

**SOCIAL IDENTITY FORMATION OF EVA IN  
*FREEDOM WRITERS* MOVIE**

**A GRADUATING PAPER**

**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for Gaining the  
Bachelor Degree in English Literature**



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**2015**

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## ABSTRACT

*Freedom Writers* is an American movie adapted from *The Freedom Writers' Diaries: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and The World Around*. This movie tells about the social life in Long Beach, California. Gruwell's student named Eva dominates the background of the story about students' struggle of life to find their social identity. Eva is the second round character which has complex character and completes the plot development along with Gruwell as the first round character. This problem background encourages the writer to analyze social identity formation. The writer limits the focus of analysis in Eva's character since the social identity is important for Eva who is reaching the teen age. The writer uses Social Identity Theory by Henri Tajfel to conduct the analysis. Besides, the writer uses psychology of literature approach to support the analysis and connect the psychology and literature in this research. It is a qualitative research. The data are analyzed by using qualitative descriptive method. The analysis about Eva's social identity formation is divided into two processes: self-categorization and social comparison. However, the process generate group behavior. Group behavior involves intergroup differentiation and stereotypic perspective about in-group and out-group. The writer concludes that Eva's social identity formation process is influenced by family, environment, and self-experience.

Key words: *Identity, social identity, society, struggle, race segregation*

## ABSTRAK

Film *Freedom Writers* adalah sebuah film Amerika yang diadaptasi dari sebuah buku berjudul *The Freedom Writers' Diaries: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and The World Around*. Film ini menceritakan kehidupan sosial di Long Beach, California. Salah seorang murid Gruwell, Eva mendominasi latar belakang cerita berkaitan tentang perjuangan hidup dalam mencari identitas sosial. Eva adalah karakter utama kedua dengan karakter yang kompleks yang melengkapi perkembangan alur cerita bersama Gruwell sebagai tokoh utama pertama. Latar belakang masalah tersebut mendorong penulis untuk menganalisis pembentukan sosial identitas. Penulis membatasi analisis pada tokoh Eva, karena identitas sosial sangat penting bagi Eva yang masih berada di masa remaja. Penulis menggunakan teori identitas sosial dalam menyusun analisis. Selain itu, penulis menggunakan pendekatan psikologi sastra untuk mendukung analisis dan menjembatani antara psikologi dan sastra dalam penelitian. Ini adalah penelitian kualitatif dengan metode analisis deskriptif kualitatif. Analisis terhadap proses pembentukan identitas social pada tokoh Eva dibagi dalam dua proses: kategorisasi diri dan perbandingan social. Akan tetapi, proses pembentukan identitas sosial membentuk perilaku kelompok. Perilaku kelompok tersebut adalah perbedaan antar kelompok dan pandangan stereotip terhadap in-group dan out-group. Penulis menyimpulkan bahwa pembentukan identitas sosial pada tokoh Eva dipengaruhi oleh keluarga, lingkungan, dan pengalaman pribadi.

Kata Kunci: *Identitas, Identitas Sosial, Masyarakat, Perjuangan, Pemisahan antar ras.*

**MOTTO**

*There is nothing either good or bad*

*but thinking makes it so*

*~William Shakespeare~*



## **DEDICATION**

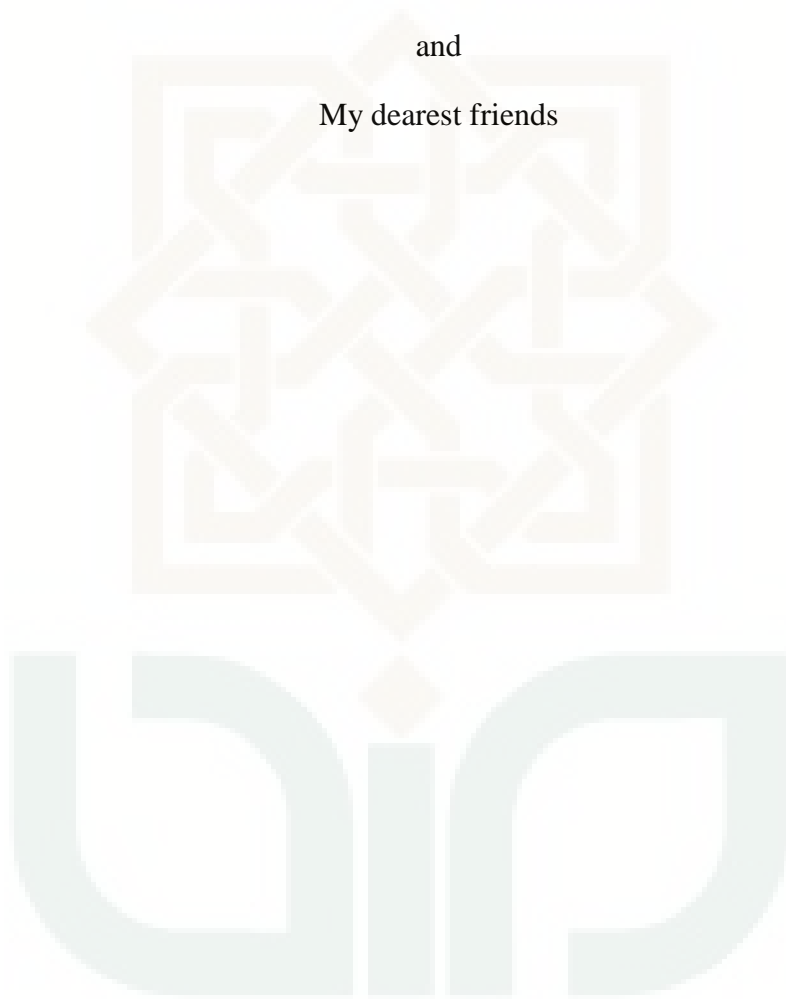
I dedicate this graduating paper for

My honorable parents

My beloved brothers and sister

and

My dearest friends







M. Hum., Margo Yuwono, M. Hum., Bambang Hariyanto, M. Hum., Teria Anargathi, S.S., M. A., M. Ainul Yaqin, S. Pd. M. Ed.

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I realize that this paper is not a perfect one. Therefore, any suggestions are gladly and warmly welcomed for improving this work.

*Wassalamu'alaikum wr.wb.*

Yogyakarta, 16 January 2015

Ulfa Puspa Sari

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background of Study

*Freedom Writers* (2007) is an American movie. The movie written and directed by Richard LaGravenese is an adaptation movie of Erin Gruwell's best seller *The Freedom Writers' Diaries: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and The World Around*. The movie won Golden Camera (2008) and Humanitas prize (2007) award. Besides, it was nominated in Image Awards (2008) (<http://www.imdb.com>). The movie is inspired by real experiences of Erin Gruwell and her students, known as the *Freedom Writers*. The movie is more interesting to be analyzed since it presents the audio-visual element so that the audience can understand the idea of the movie story more clearly. Besides, visual element of the movie depicts the situation and condition more actually. In contrast, literary work such as novel, play, short story, or poem only portrays the idea in text narratively.

As a work of literature, movie represents actual event of the author's experiences and surrounding circumstances. Literature is a mirror or reflection of a real life such as the social condition, history, human's experiences, story of surrounding events and other similar things. Rees states that literature is the same as the using of history and philosophy because it helps to understand others fellow

human being better (1973: 15). As *Freedom Writers* which tells social environment of the author's self-experience.

Generally, *Freedom Writers* tells about the struggle of a novice teacher named Erin Gruwell who changes her delinquent students. It also tells about the condition of the multiracial society in American life. Race difference becomes the big issue in the movie. It tells that people segregate into groups so that makes the racial tension arises among society. They differentiate the group based on the race group they belong to. The segregating race group and racial tension occur not only in the society environment but also in the classroom and school area. This condition makes people endeavor to show and to keep their existence in society. The struggle of the people in the movie to leave the segregation race environment is interesting to be analyzed because they have to face the other people who strictly cannot leave this issue in the society. So, indirectly people have to get rid from the stereotype of the segregation racial issue to affect other people's thought.

The other reason to choose *Freedom Writers* movie as the object of analysis is because the movie has many moral values. It tells about students' life struggle to get a better and more peaceful life within race-segregation condition. Through the movie, the audience can learn about the importance of respecting each other, tolerance, diversity, and responsibility. Furthermore, it becomes more interesting since the movie also tells about the social life of the students in their teen age. The social life is very important to the teenagers because in this age they are in critical identity so that they need to look for their true identity in order to



live in society. Teenagers have difficult time to find their identity because in teenage people is difficult to change and to accept other people opinion.

Moreover, *Freedom Writers* movie depicts the students' struggle for their existence and social identity in society. It shows the students' social life where they need social acceptance. The students need identity in order to be accepted by the society where they live. Identity is important to form someone character because through identity individuals can figure out who they are and knowing who others are. As stated by Ashton (2004), identity is 'a multi-dimensional classification or mapping of the human world and our place in it as individuals and as a member of collectivities' ( via Jenkins, 2008: 5). As the member of collectivities, individuals are divided into groups. Thus, to decide what place or group they belong to, they should know their identity. Based on that reason, the writer aims to find out how individual belongs to certain group through social identity theory since social identity is needed for individual to interact other individuals in a society.

One of the factors that influence identity formation is society. Society is a medium for someone to interact to the other individuals or social groups. It is a nature that individuals have to socialize with others because they are social human and as the social human they cannot live without other individuals. It is like mutualism symbiosis that they need one another and help each other in order to fulfill the life. As stated by Hogg and Abrams that "the society comprises social categorises which stand in power and status relations to one another" (2006:13), the statement shows that society has influence in identity formation. In line with

the social identity formation, individuals adopt identities and define themselves through social group environment.

Social group consists of two or more people who regularly interact and share a sense of unity and common identity (<http://www.educationportal.com>). In other words, people consider themselves as part of a social group if they meet or see each other frequently. There are many kinds of social groups in society to define aspect of identity, such as social group based on religion, party, ethnic, culture, nationality, age, gender, personality, physical appearance, and so forth (Giles and Middleton, 1999: 31). Individuals decide and choose their identity in a society through social group where they belong to.

To find how is the process of social identity formation this research applies social identity theory. Social identity theory is part of social psychology which is pioneered by Henri Tajfel and his colleagues (Sarwono, 1999: 90). The social identity is formed through the categorization. The process of categorization affects individuals to distinct the social group. They distinct the social group by looking for the similarities and the differences. After the individuals compare themselves to each social group, they will claim in a group which has more similarities to them. The social group that has similarities to the individuals is called as in-group while the social group that has distinction to the individual is called the out-group (Stets and Burke, 2000: 225). In line with the categorization of in-group and out-group, there is another process called social comparison. In this state, the individuals compare their group with the out-group which it can turn into the creation of positive distinctiveness and in-group favoritism.

Furthermore, since social identity is part of social psychology the writers uses psychology of literature to connect between psychology and literature. Psychology and literature discuss about the human as the object of analysis. However, the difference is that psychology discusses the human in real life while literature discusses human as an imaginary character (Wiyatmi, 2011: 19). Therefore, psychological approach can be applied in analyzing a literary work.

However, the writer limits the analysis to focus on Eva's social identity. Eva's character in the movie is interesting to be analyzed because Eva's presence is important in development of the story. Besides, Eva's existence influences Gruwell's performance as one of the round characters in *Freedom Writers* movie. Eva is the second round character in the movie. Eva plays the role as Gruwell's student. Eva's character as Latino completes the race-segregation issue in the movie. Her attempts to protect her own people and keep her existence support Eva's social identity process in her society. Eva's strong will and demand to get a peaceful of life become the center of the analysis.

## **1.2. Problem Statements**

The research of this paper aims to find the answer of the question:

How does Eva form her social identity in *Freedom Writers* movie?

### **1.3. Objective of Study**

The research is aimed to find out how is the process of Eva's social identity formation in *Freedom Writers* movie using social identity theory by Henri Tajfel.

### **1.4. Significances of Study**

This research is significant to the development of literature, social science, and other education field both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the result of the research is useful as an input on literary research especially about the social identity. In addition, the research of *Freedom Writers* movie is useful as additional source for studying and reviewing the content of the research.

Practically, this research can help the readers to learn and understand the social identity formation process. In other way, expectedly the research can be alternative possibility to solve human problem to find their social identity.

### **1.5. Literature Review**

*Freedom Writers* movie has been used as an object of research by several researchers. Since the movie tells about how the multicultural education, the writer finds several researches used *Freedom Writers* movie as a study about educational psychology and teaching technique. However, none of them discuss the social identity of the movie.



The first work is a graduating paper of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta by Dewi Erna Patmawati (2009) entitled “Struggle for Existence Erin Gruwell's *Freedom Writers* Directed by Richard LaGravenese: An Individual Psychological Approach”. In this paper, she focuses the research to find the struggle for existence of the major character, Erin Gruwell, in *Freedom Writers* movie. She uses an individual psychological approach by Alfred Adler to analyze the movie. In the research, she concludes that there are external factors that defeat Erin; those are the social treatment to her race and her rank ability, but the idealism of teacher spirit influences the character of Erin in struggle for existence that is the harmonious life and equal rights for all students.

The second is a graduating paper of Wiwin Astuti from University of Muhammadiyah Surakarta (2005) entitled “The Influence of Learning Model on Student's personality Development in *Freedom Writers* Movie: Educational Psychology Approach”. In Astuti's research, she concludes that student's personality in school can be formed by a teacher who understands his or her roles as the teacher based on educational psychology. The teacher has to know the characteristic of the adult learners. In other words, teacher is an agent of change.

Another work is a graduating paper of State Islamic University Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang by Tutik Herwanti (2009) entitled “Teknik Pengelolaan Kelas dalam Film *Freedom Writers*”. In this research, Herwanti analyzes the teaching technique in conducting the class. She uses document analysis with content analysis technique. The result of the research shows that Erin Gruwell (the teacher in the movie) uses conducting class technique curatively and physically.

This paper is different from all those prior researches. This paper attempts to find out about the social identity formation and focuses on analyzing Eva as one of the characters in the movie using social identity theory.

## **1.6. Theoretical Approach**

### **1.6.1. Social Identity Theory**

The research of *Freedom Writers* movie is aimed to analyze Eva's formation of social identity using social identity theory. Social identity theory is pioneered by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1970s which deals with intergroup relations. Turner states that social identity is about the people's self-concept to see themselves as a member of group (the in-group) in comparison with another group (the out-group) (as cited in Burke & Stets, 2000: 226). Thus, self-concept is derived from perceived membership of social group. Tajfel (1972: 292) defines social identity as "the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership" (as cited in Kakarika, 2012: 494).

Social group itself is a set of individuals that interact one another and get involved in an activity which have same intention and view themselves as member of the same social category (Turner via Strangor, 2004: 16). Moreover, through social interaction individuals can perceive group status differences so that they can evaluate and label themselves in a certain group. Furthermore, in social identity theory there are two processes which influence group behavior, they are

cognitive process and motivational process. The cognitive process leads individual to categorize on various stimulus so that individual views other individual as in-group member or out-group member, while the motivational process is the individual effort in order to obtain self esteem and positive social identity (Firmansyah, 2012: 1).

According to Hogg and Abrams there are two important processes in social identity formation are self-categorization and social comparison (via Stets and Burke, 2000: 225). Self-categorization is the process which transforms individual into group (Hogg and Abrams, 2006: 19). Self-categorization is cognitive grouping of oneself and an aggregate of stimuli as identical in contrast to another group stimuli (Turner as cited in Stets and Burke,:09). Moreover, self-categorization occurs when an individual put him/herself in a group as object that can be categorized or classified, and named in a certain way in relation with other categories in the social environment. Therefore, "People who are similar to the self are categorized with the self and labeled the in-group while people who differ from the self are categorized as the out-group" (Turner et al. 1987: 20).

Through self-categorization individual claims him/herself that he/she has similar social identity with the member group and behave as in the category group member. Consequently, the self-categorization leads individual to accentuate the similarities between the self and other in-group members and accentuate the differences between the self and out-group members (Hogg and Abrams,2006: 19). The accentuation occurs for all the attitudes, beliefs and values, affective

reactions, behavioral norms, styles of speech, and other dimension that correlated with the relevant intergroup categorization (Burke and Stets, 2000: 225).

Thereafter, the individuals' social interaction which involves some social groups leads the individuals to act as themselves not as a member of certain group. It is like what Strangor states that when the individual interacts with others there is a time when an individual acts as his/herself and when he/she acts or represent as a member of a social group (2004: 13). In this state the individual understands his/her role in a social group.

In line with the categorization of in-group and out-group, there is another process called social comparison. Social comparison is about the self-concept or social concept of another person or group which meshes in with perception of group membership. Social comparison is a process to compare the quality of an individual to another or quality of a group to other group (Maryam, 2010: 31). Individuals' perception rooted in one consensus as individuals views in their own group, they use their own group as reference to view the other. According to Strangor, when an individual wants to measure his/her ability, he/she tends to compare him/herself in the relevant dimension, individuals tend to compare their group with another" (2004: 71). There is a tendency to maximize intergroup distinctiveness when making an intergroup social comparison. Thus, the process of social comparison emerges the concept that the social group is viewed as superior than another group. Through social comparison, individuals learn about themselves and obtain confidence in the veracity and utility of their belief.

Moreover, social comparison produce consequence of accentuation of intergroup differences primarily to those dimensions which reflect favourably upon in-group and the dimensions that produce self-enhancing outcomes for the self. “The selective differentiation accomplishes positive self-evaluation that endows the individual with a sense of well-being, enhanced self-worth and self esteem” (Hogg and Abrams, 2000: 21). Briefly, one’s self-esteem is enhanced by evaluating the in-group and the out-group on dimensions that lead the in-group to be judged positively and the out-group to be judged negatively.

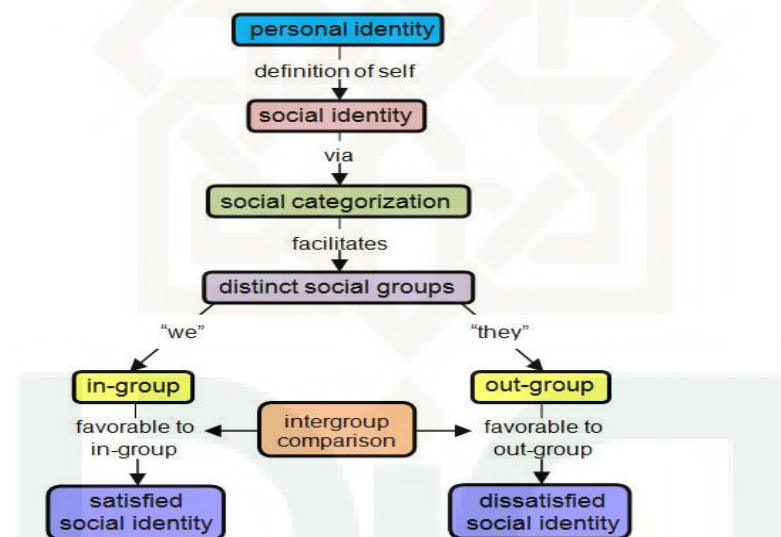


Fig. 1. Social Identity Formation Process

### 1.6.2. Psychology of Literature

Psychology of literature is applied in this research since the research analyzes identity in the movie. Psychology and literature has close relationship since both of them discusses about the human. Psychology discusses human as the creature of the god, while literature discusses human as imaginary character of the

author (Wiyatmi, 2011:14). The imaginary character created by the author in literary work may reflect human being in the real life. The imaginary character in literary work may be studied by psychological approach since the characterization of the character in literary work can show psychological matter (Minderop, 2010: 55).

Psychology of literature is study of literary work which reflects psychological process and activity (Minderop, 2010: 54). Psychology of literature intends to analyze psychological problem within the character in literary work. Further, the focus of analysis in literary work is through the character's behavior and its characterization. Therefore, psychology of literature does not intend to solve psychological problems as the study of psychology does which the object of analysis is human in the real life.

Furthermore, there are four possible analysis in psychology of literature. Those are, psychology analysis of author, analysis of creative process, psychological analysis of the reader, and analysis of psychological law in literary work (Wellek and Warren as cited in Wiyatmi, 2011: 28). The first and the second analysis possibilities are part of psychology of art which focuses on the author and the creative process of literary work. The third possibility studies about the impact of literary work to the audience. The fourth possibility studies the psychological types and laws within work of literature. Nevertheless, this research uses the fourth analysis since this research uses literary work as the object of study. Moreover, the psychology of literature is used to support the

research since the writer uses social identity theory where social identity theory is a part of social psychology.

## **1.7. Method of Research**

### **1.7.1. Type of Research**

The writer uses qualitative method in this research. Qualitative research is concerned with the phenomenon relating to quality (Kothari, 2004:3). Since this research is related to the document of movie, this research describes the phenomenon case of the movie. It describes the character of Eva as the scope of the analysis to find the process of social identity formation. The analysis is conducted by observing Eva's behavior in the movie.

### **1.7.2. Data Source**

This research uses movie script of *Freedom Writers* movie as the data analysis since movie script is considered as a literary work. Movie script is the written stage play, it indicates what was to be in the picture and in what order (Béla Balázs as cited in Harrington, 1970: 217).



### **1.7.3. Data Collection Technique**

The writer collects the data uses the documentation technique. It is appropriate to be applied since this research uses library research technique. The data is collected in the form of words rather than number and the documentary record of the content analysis (Sugiyono, 2010: 21-22). The writer watches the movie to understand the case and the character in the movie and then interprete the script and the dialogue of the character descriptively.

Moreover, to collect more information related to the movie, the writer documents the data from the library, website, anad other sources. The data are used to support the research. After collecting the data, the writer classifies the data into some categories based on the data related to the character and develops them into good unit.

### **1.7.4. Data Analysis Technique**

The writer analyzes the data descriptively. The writer describes, interprets, and analyzes the collected data in detail through social identity theory. The step of analyzing data is by classifying the related data to the character by looking at the dialogue. Then, the data are connected to the process of social identity formation. They are self-categorization, social comparison, and group behavior. The last step is completing the analysis by drawing the conclusion.

### **1.8. Paper Organization**

This paper is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is about the general information about the research which includes background of study, problem statement, objective of study, significance of study, literature review, theoretical approach, method of research, and paper organization. The second chapter describes intrinsic elements of the movie. The third chapter is the analysis of the data using social identity theory. The last chapter is the conclusion and the result of analysis.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

#### 4.1. Conclusion

This research aims to figure out how Eva's social identity formation portrayed in *Freedom Writers* movie. Through the analysis, the writer finds that Eva's social identity formation is influenced by the family, people around her, environment, and Eva's self-experience. Eva's family and people around her affects Eva's self-categorization in the society as well as the environment and Eva's self-experience affect her in finding identity.

The family and people around Eva have influenced her thought. They have taught the stereotype to always protect her own people since she was young. The stereotype is still on Eva's belief that she has to defend her own people from the people who against her and her own people. Meanwhile, the environment and Eva's self-experience take another part in finding Eva's social identity. The environment where Eva lives becomes her self-experience in deciding and categorizing her identity. The experience when Eva witnesses her own friend shoots an innocent man, the experience she gets in Ms. Gruwell's class, and the story from the Holocaust victim have affected how the process of Eva's social identity formation.

Through the theory, the writer discovers how the process of Eva's social identity formation as portrayed in the *Freedom Writers* movie. Eva's self-categorization and social comparison in the process of social identity formation show that she demands the positive identity. In self-categorization process Eva finds the similarity in Latino group since Eva's family is Latino. It is an essential perspective which cannot be changed that she belongs to the group. She is strictly defends her group in the first place which means that she has the commitment to protect the group. It is a part of social comparison process in social identity formation that she maintains to stay in the group even though the group status is low.

However, the environment where people are fighting to keep their territory is not the environment that Eva wants to. She just follows the flow of how the environment goes in order to survive in the environment. She used to fight and shoot the people who against her. Nevertheless, as an individual, Eva involves in some social groups which people around her can affect her. Besides a member of Latino, she is associated as the group of student in school. The environment in the class has less difference with the environment outside since the students are segregating their seat arrangement according to their group. However, the teacher changes their stereotype. At first, Eva and the other students against Gruwell as the teacher, but they realize that the teacher has the aim to improve and change the stereotype of fighting and hating one another. Moreover, Eva and the other students' stereotype have completely changed after hearing the story from the Holocaust victim. The students change to be care one another as one group. It

shows that the environment and self-experience have a big role in forming social identity

Furthermore, as individual, Eva involves in some social groups where sometimes she acts as an individual rather than as a part of member group. The interaction of Eva as an individual is shown when she testifies in the court of firing incident by her own friend. Literally, at that time she has to defend and protect her friend by hiding the truth. In contrast, she reveals the truth in front of the judge and her people. Eva's decision to reveal the truth shows that she acts as an individual instead of a member of the Latino. When individual acts as not a member of group it means that the individual has discovered the identity. Further, when individuals receive negative perception from the other individuals or group they tend to defend themselves in order to keep their survival existence in society.

In line with integration and interconnection program, this graduating paper analysis has the connection to Islamic perspective about the important of identity. As God stated in Surah Arrum verse 22 that individual should know his/her identity.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافُ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ  
وَالْوَلَوِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

“And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed in that are signs for those of knowledge” (<http://quran.com/30/22>).

This verse shows that God creates human different with others so that it is important for them to find their identity in order to know who they are. Moreover, in islamic perspective shows that human being should live in contiguity. It is explained that in the holly Qur'an surah Al-Hujurat verse 13 that human was created by God in many kind of races and made them into nations and tribes to know each other.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ  
لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٣﴾

Which means: "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted." (<http://quran.com/49/13>)

In this verse, it is told that human was created by God in many kinds of races and made them into nations and tribes to know each other. The difference of race is not supposed to be a reason for people to fight and stereotype the others but it is supposed to be a way to acknowledge one another so that it will make a good life. People interact with other not only to their people in same race or group but also to the out-group. Hence, this verse supports the aim of this research that is not to treat someone else differently because all of people in this world actually are same. Besides, this verse is purposed to prevent discrimination between each other.

In conclusion, in order to maintain the positive social identity the individual may leave the current group and create the new group if the individual feels that the current group cannot accept the present of an individual. Individual can do re-categorization to create the new social identity.

#### **4.2. Suggestion**

*Freedom Writers* movie is a story about teacher struggle to change her severe students. She is Erin Gruwell. She fights and breaks her sever students who have no eager to study and known as delinquent. Furthermore, in this research the writer analyzes the social identity formation. Moreover, the writer uses social identity theory which is a part of social psychology and Psychology of literature as the approach to connect the psychology and literature. The writer believes that this research is far from perfection. Thus, the writer humbly opens the chance for the readers to give the criticism and suggestion to make this research better. This research can be criticized by the next researcher by conducting the other research. There are many objects in *Freedom Writers* movie that can be analyzed. The next researcher can analyze the round character, Gruwell, using marxist theory since she is eager to collect fund to provide books for the students and invite them to field trip.



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