

***EXPRESSIONS OF PRINCE HENRY'S IDENTITY CONFLICT IN RED, WHITE AND ROYAL BLUE: A PSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVE*****Alfina Nur Fatdilah¹, Fitra Pinandhita^{2*}, Samsul Arifin³**^{1, 2*, 3} Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas PGRI MadiunEmail Correspondence: fitra.pinandhita@unipma.ac.id***Abstract***

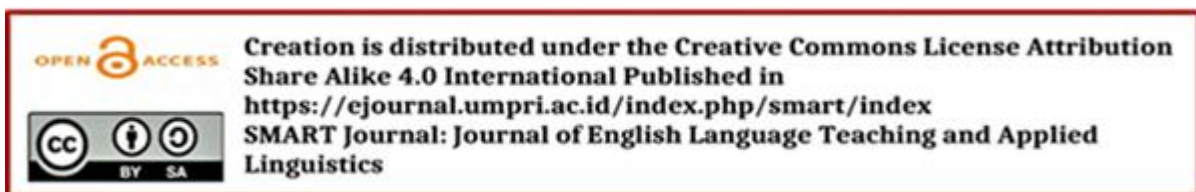
Identity conflict may emerge when personal identity conflicts with social expectations. This study aims to examine Prince Henry's expression of identity conflict in the movie Red, White and Royal Blue from a psychosocial perspective. This qualitative study used observation and documentation to analyze Henry's dialogue, emotions, body language, actions, and interactions. The data were analyzed using Erikson's psychosocial theory, supported by Butler's queer theory. The findings reveal three forms of identity conflict expression: internal emotional, verbal, and non-verbal expression. These forms reflect Henry's struggle to negotiate his personal identity with expectations associated with his royal position and social environment.

Keywords: Identity Conflict, Prince Henry, Psychosocial Theory, Red White and Royal Blue

INTRODUCTION

Popular literature is closely linked to society because it reflects various social experiences in a form that is easily accessible to a wide audience. In addition to providing entertainment, popular literature also serves as a medium for representing and examining social reality, allowing readers and audiences to better understand various issues in society (Khan, 2021; Fiske, 2010; Singh, 2025). As popular literature continues to evolve, movies have become one of its most effective forms in terms of their ability to combine narrative, dialogue, and visual representation. Through these elements, movies not only entertain audiences but also depict complicated human experiences, including identity development and the conflicts individuals face in negotiating their identity. This makes movies an important subject of literary analysis, particularly for examining identity conflict within contemporary social contexts.

Identity is a development process that occurs continuously through interactions



between an individual and their social environment; it is not purely a fixed set of characteristics. Family, peers, school, and society all play a role in shaping how individuals understand themselves and adapt to their social role (Galliher et al., 2017; Pratama et al., 2025). However, identity development does not always proceed smoothly. When personal identity conflicts with social expectations, individuals may experience identity conflict, which is often characterized by confusion, anxiety, and emotional distress (Galliher et al., n.d.; Leung, 2021). These identity conflicts become more complicated when they involve sexual identity, as individuals are often required to negotiate their true selves while still conforming to dominant social and cultural norms.

A literary work that shows the identity conflict is the movie *Red, White and Royal Blue*, adapted from Casey McQuiston's novel of the same title. The story follows Prince Henry, a member of the British royal family, as he struggles to balance his personal identity with the expectations tied to his royal status. As he enters a romantic relationship with Alex Claremont-Diaz, Henry faces mounting pressure to uphold the royal family's public image, forcing him to suppress his true identity and emotions. As a result, he experiences a constant conflict between his personal desires and the responsibilities imposed by his family and society, making him an ideal subject for examining the expression of identity conflict from a psychosocial perspective.

In examining the expression of Henry's identity conflict, this study employs Erikson's Psychosocial Theory as its primary theoretical framework. The theory specifically focuses on the Identity versus Role Confusion stage, which explains how identity develops through the interaction between psychological and social factors. Since Henry's struggles are closely tied to his sexual identity, this study also adopts Butler's queer theory. The theory explains how heteronormative norms and social expectations influence how individuals express and negotiate their identities (Butler, 1999). The combination of these theories allows for a deeper understanding of Henry's identity conflict by linking his internal psychosocial struggles to external social pressures, as reflected in his expressions through the movie.

Several previous studies have explored *Red, White and Royal Blue* from various perspectives. Nafalitha et al., (2023) examined readers' responses to queer representations in *Red, White and Royal Blue* and found that readers viewed the portrayal of queer characters

from diverse perspectives. Darmana et al. (2026) analyzed Prince Henry's internal and external conflict using Kenney's conflict theory, revealing that his struggles were influenced by family expectations, social pressure, and his role as a member of the royal family. Meanwhile, Salsabila & Nugroho (2025) examined identity development through Erikson's psychosocial theory in different literary works and concluded that identity development is influenced by various psychological and social factors. However, research specifically examining how Prince Henry expresses his identity conflict remains limited.

Previous studies have not combined psychosocial theory with queer theory to examine the ways in that Henry's identity conflict is expressed within the social expectations surrounding his position as a member of the royal family. This limitation highlights the need for a more focused analysis that links Henry's internal psychosocial struggles to the social pressures influencing his identity expression. This gap is important to address because examining identity conflict in terms of its causes or general forms of conflict may not fully explain how psychological and social pressures play out through a figure's emotional and behavioral responses.

Therefore, this study presents a psychosocial analysis of Prince Henry's identity conflict by examining his expressions. Psychosocial theory is used as the main theory to explain the psychological processes of identity development and role conflict, while queer theory supports the analysis of heteronormative social expectations surrounding Henry's personal identity. Through a combination of these perspectives, this study aims to provide a more complete explanation of how psychological and social pressures shape the ways in which identity conflict is expressed. Thus, this study aims to examine Prince Henry's expression of identity conflict in the movie *Red, White and Royal Blue* from a psychosocial perspective, specifically by analyzing his emotional, verbal, and non-verbal expression through the movie.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design to examine Prince Henry's expression of identity conflict in the movie *Red, White and Royal Blue* (2023). Qualitative research is appropriate for exploring and interpreting the meanings embedded in social and human

experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study focuses on how Prince Henry expresses his identity conflict through emotions, verbal expression, and non-verbal expression. Psychosocial theory serves as the primary analytical framework, while queer theory is used as a supporting perspective to interpret the influence of heteronormative expectations on Henry's expression of identity. The primary data source is the movie *Red, White and Royal Blue* (2023), directed by Matthew Lopez. Primary data consist of Prince Henry's dialogue, emotional expressions, body language, actions, and interactions that reflect his identity conflict. Secondary data were obtained from books, journals, articles, previous research, and other academic publications related to identity conflict, Erikson's psychosocial theory, and Butler's queer theory.

Data were collected through observation and documentation. The researcher watched the movie repeatedly to understand the plot and the character of Prince Henry. Relevant dialogue, scenes, emotions, body language, and interactions were documented and classified according to the research focus. During the observation process, scenes and dialogues were selected when they revealed a conflict between Henry's personal identity and the expectation inherent in his social position and status as a member of the royal family, or when his emotional, verbal, or non-verbal response indicated such a conflict. Relevant scenes were documented by transcribing the dialogue, describing the scenes, and noting the character's actions and emotional responses. The selected data were then coded according to the form of expression of identity conflict.

Data indicating Henry's internal emotional responses, such as emotional suppression and anxiety, were categorized as internal emotional expressions. The data that show Henry communicated his personal identity and identity conflict directly through spoken language were categorized as verbal expression. Meanwhile, data showing conflict through body movements, body language, and physical actions without direct communication were categorized as non-verbal expressions. These three categories were derived from repeated observations of the selected scenes and were used to organize the findings according to the various ways in which Henry's identity conflict was expressed.

Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions (Miles et al., 2014). First, the researcher conducted data reduction by selecting

only scenes and dialogues relevant to the research focus and eliminating unrelated information. Second, the selected data were coded and grouped into three categories of identity conflict expressions, internal emotional expression, verbal expression, or non-verbal expression. Third, the categorized data were displayed through descriptive explanations supported by descriptions of selected scenes and dialogue. Finally, conclusions were drawn by interpreting the patterns found in the data using psychosocial theory as the main theory and queer theory as supporting theory. Through these procedures, this study examines how Prince Henry's identity conflict is expressed through internal emotional, verbal, and non-verbal expression in the movie.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings and discussion regarding Prince Henry's expression of identity conflict in the movie *Red, White and Royal Blue*. These findings are based on Prince Henry's dialogue, emotional responses, body language, and behavior, as identified through observation of the movie. This analysis identifies three main forms of identity conflict expression. Table 1 summarizes the data identified in each category, while the following sections present the findings and discussion regarding each form.

Table 1. Summary of Henry's Identity Conflict Expression

Category	Data	Evidence (movie)	Expression
Internal emotional expression	Figure 1	Jumping into the lake	Emotional withdrawal
	Figure 2	Emotional outburst	Suppressed emotion
Verbal expression	Figure 3	Revealing his sexual identity	Direct disclosure
	Figure 4	Setting boundaries	Verbalizing fear
Non-verbal expression	Figure 5	Twisting the ring	Anxiety
	Figure 6	Hiding in the closet	Avoidance

Internal Emotional Expression

Result

The findings indicate that internal emotional expression is the most dominant form through which Prince Henry expresses his identity conflict. Rather than communicating his emotions directly, Henry frequently suppresses feelings of fear, anxiety, sadness, and guilt when confronted with situations that challenge his personal identity. These emotional

responses demonstrate his psychosocial struggle in balancing his personal desires with the expectations attached to his role as a member of the British royal family.



Figure 1 Jumping into the lake

In Figure 1, Alex expresses his wish for him and Henry to make their relationship public. Instead of responding directly, Henry suddenly gets up and jumps into the lake. He stays underwater for a moment before resurfacing. His reaction reflects an inner emotional response in which he avoids verbal communication and chooses to withdraw physically to manage psychological stress.



Figure 2 Emotional Outburst

In Figure 2, Henry reacts emotionally when Alex says that he is the only one trying to save their relationship. Henry responds, “Because it cost you nothing!” This statement is made in the middle of an emotional argument and is accompanied by a clearly visible expression of anger. This expression reflects the accumulation of emotional pressure he has long suppressed.

Discussion

These findings indicate that emotional expression was one of the ways Henry responds to his identity conflict. His decision to jump into the lake can be interpreted as an attempt to temporarily withdraw from a situation that requires him to confront the conflict between his personal desires and his royal responsibilities. Rather than immediately communicating his

feelings, Henry responds through physical withdrawal, suggesting that the pressure surrounding his identity is initially processed through his emotional response.

This emotional outburst serves as another indication of this inner conflict. Henry's statement, "Because it cost you nothing!", reflects the accumulation of emotional pressure arising from the various consequences he links to his relationship with Alex. According to Erikson (1968), this response reflects the difficulty of balancing personal identity with social roles and expectations. This interpretation is supported by Galliher et al., (2017) who explain that identity develops through continuous interaction between the individual and their environment. This is also consistent with the findings of Darmana et al. (2026), which indicate that Prince Henry's conflicts were influenced by social pressures, family dynamics, and his public status. Although Darmana et al. (2026) focused on the sources of Henry's conflicts, this study further demonstrates how these pressures are reflected in his emotional responses, particularly through withdrawal and emotional outbursts.

Verbal expression

Result

Verbal expression appears when Prince Henry begins to communicate his identity conflict directly through spoken language. In contrast to the internal emotional expression, which is reflected through emotional reactions, verbal expression allows Henry to openly reveal his thoughts, feelings, and concerns. These expressions demonstrate his gradual willingness to acknowledge his personal identity despite the social expectations attached to his role as a member of the British royal family.



Figure 3 Revealing his sexual identity

In Figure 3, after Alex reveals that he is bisexual, Henry responds by saying, "Just to put it out there, I'm as gay as a maypole." This statement represents Henry's first explicit verbal statement about his sexual identity to someone outside his immediate family. Through

openly revealing his sexual orientation, Henry began to express a part of his identity that he had long kept hidden.



Figure 4 Setting boundaries

In Figure 4, shortly after revealing his identity, Henry tells Alex, “I just can’t afford for you to fall in love with me.” Rather than rejecting Alex’s feelings, Henry expresses his fears of the consequences that their relationship could have for his royal responsibilities. His statement reflects an attempt to establish emotional boundaries in order to protect both himself and Alex from the pressures associated with public expectations. This verbal expression demonstrates that Henry remains caught between his personal desires and the obligations imposed by his social position.

Discussion

These findings show that Henry’s verbal expressions indicating a shift toward more direct communication about his identity conflict. His statement that he says “I’m as gay as a maypole” shows that his willingness to acknowledge and communicate his sexual identity to Alex. According to Erikson (1968), this can be understood as part of the identity negation process, in which an individual tries to recognize and communicate their sense of self while dealing with conflicting social roles.

However, Henry’s statement that he cannot bear the risk of Alex falling in love with him shows that this verbal expression does not mean the conflict has been fully resolved. His concern about the consequences of their relationship indicates that his personal identity remains influenced by his position within the royal family. This finding is aligned with Butler (1999), which highlights how dominant heteronormative expectations shape the ways in which individuals express and negotiate their identities. Thus, Henry’s verbal expressions

reveal both his growing willingness to acknowledge his identity and the continuous social pressures that limit the open expression of that identity.

Non-verbal expression

Result

Non-verbal expression is reflected through Prince Henry's gestures, body language, and spontaneous actions when facing situations that threaten his personal identity. In contrast with verbal expression, these behaviors occur without direct verbal communication and reveal Henry's emotional state unconsciously. The findings show that non-verbal expression becomes another important way for Henry to communicate the psychosocial pressure caused by his identity conflict.



Figure 5 Twisting ring

In Figure 5, Henry repeatedly twists the ring on his left pinky finger whenever he experiences emotional pressure. This gesture first appears while inviting Alex to a polo match and reappears after their emails are leaked. The habit persisted spontaneously; Henry instinctively reached for the ring even after he had given it to Alex. That action indicates that the gesture had become an automatic response to stressful situations. This repetitive behavior reflects Henry's anxiety and demonstrates how his identity conflict is expressed through unconscious body language rather than spoken words.



Figure 6 Hiding in the closet

In Figure 6, another example of non-verbal expression is when Henry hides inside Alex's hotel closet after Zahra unexpectedly arrives. Rather than explaining the situation, Henry chooses to conceal himself to prevent others from discovering their relationship. His spontaneous action reflects his fear of public exposure and the possible consequences for both his personal identity and his position within the royal family. This behavior illustrates that avoidance becomes one of Henry's strategies for coping with psychosocial pressure.

Discussion

These findings indicate that Henry's identity conflict is also expressed through spontaneous movements and avoidance behaviors. His repetitive motion of twisting the ring signifies a physical response that arises when he experiences emotional stress. According to the psychosocial perspective, Erikson (1968), behavior reflects the tension accompanying Henry's difficulty in balancing his personal identity with the expectations surrounding his role as a member of the royal family.

Similarly, Henry's decision to hide in the closet shows avoidance behavior when his relationship is threatened with exposure. Butler (1999) perspective helps explain this behavior by highlighting the influence of heteronormative expectations on the visibility and expression of sexual identity. Henry's efforts to conceal himself reflect the social pressure surrounding the disclosure of his relationship. This behavior aligns with the concept of identity compartmentalization, in which individuals separate various aspects of their identity according to social context, which can potentially reduce their sense of self-consistency (Mosanya & Kwiatkowska, 2023). Therefore, his non-verbal expressions indicate that identity conflict manifests not only through what he says but also through his physical responses and avoidant behavior.

CONCLUSION

This study examines Prince Henry's expression of identity conflict in the movie *Red, White and Royal Blue* from a psychosocial perspective. The findings reveal three forms of identity conflict expression: internal emotional expression, verbal expression, and non-verbal expression. These forms reflect Henry's struggle to balance his persona identity with the expectations inherent in his position as a member of the British royal family, as well as

broader heteronormative social norms. This study contributes to literary studies by showing how Erikson's psychosocial theory, supported by Butler's queer theory, can be used to examine the psychological and social dimensions of identity conflict. Future research could explore identity conflict in other literary works using different theoretical perspectives or broader social contexts.

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