

**BLACK WOMAN'S STRUGGLES IN ASSERTING  
RACE AND GENDER IN "THE HELP" NOVEL BY KATHRYN  
STOCKETT; FEMINIST APPROACH**

**THESIS**



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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES  
PUTERA BATAM UNIVERSITY  
2021**

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**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Sarjana Sastra**



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**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES  
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2021**

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Suci Islami Rahayu  
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I, Suci Islami Rahayu, NPM No. 171210069  
Hereby declare that the term paper entitled:

**BLACK WOMAN'S STRUGGLES IN ASSERTING RACE AND  
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FEMINIST APPROACH**

Is the real work of myself and I realize that thesis has never been published in  
other media before, partially or entirely, in the name of mine or others.

Batam, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021



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**The term paper has been approved examined on the date as indicated below**

**Batam, March 04<sup>th</sup> 2021**

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized letters that appear to be 'RS'.

**Robby Satria, S.S., M.Hum.  
Supervisor**

## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis feminis yang terjadi dalam kehidupan wanita berkulit hitam yang di tampilkan dalam novel *The Help*, penulis dari *Kathryn Stockett* pada tahun 2009. Dalam cerita terdiri dari tiga karakter yaitu Aibileen Clark, Minny Jackson, dan Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan. Penulis menceritakan sangat jelas fenomena yang terjadi di novel tersebut sama persis apa yang terjadi pada masa itu. Dimana wanita yang berkulit hitam di perlakukan sangat tidak adil dan wanita kulit hitam tidak dapat kesempatan untuk mensejahterakan kehidupan mereka, karena mereka haru bekerja sebagai "pembantu" bagi orang berkulit putih. Pada masa itu mayoritas berkulit putih sangat membenci dan bahkan menyerang secara psikologis atau psikis kepada berkulit hitam. Objek dalam peneilitian ini adalah tiga orang wanita berkulit hitam yang memiliki rasa kesamaan atas ras dan gender memberanikan untuk mengungkapkan martabat mereka sebagai minoritas pada masa itu. Penilitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Data yang telah dikumpulkan di analisis dengan menggunakan teori feminis dari Patricia Hill Collins dengan berfokuskan kepada pemberdayaan perempuan kulit hitam dan kondisi keadilan social. Penelitian terdahulu yang dikumpulkan memiliki persamaan yaitu menggunakan tema feminis, yang korban nya adalah wanita. Adapun perbedaan yang dari jurnal tersebut, menggunakan teori yang berbeda karena, setiap kasus memiliki sudut pandang berbeda.

**Kata kunci:** feminisme, perempuan kulit hitam, resisten, pengendalian image

## **ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to analyze the feminist life in black women featured in the novel *The Help*, author of Kathryn Stockett in 2009. The story consists of three characters: Aibileen Clark, Minny Jackson, and Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan. The author tells that the phenomena in the novel are precisely the same as what happened at that time. Where black women were mistreated, and black women do not get the opportunity to prosper their lives because they have to work as "helpers" for white people. At that time, the majority of white people hated and even attacked them psychologically or psychologically. This research's objects were three black women who had a sense of equality of race and gender who dared to express their dignity as a minority at that time. This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method. The data that has been collected is analyzed using feminist theory from Patricia Hill Collins with a focus on empowering black women and conditions of social justice. Previous studies collected have something in common, namely using a feminist theme, where the victims are women—as for the differences from the journal, using a different theory because each case has another point of view.*

**Key term:** *feminism, black women, resistance, controlling image*

## **MOTTO AND DEDICATION**

### **MOTTO**

“It is only right that a person be optimistic, feeling happy about the good he sees (in things); and he should not look at the life lying ahead of him in this world as dark and dismal so that he becomes weary (of life) and loses hope.”

Shaykh ibn Utthaymeen

### **DEDICATION**

This thesis is proudly present to my beloved parents, siblings, all of my family, and all lecturers and staff of Putera Batam University

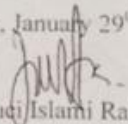


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Praise and thank God, the almighty, who has granted countless blessings, knowledge, and opportunity to the researcher, so that researcher have been finally able to accomplish the thesis entitled "Black Woman's Struggles In Asserting Race And Gender In "The Help" Novel By Kathryn Stockett; Feminist Approach" which is one of the requirements for completing the undergraduate study program (S1) in the English Literature Program at Putera University Batam. The researcher realizes that this thesis is far from perfect. Therefore, the researcher will always receive criticism and suggestions with pleasure. With all the limitations, do not realize that this thesis will not be realized without the help, guidance of various parties. For that, with all the humility of the day, the researcher would like to say thank you to

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Batam, January 29<sup>th</sup> 2021

  
Suci Islami Rahayu

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## LIST OF PICTURE

**Figure 2.3** Theoretical Framework .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This thesis reports the findings of a thorough study to establish the factors that have led to the feminism in the world. What makes the writer interested in researching the film *The Help* is because this film has succeeded in conveying its main issue, namely the portrait of the issue racial discrimination that occurs in the United States. Delivery of themes discrimination in this film is conveyed lightly, but packaged interesting so it doesn't make us as the audience feel bored. By that's why *The Help* storyline is very easy to accept and follow.

A novel written by Katheryn Stokett is a fictional story. But things that happen in the film *The Help* it can also happen in real life. Overall this film delivers real pictures of the tragedies that occurred during the time the civil rights movement took place. As well as providing an overview stories about the behavior of the majority race when discriminating against racial minorities in the United States.

### **1.1. Background of the research.**

According to Schein (2016) the culture in the world includes a way to live around the community which is existing cultures cannot be separated from a human being. Everyone has own culture because there are so many differences in culture in the world. Starting from religion, race, and customs, etc, so this is we must respect the rights of each other. The differences in the world sometimes can

create consequence problems. The problems can create division between nations or different countries.

The conflicts that occur in the world can divide the nation and social gap in the country. One of the hardest problems in the world is racist. The history that happened mostly in the past is racist. The factors that occurs racist are the differences in color skin and faith. This can lead to violence and disparity among fellow human beings, especially for people who are intimidated can cause psychological disturbances.

The most violent historical event of its time was the white skin intimidation of black skin that occurred in American. Which is at the time the white race massacred the blacks, thousands of black skin in American dies at that time. Research of black Americans say four things as fields of discrimination, namely the treatment of police officers, job, courts, and schools. While for white American, the Afro-American population believes in racial discrimination against them, whether it is in a restaurant or hospital.

With the development of technology and trade, the feminism of a country develops rapidly, which leads to a continuous increase in the degree of diversification in the country. Then, countries with good trade interests to improve life attract people from all ethnic groups. The myth of a higher race and a lesser race is an increasingly complex factor in the problem of racism. Those from the superior race often engage in racist behavior against the inferior race. This racist behavior occurs in all areas of social life, such as education, health care, entertainment, etc.

(Kulaszewicz, n.d.) said that the reality of the statement above can be looked from the situation of the United States in which there are various racial groups. Almost all sectors of life in the United States can control by white people who are a Caucasian race. At the beginning of his arrival in the American, white race people had the desire to spend all the indigenous tribes who occupied the American continent at that time, namely the Indian tribes that were part of the Mongoloid race.

The case of racist is not only in real life but it also happened in fiction work like novel. This phenomenon has been brought by many authors into a novel that people can enjoy. One of the novel that discussed racism towards race was brought by Kathryn Stockett with her bestselling novel "The Help". Kathryn is one of American author who was born and raised in Mississippi. She was a graduate from Alabama University majoring English and Creative Writing. After she graduated from university, she moved from her hometown to New York City and work in publishing and marketing department of a magazine for nine years. She never wrote a novel before and her first novel was "The Help" which was published in 2009.

As a new author, Kathryn first novel grasp readers attention. The novel itself talk about a wealthy white lady, named Skeeter, who just back to her family cotton plantation house in Jackson, Mississippi after completing her study at Ole Miss. As a lady from wealthy family, she tried to behave like a proper southern lady like playing bridge with other upper class women, editing letter, and even enduring her mother nagging about finding a proper man to marry.

Skeeter was a lady from upper class family who owns a plantation house, but she did not like to work there. She has her own dream, to be a writer. However, she could not find a proper writing job at there and she could only find a writing job at Jackson Journal. Skeeter's job at that journal was to refill a housekeeping advice column called "Miss Myrna". Skeeter did not know about housekeeping so she asked some advice from her black woman maid, Aibileen. At first, Skeeter only wanted to seek some housekeeping advice from Aibileen, but as the story got along, Skeeter found out the tragic event black people faced from white. She also learn about Aibileen tragic past.

Inspired from Aibileen story, Skeeter decided to write a book based on the true story that happened to Aibileen, however, other white named Hilly did not like Skeeter's relation with black people, thus Hilly framed Skeeter and made Skeeter's image bad. However, Skeeter could overcome the problems and even made a book that could help black people raised their image in white people's thought. "The Help" novel was written in both black and white point of view, this novel clearly indicated the unfair treatment black people suffers from white. The treatment that portrayed in the novel showed in the black women's life who worked as maid in white people's house. Based on this reason, the researcher felt that this novel could be analyze by using feminist approach.

Feminism is interesting to discuss because for this era case it is difficult to remove in the world. By discussing this topic, we can add insight into how terrible it is when there is massive racism in the world. The present and the past are no



different, even for today there any occurrences ranging from small children and adults. I hope this topic can be useful and add to our knowledge of feminism.

Although this story comes from an old black servant, we hear it through Skeeter's voice (at this point, she is wise enough to describe the love between black and white women as something inexplicable). It's hard to find examples of white women harassing, discriminating against or exploiting black servants on the "help" page, but they are strong examples of close and intimate relationships between black women and white women.

### **1.2 Identification of the problem**

1. Unfair treatment done by white people to black people shown in “The Help” novel by Kathryn Stockett
2. Black people’s way to defend their image towards white people treatment as shown in “The Help” novel by Kathryn Stockett
3. Rights that black people should not have as shown in “The Help” novel by Kathryn Stockett
4. Ideology feminism displayed in “The Help” novel by Kathryn Stockett
5. Laws and regulations that oppress aides of African-American descent in “The Help” novel by Kathryn Stockett.

### **1.3.Limitation of the problem**

1. Unfair treatment done by white people to black people shown in “The Help” novel by Kathryn Stockett

2. Black people's way to defend their image towards white people treatment as shown in "The Help" novel by Kathryn Stockett

#### **1.4 Formulation of the problem**

1. What types of unfair treatment done by white people to black people shown in "The Help" novel by Kathryn Stockett.
2. What kinds of Black people's way to defend their image towards white people treatment as shown in "The Help" novel by Kathryn Stockett

#### **1.5. Objectives of the Problem**

1. To know about types of unfair treatment done by white people to black people shown in "The Help" novel by Kathryn Stockett.
2. To figure out about Black people's way to defend their image towards white people treatment as shown in "The Help" novel by Kathryn Stockett

#### **1.6. Significance of the Research**

1. Theoretical benefits

In the theoretical aspects, to increase insight into English literature research on the novel, apply the knowledge and theory learned in analyzing opus and understanding the structure in use in the novel.

## 2. Practical benefits

In the practical aspects, to our, it is expected that when reading the community should be more active and critical of the message that will be conveyed by a novel so that we are not easily affected and provoked by a message and the meaning contained in the novel.

### 1.7. Definition of Key Term

**Feminism** : The advocacy of women's rights on the basis of the equality of the sexes.

**Black women** : Women who are of Sub-Saharan African and Afro-diasporic descent. The term black woman is both a multi-faceted cultural identity and a social construct with different meanings in different places.

**Resistance** : Is showing the position of an attitude to behave defensively, trying to fight, opposes or attempt the opposition in general, this is attitude is not based or refers to a clear understanding.

**Controlling images** : Controlling images focuses on the negative stereotypical representations and images of black women.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK**

Writing or discussion must be based on the results of studies or research that have been carried out, so this discussion chapter is the words or descriptions we provide for the material that has been determined. In writing the paper, there is a review of the related literature and theoretical framework. This will contain detailed descriptions of the various materials that have been selected. This section can simply be said as a place for the author to explain various materials that he has previously studied in research.

#### **2.1. Feminist Approach**

Feminism is the belief and aim that women should have the same rights, power, and opportunities as men. Feminism has still to change the lives of the majority of women. Feminism can be the face of many women and men, manifested in different thoughts and expressions, with the same goal of building equality for women in all areas of their lives. Feminism is a women's movement which fights for the emancipation or equality of full rights between you women and men without discrimination. There are several reasons that make feminism so important.

According to (Collins, 1991) Feminism is recognition of power imbalances between sexes, with women in subordinate roles for men.

Furthermore, Collins also explained that feminism is the belief that women's condition is a social construction and therefore can be changed. Collins also stated that feminism emphasis on women's autonomy.

Although there are already women who are debating to get a position accepted by society, feminism has not been very developed at that time. At that time what emerged were women who wrote their work to get rights, especially in the field of education. Then, the women became interested in new ideas that emerged after the French revolution. They consider if current gender relations are abolished and appear in the form of various associations that want to replace male dominance and reject the general notion of how to be a woman at that time. (Collins, 2007: 6).

### **2.1.1 Controlling Images**

According to Collins all the condition which can evoke racism in a person life was called controlling images. Those conditions included sexism, poverty, race, and skin color which are natural normal but can create social and injustice. Controlling images is similar type with stereotype, that image showed to incorrect represent in a group and individuals based on racist and sexual notions by Hill Collins (2001). The situation can be presented in social black women skin, some example in past and present displayed in controlling image.

The phenomenon of controlling image can be seen in black women attitude towards racisms behavior done by white people Collins (1991), for the example white people discriminated black people especially black women the differences by facility

what their needs. From the different with household appliances white people did not want same to black people. White people felt beastly if that have to same facility. Not only that, they have to the difference bathroom also in the story explained one of white people asked to black women going to outdoor bathroom. Sometime, one of white woman very cruel liked they did not give facility for them.

Another example of controlling image is the phenomena that black women have not valuable opportunity for developed person. Even if, black women resist the behavior, those resistances are pointless because, in white people opinion black people especially black women are the lowest caste so most white people neglect them.

Collins discussed racism, heterosexuality and black sex. Black women are consciously aware that they have fallen into the margins of society and the bottom of the social hierarchy. Having said that, Patricia Hill Collins portrayed black women in the media in four ways first is “mummy”. That described as overweight, dark and African-American, is asexual making her an inappropriate partner for white men, and the same time, she has also become her unborn child like a mother.

Secondly, the patriarchy's sex is directly related to their fertility and represents a sexually aggressive woman. She denies them the role of black patriarch and therefore refuses to be passive. Welfare mother is also directly related to her fertility, but in a different way. She is portrayed as a women with low morality uncontrolled sexual desire, both of which contribute to her current

situation as welfare mother. This group of humiliated women has not only been severely criticized for raising their children, but they have also been widely distorted in the media and used as propaganda to cut funds for social programs.

The black lady took a little bit from each lady to divide it into another category, describing a black woman who worked hard to win the respect of the middle class and was considered asexual. Not only that, but black ladies are considered the most suitable for having children and are therefore least likely to be encouraged. Like black men, the reproduction of these images has a negative impact on how black women perceive themselves and others.

Women pay has the same opportunities as men to succeed in society. According to Collins liberal feminists, gender justice can be started from ourselves. First, the rules for the game must be fair. Second, help no party who wants to use other community groups and the system used must be systematic and no one is harmed.

Theory of humiliated women has not only been severely criticized for raising their children, but they have also been widely distorted in the media and used propaganda to cut funds for social programs according to Lindner (2003). The black women took a little bit from each lady to divide it into another category, describing a black woman who worked hard to win the respect of the middle class and was considered the most suitable for having children and are therefore least likely to be encouraged. Like black men, the reproduction of these images has a negative impact on how black women perceive themselves and others.

### **2.1.2 Self-Definition**

Consider a party system shaped by power, rule, hierarchy and competition. But this cannot be reformed, and even the thinking must be changed. Radical feminists use gender, gender and reproduction as places to develop their feminist ideas (Collins, 2009: 2).

They determine women will not reach that position. Same with men returning the male domination system and being replaced is not changed. As issued by Firestone in *Feminist Thought*, no matter how much a lot of educational, legal and political equality that reaches women and doesn't care how many women move public industry, Firestone approved. Because nothing fundamental will change for women during repairs natural still in training and artificial on exception.

Differences of opinion between radical-libertarian feminists and radical-cultural feminists also target topics related to sex and sexuality; like pornography and lesbianism. For radical-libertarian feminists, consumption of pornography is a right for every woman. This group draws a clear line between sexy fantasies and sexy activities in the real world (which is full of unequal power relations).

### **2.2. Previous Study.**

There are some researchers who also conduct a research related to gender stereotype towards black women. The first research was conducted by Nugrohowardhani (2014). The title of the research is *Women's Resistance in Cotton Industry: Study on Environmental Degradation in East Sumba*. In this



research, the researcher wanted to analyze the resistance act done by women in East Sumba. Women in East Sumba, especially female farmers in Tanamanang Village did resistance act to protest against National Cotton Acceleration Program in West Sumba. Based on the research that had conducted by the researcher, the researcher found three different forms of resistance in the action. First is symbolic resistance. Second is open resistance. The last is assertion resistance.

The second research was conducted by Bere & Arianto (2019) the title of this journal is *Woman Violence and Resistance in "Sweat" Short Story by Zora Neale Hurston: Feminist Approach*. The aim of this research was to find out the violence toward women and women's resistance toward the construction of patriarchal. Based on the analysis, the researcher found that the woman in the short story got abusive treatment from her husband. The researcher was used Beauviour theory and feminism approach to research the problem. This research used descriptive qualitative method to look out the data in the short story. Based on the analysis, the researcher found out that feminism that happened in the story related with woman resistance towards abusive experience in life for having their freedom and rights as a human.

The third research was conducted by Gemberling (2014) The title of his journal is *The Historical Evolution of Feminism as Reflected in The Content of American Women's Magazine* (Kyra Gemberling). That paper provides many magazine magazines in America discuss about feminists to express opinions not only in magazines, American media also often discuss this. Therefore, it is easier for feminists to express their opinions through various media. Voicing that is

certainly not easy, especially since it was published in an American magazine that of course everyone reads.

The fourth research was conducted by Nienaber & Moraka (2017) The title of this journal is *Feminism in management research: A Route to Justly Optimise Talent*. This paper talking about the author explains some perspectives from feminists. A feminist describe a lot not only racist or gender equality but in this article also explains some who are including feminists. The first is a gender perspective; all have the right to be equal in education and position. The second is social feminists; women have the right to socialize their environment. Women don't have to take care of children, cook and take care of the house, but women also have the right to do their social life.

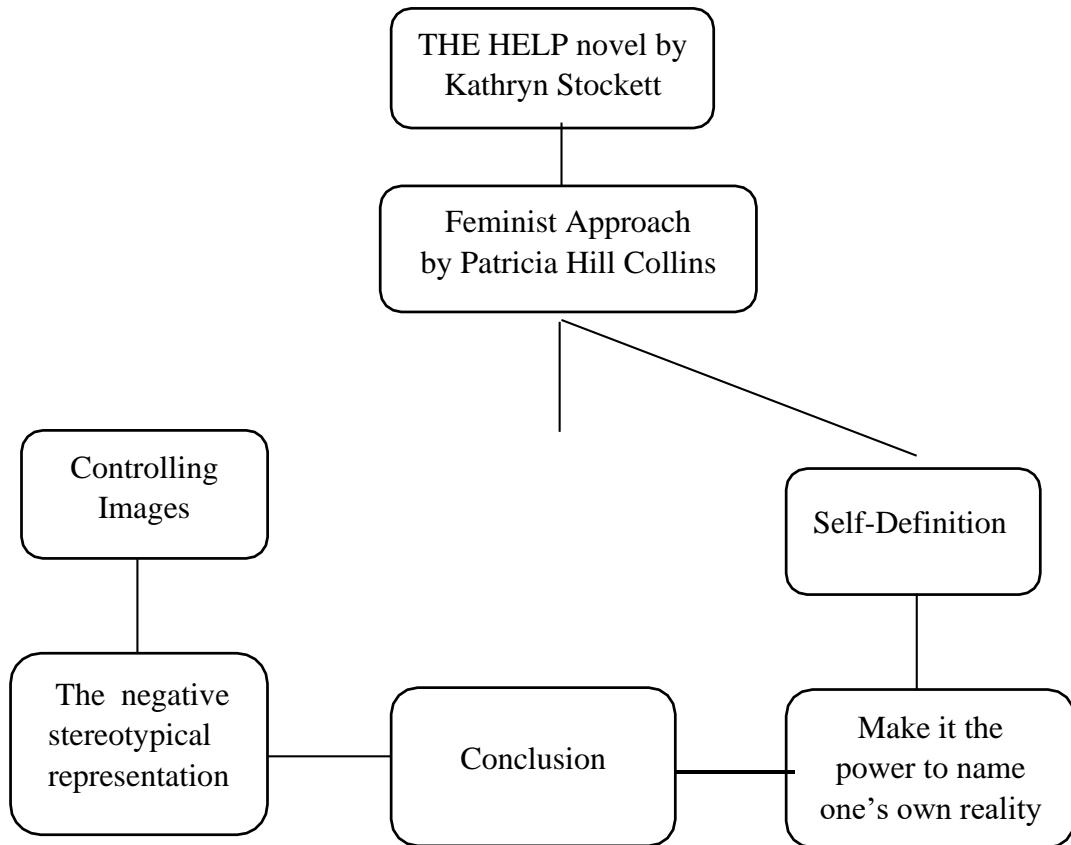
The fifth research was conducted by Lóttter (2000) The title of this journal is *The South African Constitution requires men to be feminist* (H P. P. Lotter). This is about proposing the basic values of justice embodied in South Africa's constitutional democracy require that men be feminists. These values are the best guarantee for safeguarding the interests and important values of men and women. African women found it difficult to get a defense at that time. Their identity as a black woman continues to struggle to prove they are also part of them. Men who accept these values can support the main concerns of feminism.

The fifth previous studies mentioned above had discussed different problems and issues. Some of the researchers above also analyze their problems by using Patricia Hill Collins feminism theory. Thing that made this research different with other previous studies was the main data used in the research. The

fifth journal was using the same approach but different novel. The researcher was used *The Help* novel by Kathryn Stockett. Although there was a research that used the same novel in their study, this research was using different method to analyze the data. This research is literature researches that analyze the characters in the novel by using Patricia Hill Collins theory about controlling images and self-definition.

### **2.3. Theoretical Framework**

This research used one of Kathryn Stockett famous novel entitled “*The Help*” as the main source of the research data. From the novel, the researcher found some phenomena related to Feminism. The theory of Feminist that the researcher will use in the research is Patricia Hill Collins theory about controlling images and self-definition. The characters in the novel can classify as a controlling images because they race in that moment can be improved their skills, it must be help always. The characters did self-definition how to characters speak up their race to dignity black woman at the moment. Based on the reasons stated before, the researcher wanted to examine the controlling images and self-definition happened in the novel by using Patricia Hill Collins theory.



**Figure 2.3 Theoretical Framework**

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH**

In this chapter, the writer discuss about the method and procedure that to be used in this research and explain about the methodology, design of the research, object of the research, technique of collecting data, instrumentation, and technique of analyzing data.

#### **3.1. Research Design**

Research design is a guide to the collection and analysis of objectives combining research with objectives in the procedure (Creswell, 2018). Research design helps researcher to analyze the data that had been collected to answer the problem of research. In fact, research design is a conceptual goals with social procedures which is connected to the main analysis.

Methodology of the research is procedures that used in making systematic observations or a way in obtaining or collecting data, information, or evidence as part of a research study. Research can also be defined as an academic activity, so the term should be used in a technical sense. Systematic approaches to generalization and theory formulation are also being studied. In this research, the writer utilized the approach with the quantitative methodology in distributing of the questionnaires to samples, then analyzed about the validity and reliability.

### **3.2. Object of the Research**

The object of this research is black woman's struggles in asserting race and gender in "the help" novel by Kathryn Stockett; feminist approach. The objective of this research is related to feminism theory. The researcher used Collins feminism theory. The researcher was using Collin theory to find out the controlling images and self-definition in the novel story.

### **3.3. Method of Collecting Data**

Technical process of data collection that used in this research is mainly for process of data collection that used in this research is mainly from library and website research. The first step is reading the primary data source which is Kathryn Stockett in the novel The Help. Then, make some list of the focus of the object analysis. The second step is to get the information and observation from other source or the previous research with support the data, including the literary books which related to the analyzing of the element of fiction.

This research in process, Creswell (2008:52) and was using qualitative descriptive and how identification of the researcher, there are:

1. Identification topic of research. Researcher identification topic and make it this research interesting.
2. The aim of research. Researcher identification information about the aim research and found benefits and strategy for doing research.
3. Reading. Researcher must read the novel or information related with research

4. Analyzes data in object. Researcher found the problem and identification phenomenon in the object research.
5. Identification problem with theory. Phenomenon from novel classify with theory use.
6. Evaluate and summarize the research. Data and issues make conclusion in narration.

### **3.4. Method of Analyzing Data**

The researcher find out intrinsic elements in the novel *The Help* novel by Kathryn Stockett, there are theme, setting, plot, point of view in *The Help* Novel by Kathryn Stockett. Reading the novel and found of problems and identification data with theory. The second types found extrinsic elements researcher should explain and analysis the data using Collins theory in *The Help* Novel by Kathryn Stockett , after that make it the reader understand what the aim from researcher. Analysis and try to display use the based on the novel.

### **3.5. Method of Presenting the Research Result**

The researcher was using qualitative descriptive method to present the research result. Qualitative method was used in this research to analyze the social phenomenon happened in novel “*The Help*” by Kathryn Stockett. Descriptive method was used because the researcher will present the research result descriptively by using word and sentence.