

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The writer describes the background on which this study is based in the first chapter. This section also deals with the identification of several issues that can be analyzed in this study and is supplemented by an explanation of the background. It covers the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, the significance of the study, and the scope and limitations of the study.

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Historically, various racial and ethnic groups in the United States, including African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, American Indians, and others, have faced considerable discrimination, marked by pervasive and explicit denial of civil, social, political, educational, and economic opportunities. There are still big differences between racial and ethnic groups when it comes to jobs, income and wealth, housing, education, the criminal justice system, health care, and other areas (National Research Council, 2004: 1). There are big differences between racial and ethnic groups in many areas of life in the United States, including the criminal justice system, education, jobs, health care, and housing. For instance, there are differences between races in the rates of arrest and incarceration, income, wealth, education, health, and homeownership and mortgage lending.

Despite the fact that race has become a significant factor in determining how we interact, Golash-Boza contends that race is a modern social construction and that it is not founded on biological differences between individuals. It is a specific perspective on human diversity that emerged from colonial experiences (Golash-Boza, 2018: 6). Regardless of how they identify themselves, people in the US are categorized as belonging to different races based on socially constructed, ascribed traits like skin color or hair texture. According to the National Research Council, racism consists of two parts: (1) treatment that is biased against a racial group based on race, and (2) treatment that is biased against a racial group based on factors other than race that are not sufficiently justified (differential effect) (National Research Council, 2004: 4).

In the past year, racism has been confronted. Global demonstrations against racial injustice and the revival of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement after George Floyd's death in 2020 have brought attention to how widespread structural racism is throughout the world. One well-known instance of racial inequality in the US is the practice of racial profiling in law enforcement. The practice of suspecting someone of criminal activity based on their race, ethnicity, or country of origin rather than proof of criminal activity is known as racial profiling. This practice disproportionately affects people of color, especially Black and Hispanic Americans. They are more likely to be stopped, searched, and arrested than their white counterparts, even after adjusting for variables like crime rates.

The writer's reason for selecting this issue of this study is because the writer would like to examine the racial inequality in Brit Bennett's *The Vanishing Half* by using the theory of critical race theory. *The Vanishing Half* is a multi-generational, multi-geographic story that jumps from the 1950s to the late 1990s, and from the small, light-skinned-obsessed town of Mallard to New Orleans, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, New York, and Minneapolis. *The Vanishing Half* recounts the lives of two twin black sisters, both with fair complexion, who run away from home at the age of sixteen. Desiree marries a dark-skinned Black man and has a child, but Stella lives her life as a white woman. The tale follows their lives over decades, as their paths diverge but stay entwined. The story delves into the subjects of female familial relationships and the Black experience in America. It's a story that delves into the complexities of identity, family, and race in a challenging but sensitive manner (Bennett, 2020, *The Vanishing Half*, Riverhead Books).

The novel takes place in a variety of settings and time periods. The story begins in the little Louisiana community of Mallard in 1968, then moves to New Orleans, New York, Southern California, and back to Mallard between 1978 and the early 1980s. Desiree and Stella Vignes, identical twins, leave their modest Louisiana village at the age of 16 to seek their fortune in New Orleans. Their lives had veered in completely different paths ten years later. Desiree has returned to Mallard after fleeing a brutal marriage to a Black guy, whereas Stella is White, married to a

businessman, has a daughter with him, and lives in California (Bennett, 2020, *The Vanishing Half*, Riverhead Books).

Desiree and Stella Vignes are identical twins who live in Mallard, Louisiana, among a neighborhood of light-skinned Black people. The locals are proud of their Caucasian features and coloration, and the majority of them could be mistaken for White. The Vignes sisters have lofty ambitions for their futures. Desiree aspires to be an actress, while Stella aspires to be a teacher. Their hopes are dashed when their mother pushes them to drop out of school at the age of 16 and work as maids to make ends meet. Desiree persuades Stella to flee to New Orleans in quest of a better life in 1954. Desiree returns to Mallard fourteen years later, followed by her dark-skinned daughter. They are on the run from Desiree's abusive husband. Meanwhile, Stella has abandoned Desiree in order to masquerade for White. She married a wealthy businessman, had a child with him, and relocated to California. Stella never tells anyone her true identity and makes no attempt to contact her birth family. When Desiree's daughter, Jude, turns 18, she accepts a college scholarship at UCLA and leaves Mallard. During her time in California, she happens to see Stella and meets Stella's daughter, Kennedy. Jude becomes fixated on confronting her aunt. In the process, she builds an odd friendship with Kennedy, as the two explore the significance of their kindred despite their starkly different appearances. Stella returns to Mallard to mend her shattered relationship with her sister and mother as a result of Jude's intervention. She returns to her White life in California after this reunion, and she is never able to acquire a true sense of herself because her entire life is based on a lie (Bennett, 2020, *The Vanishing Half*, Riverhead Books).

Moreover, *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett is a compelling, dramatic family story as well as a brilliant investigation of race, gender, and identity, as well as the long-lasting influence of the past on a person's wishes and expectations. Therefore, this study aims to find out the racial inequality that occurs in the novel. This study also examines racism which is represented in Brit Bennett's *The Vanishing Half* novel. Based on the description above, the writer is interested in presenting racial inequality or racism through the black people character's perspectives. Also, the writer is interested in how black people character's struggle and efforts in resisting

racial inequality are represented in *The Vanishing Half* novel. This study is supported with critical race theory by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic. This study is focused on presenting racial inequality and the black people character's struggle effort in resisting the racial inequality and racism represented in *The Vanishing Half* novel by Brit Bennett (Bennett, 2020, *The Vanishing Half*, Riverhead Books).

The writer provides previous studies to strengthen the study. The first previous study is done by Evi Milatul Ulya entitled *A Study On Racism In LouAnne Johnson's Dangerous Minds Using Ricard Delgado's and Jean Stefancic's Critical Race Theory* (2016). This thesis focuses on racism issues in the novel that are influenced by the social condition in the 20th century American society as represented in the *Dangerous Minds* novel by Louanne Johnson.

The second previous study conducted by Caroline Maas Rue entitled *The Unarticulated Unseen: Britt Bennett's "The Vanishing Half" And Her Intent On Revealing The Unseen In The Tradition Of Racial Passing*. This paper examines Britt Bennett's 2020 novel, *The Vanishing Half*, as a socio-political artifact reflecting post-raciality using the theory of passing. Comparative studies show that racial passing is a privilege-incentivized act that requires the passer to exhibit agency. The paper analyzes Stella Sanders' desire to pass as white, highlighting the complexity of the act compared to other novels. This study, along with the previous studies conducted by Caroline Maas Rue used *The Vanishing Half* as its research object. However, different topics and theories are used, with this study focusing on racial inequality and the struggle of racial inequality experienced by black people characters in Brit Bennett's *The Vanishing Half* using Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic's critical race theory. In contrast, the previous study examined *The Vanishing Half*, as a socio-political artifact of a post-racial era using the theory of passing.

The writer also provides some journals as previous studies. The first journal written by Rashad Mohammed Moqbel Al Areqi entitled *Race and Identity in Brit Bennett's The Vanishing Half*. The study explores the importance of race and

identity for African Americans, focusing on the sisters' decisions to maintain or shed their Black identity and their community's influence. Desiree chooses to marry a Black man, while Stella sees her interest in marrying a White man. Their children, Kennedy and Jude, adhere to their parents' beliefs regarding race and identity. Despite their differences, Stella and Desiree long for their origin and home, ultimately reunited at their new home. The second journal entitled *Racism Towards African American Community As Reflected In Maya Angelou's I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings: Black Aesthetic Criticism* written by Gisa Maya Saputri. This paper analyzes the racism experienced by the African American community and their struggle against it using critical race theory. The analysis focuses on everyday racism, interest convergence, the social construction of race, differential realization, intersectionality, and the voice of color. The findings reveal the struggle against racism through ignorance, intelligence promotion, community efforts, resistance, social movement, and voicing their experiences through African American literature.

## 1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of the study above, this study examines the racial inequality in Brit Bennet's *The Vanishing Half* novel. Furthermore, the research questions are formulated as the following question:

1. What kinds of racial inequalities are portrayed in Brit Bennett's *The Vanishing Half* novel?
2. How do the black-people character's in the novel struggle against racial inequality in Brit Bennett's *The Vanishing Half*?

## 1.3 Objective of the study

Based on the research question above, this study is intended to elaborate :

1. Kind of racial inequalities are portrayed in Brit Bennett's *The Vanishing Half* novel.
2. How the black-people character's in the novel struggle against racial inequality in Brit Bennett's *The Vanishing Half*.

#### 1.4 Significances of the Research

This study provides numerous benefits, both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study is expected to support the theory of critical race theory and to define critical race theory (CRT) and its core principles based on the issues of racism and racial inequality in the novel *The Vanishing Half*. Practically, this study is expected to broaden the reader's understanding of the dangers of racism and racial inequality based on Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic's critical race theory.

Furthermore, it is important to raise awareness of racism and racial inequality in order to reduce the likelihood of future acts of racism or violence. This study also can provide readers with new information and insight into the contents of the novel *The Vanishing Half*. Then they can recognize the emergence of racial inequality issues and respond appropriately in terms of how to fight back. Furthermore, the writer hopes that this study will spark readers' interest in reading a literary work. The writer also hopes that this study will serve as a valuable resource for future researchers looking to investigate similar topics and problems.

#### 1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Research

This study is carried out by analyzing the novel Brit Bennett's *The Vanishing Half* in order to identify racism issues in the novel. The scope of this study is racism issues in Brit Bennett's *The Vanishing Half* by using the theory of critical race theory since this study elaborates the racial inequality in Brit Bennett's *The Vanishing Half* novel. Furthermore, the limitation of this study is the novel that is analyzed through the plot of each story by looking into the character's utterances and the narrator's narrations. This study is conducted by analyzing the novel Brit Bennett's *The Vanishing Half* to find racism issues in the novel.