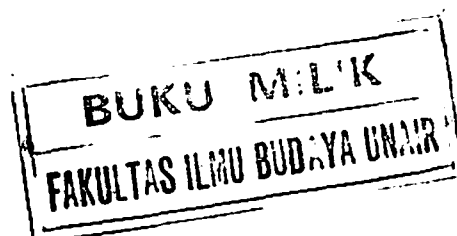
CHAPTER 2
THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK