



CAITLIN'S PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT DEPICTED IN THE NOVEL *HOLD STILL* (2009) BY NINA LACOUR ACCORDING TO HURLOCK'S PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT THEORY

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the process of personality development by the main character, Caitlin, in the novel *Hold Still* (2009). This analysis reveals how the main character goes through the process of personality development when she loses her best friend. This analysis is a text-based interpretation based on the concept of personality development theory proposed by Elizabeth. B. Hurlock (1974). This analysis uses fictional devices such as characters, plots and settings to help the analysis process to explore an issue. The results of the study indicate that the main character goes through a process of personality development through several factors such as: The change of significant people, strong motivation and the change of Self-concept.

Key words: *personality development, self-concept, Hold Still*

A. INTRODUCTION

Individuals have their own unique pattern of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. This unique pattern is called personality. Personality involves traits (e.g., agreeableness, extraversion, etc.), character, beliefs, code of ethics and even temperament that individuals are born with and influence the way individuals act and respond to things. Personality is often confused with “character”. Hurlock (1974) stated that character relates to behavior that is regulated by personal will, it implies moral standard and judgment of value. Personality is not something that cannot be changed. Research shows that humans are not only born with certain traits but can develop those traits or patterns over time.

Just like humans, characters in fiction also experience certain conflicts. One of them is coping with grief and loss. Coping with grief and loss is not an easy thing to do, some people even need a very long time to recover. The grieving process itself is a process that takes time and does not have a specific time

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reference to show how a person can recover from that process. Through the process of coping with grief and loss, characters not only slowly show the healing process, but can also show several other processes, for example personality development. The process by which a character's personality develops is typically an essential element in fiction, particularly when the character experiences trauma or important events that affect their trajectory in life.

Hold Still (2009) by Nina LaCour is a novel that reflected the issue of personality development of someone after experiencing grief and loss. *Hold still* is the debut released by Nina LaCour, the bestselling and Michael L. Printz Award-winning author of five critically acclaimed young adult novels. *Hold Still* explores the psychological and emotional journey of teenager following the death of her best friend, Ingrid. The main character, Caitlin, is a 16-year-old girl when her friend commits suicide. Caitlin was so deeply affected by this accident, forcing her to confront her feeling of grief, isolation and confusion. As the central character in *Hold Still*, Caitlin sets off on an insightful journey of personality development throughout the novel. The novel shows the transformation that Caitlin undergoes, also the healing process and how Caitlin rediscovering herself.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study is conducted using the psychological approach. As stated by Rohrberger and Woods (1971), Psychological approach aims to analyze the pattern of character's thoughts, action, behavior, or motives. As the purpose of this study was to analyze Caitlin's personality development and as well as determine the factors influencing Caitlin's personality development, a psychological approach needed to be used during this research. It analyzes using qualitative method. A qualitative method used to explore a problem or topic. Creswell (2007) indicates that it starts by considering assumptions, a broad perspective, the potential use of theoretical lenses and the investigation of research problem that comprise analyzing the significance that individuals or groups assign to a social or human. This investigation is required to analyze a demographic group or to observe the perspective that has been ignored. It was completed as well, considering an in-depth understanding of the problem was required. In this research, researchers focus on phenomena in the novel *Hold Still* by Nina LaCour (2009). By using Elizabeth B. Hurlock's personality development theory, researcher focuses on the process of how the main character, Caitlin, shows her personality development through loss and grief she experienced.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Caitlin's Personality Development

1.1 Caitlin's Initial Personality

1.1.1. Avoidance

In the beginning of the story, Caitlin's character is described as a girl who always tries to avoid talking to people around her. She just talked with people that

she is familiar with all the time like her family and her best friend. But this becomes worse when her best friend, Ingrid, dies. Caitlin always avoids talking about Ingrid even when her mother tries to talk with her. It can be shown in quotation below:

Mom says Ingrid's name and I start to hum, not the melody to a song, just one-drown note. I know it makes me seem crazy, I know it won't make anything change, but it's better than crying, it's better than screaming, it's better than listening to what they're telling me. (p.2)

The quotation shows how Caitlin is trying to stop her mom from talking about Ingrid. Losing Ingrid was a trauma for Caitlin. "it's better than crying, it's better than screaming, it's better than listening to what they're telling me", shows that Caitlin always thought that crying, screaming or hearing anything about Ingrid would always remind her of what happened to Ingrid. Because she wanted to avoid the feeling of sadness, Caitlin chose to avoid talking about Ingrid or anything related to Ingrid's incident. Hurlock (1974) also states that avoidance behavior is a natural response from someone that experienced traumatic event.

As soon as I can, I get away from the street because I don't want anyone to see me and pull over to offer a ride. They would probably want to talk about Ingrid and I would just stare at my hand like an idiot. Or they wouldn't want to talk about Ingrid and instead there would be a long silence that would get heavier and heavier. (p.15)

From this quotation, Caitlin tried to avoid everybody because she was scared that they might ask her about Ingrid, or anything related to Ingrid. "Stare at my hand like an idiot" and "instead there would be a long silence that would get heavier and heavier" implies that Caitlin unable to provide answer or responses to anything related to Ingrid because she knows that if she responds to it, the sadness she feels will fell even heavier. So, she decided to avoid all people and not talk with them.

1.1.2. Insecure

Besides avoidance, Caitlin also shows that she often feels insecure when she is outside of her comfort zone, even if it only in her class. It can be shown in this quotation:

Ms. Delani scans the class. I wait for her to look over here, to smile or not or *anything*, but it seems like the room ends just the right of me. She smiles at everybody else, but I, apparently, do not exist. It's obvious she doesn't want me here, and I have no idea what to do. I would get my stuff together and leave, but I'd have nowhere to go. I want to crawl under the table and hide there until everyone is gone. (p.19)

This quotation shows that Caitlin feels insecure and unsafe in her own class. Caitlin thinks that other people do not like her presence. It happens because the only person who makes her feel safe and comfortable in class is no longer there. This creates various feelings of discomfort and worries that always appear in Caitlin's mind. It also shows that Ingrid, as a significant person to Caitlin, gives Caitlin a big influence on her personality pattern as stated in Hurlock's theory about personality development.

1.1.3. Self-blame

Caitlin often feels guilty about what happened to Ingrid. She feels guilty for not realizing the signs of Ingrid's depression. It makes Caitlin blame herself and feels like she failed as Ingrid's best friend. It can be seen in this quotation:

I shut the book
My room is so quiet and empty it hurts.
I know I should want to keep reading but I can't. It's too much. (p.40)

After start reading Ingrid's journal, Caitlin feels she is responsible for Ingrid's death. Caitlin thinks that her biggest mistake is by not realizing the difficulties that Ingrid experienced. "I know I should want to keep reading but I can't. It's too much" show that she could not even continue reading the journal. It leads her to blame herself for what happened to Ingrid. Caitlin thought that it was too much for Ingrid to handle, and she should have helped Ingrid back then.

1.2 Caitlin's Transitory Personality

1.2.1. Expressive

As the story goes, Caitlin's personality starts to develop. Caitlin has started to know how to express her feelings.

I set my backpack down next to a girl with a Metallica shirt that's so worn it must be decade old.
"I'm gonna stay here for a few minutes. I really don't feel like having chat with him right now." I say it so confidently that for a second it makes me feel confident, too, like I'm the kind of person who has near brushes with danger every day. (p.98)

This quotation shows that instead of being silent like before, Caitlin has started to be able to express what she feels even to a stranger. Caitlin no longer feels insecure or anxious about what other people think about her. Caitlin also began to realize expressing what she felt was not a bad thing and even made her feel more confident. She does not have to keep all the things by herself anymore. Hurlock (1974) states that when someone is able to introspect themselves that person also begins to change their self-concept. This process will always continue to happen until the person likes and accepts their new self-concept. There is also another quotation showing how Caitlin became more expressive.

I laugh, just happy that I'm taking us somewhere. I slow for red light and turn the volume down. (p.159)

From the quotation, Caitlin expresses her happy feeling by laughing. Previously she was not even able to express her sadness and just kept it all to herself.

1.2.2. Confident

As Caitlin started to express her feelings, Caitlin also started to gain self-confidence. At the beginning of the novel, Caitlin is described as someone who thinks that she is not able to do something better than anyone and always feels

insecure about herself. Caitlin always thinks that Ingrid is better than her at photography so that is why she always thinks that Ms. Delani only likes Ingrid and hates her. But after Caitlin personality started to develop Caitlin gain more confident and creative.

“These are...” Ms. Delani says, she doesn't finish.

“At first I didn't know if it would work” I say. “You know photographing a photograph.”

“But you've done so much than that,” Ms. Delani says.

“Just by the act of enlarging the images, you've given her photograph heightened significance. They demand to be seen” (p.207-208)

From the quotation above, Caitlin became more creative in the photograph. Caitlin takes Ingrid's pictures and makes them look better. She thinks that the pictures and everything about Ingrid need to be shown to everyone. At the beginning of the story Caitlin is not able to do this because she feels that she cannot do it with just the skill she has. Caitlin often thinks that she can only photograph the same thing, black and white, full of darkness. But after her personality began to develop, Caitlin became more confident in herself and started to dare to try new things for her photography. This development did not just happen like that but happened because of the support of the people around Caitlin and the motivation she had within herself. Hurlock (1974) stated strong motivation in an individual can have such a big influence on someone's personality development.

2. Factor that influence Caitlin's Personality

2.1 Changes in significant people

The first factor that influences Caitlin's personality is changes in significant people. According to Hurlock (1974), changes in significant people can have such a big influence on someone's personality changes. When the significant people in an individual's life change, the changes of that person's personality pattern are inescapable because that person will try to adapt their pattern of behavior and attitudes to that significant people personality pattern. Hurlock (1974) also stated that the changes of significant people influence someone's self-concept. These changes will depend on how much disparity is between the individual to the other. The greater the disparity the greater the motivation to someone to the changes their personality pattern.

In this novel, Caitlin personality pattern started to change when Dylan come to her life. Dylan is described as a free teenager who does not think too much about what other people say about her. Dylan is also depicted as the first person to interact with Caitlin without talking about Ingrid. Because she does not have to talk about Ingrid, Caitlin becomes more open and continues to interact with Dylan. This then slowly affects Caitlin's personality pattern. She became more expressive and confident, because she absorbed and started to imitate Dylan's free and expressive character.

2.2 Strong Motivation

Personality patterns can change when someone has strong enough motivation to change their personality. Hurlock (1974) states that ordinary people are the most strongly motivated to change their traits to improve their social relationships and earn social acceptance. Children and young adolescents usually have strong motivation to be more independent.

Caitlin also shows that she wants to be an independent person. At the beginning of the story Caitlin saw herself as someone who cannot be able to do anything because she always feels insecure and worried. After her meeting with Dylan, Caitlin started to think that she also wanted someone who was brave and independent just like Dylan. This desire then makes Caitlin slowly change herself to be a better person.

2.3 Changes in Self-Concept

Self-concept is the core of the personality pattern, and these changes in self-concept will bring a change in the entire personality pattern. According to Hurlock (1974), changing someone's self-concept requires tremendous self-insight. It means that an individual must be able to see themselves as they actually are. They cannot see themselves as what they would like to be. These changes in self-concept can happen because of several factors including the changes of significant people, society pressure, changes in environment, etc. Hurlock (1974) stated that when the self-concept has been changed, it is essential for individuals to adjust the characteristic patterns that are related to the old self-concept. This process will always happen until the individuals like and accept their new self-concept.

Caitlin sees herself as someone who is useless for being a bad best friend to Ingrid. But Dylan, as a significant person for Caitlin, makes her see herself as a new person. Caitlin began to introspect herself and begins to accept the fact that Ingrid's death was not entirely her fault. Caitlin also begins to realize that there are limits to what she can do about Ingrid's situation. This process then made Caitlin change her personality pattern. From initially thought that everything was her fault, and she should be responsible for it to become a person who accepts reality and tries to be better.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The issue of personality development can be shown in the novel *Hold Still* (2009) by Nina LaCour. Character, plot, and setting are used to reveal the meaning beyond the novel. This analysis uses the theory of personality development by Elizabeth B. Hurlock (1974).

In this analysis, the process of personality development is reflected by Caitlin. The way she is going through the process of personality development while experiencing grief and loss brings her on a new journey and makes her a better person. In this research, the researcher found out that there are 3 out of 7 factors that influence Caitlin's personality development. There are changes in significant people, strong motivation, and changes in self-concept. Thus, the

analysis proves that someone who experiences grief and loss can also have personality development.

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