

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

Identity is a crucial component in every person's life, formed through various processes, including personality development, exploration, social interaction, and the influence of values and culture. Identity refers to the individual characteristics or traits that define a person, shaped by biological, psychological, and sociological factors that underlie individual behavior. Identity plays an essential role in shaping people's perceptions of themselves, such as behavior and habits, which then impact individual life decisions, including education, career, and relationships in society. In addition, identity also describes and strengthens social relations and group or community ties, and provides a person's identity as part of a community group.

The exploration of identity in literature reflection has long been held by some authors, serving as a mirror to society's evolving perceptions of identity, race, and belonging. Through their narratives, authors reveal the complexities of personal identity, often shaped by cultural, social, and political forces. Literature works provide a means to navigate and express the multifaceted aspects of self, with self-discovery narratives shedding light on the internal journeys of characters as they seek to define themselves. In this context, literature stands out for its rich exploration of these themes, particularly as it intersects with contemporary issues of identity. According to Hall (1996), identity is not a fixed entity but rather a fluid construct, shaped and reshaped through cultural and social interactions (p. 24). This dynamic view of identity is reflected in literature, where characters frequently embody the tensions and transformations of self that arise in multicultural, often fragmented societies (Smith, 2006, p. 13). By portraying these nuanced dimensions of self, literature contributes to a deeper understanding of the societal

factors influencing identity (Bhabha, 1994, p. 33).

Identity in literature can be seen as a complex construction, influenced by factors such as culture, history, and personal experience. Literature often uses identity to identify a person or a particular group in society, so that it can be placed in a situation or condition suitable for the socio-culture. In literary works, identity is one of the important aspects, including race, culture, class, gender, economy, and social class, which play an important role in identity. Identity is often used as a reference for how a group of people treats a person, provides social relationships, and provides ways of interacting with others. Identity itself provides a concept of self and social relationships with a particular society, so that it can be placed in a suitable social group or in a suitable sociocultural condition.

Literature has a unique ability to describe and explore individual and group identities in depth. Through characters and narratives, literary works can illustrate how identities are formed, maintained, and challenged in diverse social contexts. Literature not only reflects the complex and diverse identities of individuals but also provides a profound understanding of the diversity and complexity of human identity, promoting tolerance and empathy among individuals, groups, and races.

Race and identity are social constructions that include interpretation and self-identification, namely, their relationship to the complexity of racial identity. Physical characteristics, such as skin color, and cultural, sociocultural, and psychological aspects significantly influence how a group of people treat and view someone in this context. Racial identity is also very important and refers to how one is perceived and treated by others. Stereotypes have been created for a long time, and they also influence a person's interaction with a group. This creates a variety of social contexts and personal identities; certain communities

also influence the dynamics of social structures and the process of accepting certain values, attitudes, and experiences related to certain races or social groups.

Racial identity and literature are closely intertwined, as literature serves as a reflection that can describe, critique, and shape our understanding of racial identity. The author provides a picture of how discrimination and stereotypes can hinder, limit, and sometimes worsen a person's life, and make the reader reflect and think longer about a narrow view. The author also often brings up racial issues by bringing a background to develop complex characters and telling in such a way the experience of a person or a social group.

One example of an author whose works discuss the theme of racial identity is Toni Morrison with her novel *Beloved* (1987), which tells the story of the legacy of slavery and prolonged psychological trauma. In addition, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is another author whose works discuss this theme, such as her novel “*Americanah*” (2013), which describes the experiences of a Nigerian woman who moves to the United States and faces different racial categories. Through literary works, authors can describe the experiences and struggles of marginalized groups that are often overlooked in society. The two examples of literary works above reflect that literature plays a significant role in raising identity issues through the author's understanding and representation in their work, as well as how these works can provide better insight and understanding of the experiences of marginalized groups.

Through literary works, representation becomes the strength, struggle, and conflict brought about by the characters written by the author, thereby providing a background that feels distinct and lends social reality to the reader. In addition, literature and racial identity provide a reflection of the voices of groups that are often marginalized and feel marginal in certain social environments. Through literary works, a person's racial identity contributes to social and cultural

diversity, providing readers with insight and understanding.

Racial identity gives a generous scope analysis, especially in intrinsic elements such as plot, character development, and setting, to show the complexities of navigating racial identity awareness and belonging. Several characters in literature often have deep internal conflicts with significant issues. In this context, resilience is essential to confront racial prejudice while maintaining cultural values. Several issues, such as cultural shifts, racial discrimination, trauma passed down from generation to generation, and authentic racial identity analysis, are common themes in works that explore racial identity. These elements show through the conversations and behaviors of the characters in the story.

Characters with racial discrimination experience and cultural alienation show a remarkable ability to navigate adversity and shape the self and community understanding. Resilience is an active process of maintaining cultural integrity, not the absence of suffering while adapting to a challenging environment. The ability to preserve one's racial authenticity in the face of systemic obstacles highlights the essential role of mental strength in individual well-being. Authors incorporate resilience and racial identity as themes to reflect the evolving social dynamics of society. These literary portrayals show that resilience allows characters to transform racial trauma into personal empowerment and collective strength.

Ultimately, resilience in literature is the symbol of characters' resistance and communities against racial and cultural erasure. Racial identity is the central force in stereotypes, prejudices, and racial discrimination but it is also the source of inner strength and a means of cultural affirmation. Authors frequently deploy complex storytelling methods to depict resilience and identity, focusing on characters with their heritage while confronting systemic injustice.

Nowadays, racial identity and resilience are significantly connected in literary works, particularly in the psychological aspects of characters. Some novels portray the racial consciousness process and mental fortitude as essential elements in personal and societal racism. The issue in several texts frequently emerges, especially in subtle racial racism and cultural displacement, where resilience is crucial as a defense mechanism. It is mostly triggered by societal pressure to conform to white cultural norms, expectations from both majority and minority communities, and the struggle to balance racial authenticity with social acceptance. Werner (1982) defines resilience as "the capacity to cope effectively with internal stresses of vulnerabilities and external stresses," while scholars of critical race theory emphasize how racial identity development involves navigating both personal and structural dimensions of race. The confluence of these concepts shows how psychological resilience is crucial in dealing with racial discrimination, colorism, cultural displacement, internalized racism, and navigating complex racial hierarchies.

The writer noticed that the theme of racial identity is being explored more frequently in contemporary literature. Many authors frequently examine the complex interactions of racial identity and resilience in their works. They explore themes like code-switching, colorism within racial groups, and how race intersects with other identity factors such as gender, class, and sexuality. The texts frequently illustrate how resilience manifests not only in individual resistance to racism but also in the preservation and celebration of cultural traditions, the formation of supportive community networks, and the reclamation of ancestral knowledge. Through carefully crafted metaphorical representations, racial resilience emerges in symbols of cultural persistence, including traditional practices, language retention, and intergenerational storytelling, which serve as crucial mechanisms for characters maintaining their racial identity despite societal pressures to conform. Racial identity and resilience in literature show how

authors utilize various textual techniques to portray the multifaceted nature of racial consciousness and survival. The characters' journeys often reflect broader societal struggles with racial justice, cultural preservation, and the ongoing process of building psychological fortitude in the face of systemic oppression.

The writer has chosen the novel *Caucasia* by Danzy Senna as the object of this study on racial identity and resilience because the novel presents a unique theme, particularly in its storyline of racism faced by a biracial character. Published in 1998, *Caucasia* has achieved some achievements. Some of these are the Stephen Crane Award for Best New Fiction (1998), the American Library Association's Alex Award (1999), selected as one of School Library Journal's 23 Best Adult Books for Young Adults (1998), and selected as one of the Best Books of the Year by the Los Angeles Times (1998). Furthermore, *Caucasia* are interesting to examine because it provide new perspectives on issues of racism and identity construction. This novel is also Danzy Senna's first work, and she is known in the literature for often exploring issues that raise important questions about the construction of identity, class, and race in America, which remain relevant today. Danzy Senna's debut novel, *Caucasia*, delves into themes of identity, class, and race in America—topics that continue to be highly relevant and widely discussed. These factors aim to investigate the *Caucasia* further. Additionally, Danzy Senna provides new perspectives on racism, identity construction, and linked resilience and identity, especially in the context of racial and cultural challenges.

Danzy Senna's compelling novel *Caucasia* transcends the conventional coming-of-age narrative (a literary genre that tells the process of maturing). by exploring intricate themes of race, identity, and familial relationships through the protagonist's lens from Birdie Lee. Senna portrays Birdie's journeys on a deep self-exploration, navigating the emotional challenges caused

by the separation of parents and the sociocultural pressures of racial categorization. The novel provides a nuanced portrayal of racial discrimination in 1970s America, with the psychological issues, particularly on individuals of multiracial backgrounds like Birdie. Despite the civil rights during this era, racial bias and social division remained deep in American society. The novel shows the psychological strain caused by a system that enforces rigid racial binaries, forcing the mixed heritage into a constant negotiation of identity. Birdie's struggle is about societal and internal conflict, which is to define herself authentically while simultaneously adapting to external expectations. So, Birdie develops various psychological coping mechanisms to navigate a complex social reality, which often creates conflict between personal authenticity and the need for social survival.

The dynamics of pressure from society depicted by the author through the *Caucasia* novel can be taken as a historical pattern of discrimination and racial issues by giving psychological impacts on individuals or certain groups of people. Around 1970, segregation and social inequality in America were still very much felt, even though legal progress had emerged in civil society. This novel is very complex in terms of psychology for individuals of mixed races, and they must continue to try to accept their identity amidst societal pressure. This self-acceptance involves not only external processes but also internal processes of identity and sociocultural maintenance. In this context, characters like Birdie must develop and maintain their psychology to guide themselves amidst complex racial issues and the struggle between external society and internal conflict with themselves.

The impact of this dynamic becomes an important part that is interesting to analyze. It appears to be one of the most important layer factors to explore the mechanism of maintaining identity and resilience in the novel, especially emphasizing how family strata based on racial

status can cause deep psychological trauma, and individuals are forced to develop complex coping mechanisms as they struggle to maintain their identity. Birdie's relationship with a black man who is actively involved in politics is chosen by her father, her white mother's choice to stay silent and hide, and the separation from her sister, Cole. All of these contribute to complex psychological development. This relationship highlights the connection between racial identity and the influences of family, society, and culture.

Sigmund Freud's theory of defense mechanisms applied with a structural model of the psyche, the id, ego, and superego to examine social pressures and family dynamics influencing the psychological development of biracial characters in *Caucasia*. According to *Caucasia*, it helps the writer understand biracial characters and solidify their identity amidst ambiguous racial identities. The writer is also interested in exploring the psychology of racial identity and the resilience of characters in society, shaping identity and building resilience in text and in real life, where racial experiences are complex.

1.2. Identification of the Problem

The main problem in the novel *Caucasia* focuses on the complex interaction between racial identity issues, family relationship dynamics, and societal expectations. The main focus of this novel is Birdie Lee, a mixed-race girl who faces inner conflict in her psychology while living and socializing in a society that prioritizes identity based on one's race. Birdie, who is struggling with her own condition, faces emotional and psychological challenges. Birdie must face various questions that affect her mental and psychological health. This novel describes her subconscious mind regarding her determination to maintain her identity as a mixed white and black child, even though her physical appearance is white, which is of a higher status than her black sister and father, as well as the influence of her parents, who have separated due to differences in social class. She also faces external problems derived from environmental

demands to consider herself white and must behave like white people. This conflict makes her strive hard to balance what she needs as an individual and the racial realities around her. This struggle captures a severe part of her identity, and she must constantly face the painful dilemma of navigating between authenticity and survival. Therefore, it highlights the broader impacts of race and identity as a social construction and also how society enforces individuals based on skin color.

1.3. Review of Related Literature

The writer reviews some research related to this research to guide and avoid similar research objectives. The first one is "Racial Attitudes in the United States: Racial Hybridity in Danzy Senna's *Caucasia*," Alyx Arnett (2009), The main idea of the research is Birdie's story shows the challenges and complexities of racial identities and the growing acceptance of racial hybridity in American society focus on shifting racial attitudes in the U.S. and the mixed race struggles in understanding their identities. The interesting point from this research is that the writer also mentions interracial relationships, especially those between Birdie's parents, Sandy and Deck, and the desegregation of Birdie's education, as well as the acceptance of racial hybridity. This aligns with broader literary studies on characters navigating racial identity, defense mechanisms, and resilience.

The next related study is from Kathryn Rummell's (2007) study, titled "Rewriting the Passing Novel: Danzy Senna's *Caucasia*," which explores themes of race, identity, and sexuality in the novel *Caucasia*. Rummell analyzes the journey of Birdie, a mixed-race protagonist who refuses to be confined by a single racial label. Using theories of racial identity and flexibility, Rummell understands how Birdie navigates a world that tends to impose rigid boundaries around race. This research has several strengths that contribute to this study, such as its

multidimensional and comprehensive analysis of Birdie's identity in exploring the psychological processes behind Birdie's self-development and self-resilience. However, this research also has gaps that could be areas for further discussion, particularly regarding the internal strategies Birdie uses to cope with external pressures. Rummell's study provides an essential foundation for this research, especially in introducing the concept of defense mechanisms as a lens to better understand Birdie's inner resilience. This research can serve as a reference for understanding how characters can develop and maintain their identities in the face of external pressures.

The next related study is from Sari, Yuliana, Sarwiji Suwandi, and Nugraheni Eko Wardani, titled "Id, Ego, and Superego in the Main Character of Mata di Tanah Melus Novel by Okky Madasari." In 2018. The primary focus of this article is the psychological dynamics of Matara's character, who struggles to survive in Tanah Melus with strict social and cultural dynamics that make her feel alienated and experience an identity crisis. The primary purpose of this article is to examine Matara's development using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, especially the interplay between the id, ego, and superego, and how it influences her behavior, decision-making, and shapes her strategies in facing social and ethical boundaries. This study has several strengths that relate to this research, such as a deep analysis of Matara's psychological structure and how these internal forces shape her actions and growth. However, it also has some limitations, such as not exploring the complexity of racial identity as in the novel *Caucasia*. But this study enriches the writers' understanding of Freud's concepts and provides an essential foundation for analyzing the psychological dynamics in Danzy Senna's works, mainly the way the characters balance the complexities of the id, ego, and superego.

The next related study was written by Adisti Supit, Ceysi N. Wuntu, and Delli Sabudu in their article titled "Louisa Clark's Resilience as Reflected in Jojo Moyes' Novel 'Me Before

You': A Character Analysis" in 2022, which discusses the concept of resilience as depicted in Jojo Moyes' novel "Me Before You." This study uses a qualitative method and a psychological lens to examine the internal factors that contribute to Louisa Clark's overall resilience. The results of the study show that Louisa has high self-esteem and a self-indulgent personality, which helps her cope with difficult situations. The study provides an in-depth analysis of Louisa's psychological aspects and also the way she deals with life's challenges. The study also offers new insights into how individuals can develop resilience to face life's challenges. This research shares similarities in analyzing the main characters in each novel through the internal factors of the characters, which are very helpful for writers as a reference to understand the concept of resilience in the *Caucasia* novels. This article helps the writer understand the character's resilience journey and their development.

The next related study is the article by Dwi Nila Mutyarani, Jesicha Dwi Amareta, and Diana Hardiyanti titled "Analysis of Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis Theory: Id, Ego, and Superego on Personal Character in the Novel The Tragedy Paper" (2024). This study discusses Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, namely the id, ego, and superego, in shaping the behavior and internal conflicts of characters in the novel "The Tragedy Paper." The author uses a qualitative method to analyze the main narrative and supporting texts to trace the psychological motivations of each character in the novel "The Tragedy Paper." The research results indicate that the id is expressed through basic desires and impulsive drives, while the ego manages emotions, makes decisions, and balances actions. The superego, which reflects internal morality, often conflicts with the id, creating internal conflict. This research shares similarities with *Caucasia's* research, such as the in-depth analysis of the interaction between the id, ego, and superego in shaping character behavior, which greatly assists the author in analyzing the

character of Birdie. This research also demonstrates how Freud's psychoanalytic theory can be used to understand the psychological depth of fictional characters. This research was useful for the writer to know more about Freud's concept, literary psychology, and the role of psychoanalysis in character development in literature.

The next related study is from Aldwin, Cunningham, and Taylor, entitled "Resilience Across the Life Span: A Tribute to Emmy E. Werner" in 2010. The main focus of this article is on Emmy E. Werner's significant contributions to developmental psychology, particularly through her longitudinal research that challenged assumptions about poor adult outcomes for high-risk children. The main purpose of this article is to honor and summarize Werner's work, which emphasizes the importance of resilience and the interaction between individual characteristics and sociocultural context in overcoming difficulties. This study is very helpful and relevant to this research, outlining Emmy Werner's perception of resilience as a dynamic process influenced by various factors and an in-depth exploration of the specific mechanisms underlying resilience in adolescents. This study greatly enriches the author's understanding of the concept of resilience in psychological fields and provides an important foundation for analysing the factors that contribute to an individual's ability to overcome challenges in lifes including the process of developing self-resilience.

The next related study is from George A. Bonanno's "Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience," published in 2004, which explores individuals' adaptation to trauma and loss. According to the article, resilience comes from internal coping strategies and external support. This research helps the author understand Birdie's emotional resilience in the novel *Caucasia*, particularly in dealing with racial confusion and social pressure. Bonanno's research on resilience as a transformative process aligns with Birdie's ability to adapt and redefine her identity. From

this study, the writer concluded that Bonanno's research on resilience provides a strong foundation for exploring resilience as a complex psychological process, despite its cultural limitations.

The next related study is a research conducted by Prof. Ajay Kumar Shukla and Priyanka Mishra titled “Exploring Identity and Social Dynamics in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Novel *Americanah*” in 2024, which explores complex themes of identity, race, and belonging in Adichie's novel. The main idea of this article is the journeys of Ifemelu and Obinze in the novel "Americanah", who face the complexities of identity, culture, and class in America and London. *Americanah* portrayed the struggle and the difficulties of race in minorities perspective through Ifemelu and Obinze, who struggle with these issues not only in the novel but in real life. The writer of this research highlights the importance of authenticity and self-transformation in the characters' experiences, particularly in Ifemelu's return to Nigeria and her reconnection with Obinze. The research concludes that "Americanah" serves as a representation of minorities in maintaining their identities and ideologies, which also encompasses issues of race, gender, and class in the era of globalization. This article provides a unique insight from the perspective of minorities. The research shows that Ifemelu's and Obinze's experiences emphasize the importance of authenticity and self-transformation. This article helps the writer to gain a better understanding of the complexities of identity and globalization in literary works. This study is helpful because it is relevant to this research as it highlights cultural dynamics and racial discrimination, such as the identity conflicts experienced by Birdie in *Caucasia*. Although it focuses on a postcolonial context, which limits its cross-cultural generalizability, the approach applied in this study demonstrates how literature can function as a tool for social criticism and reflection on resilience in the face of racial boundaries, thereby contributing to an understanding

of the complexity of race, identity, and socio-cultural dynamics in line with the novel *Caucasia*.

The next related is "Multiple racial identities as sources of psychological Resilience," written by Shih, M., Wilton, L. S., Does, S., Goodale, B. M., & Sanchez, D. T., published in 2019. The article explores how multiracial individuals manage their racial identity, highlighting both the benefits and challenges they face. The study finds that multiracial people often develop a more nuanced understanding of race and racism, which can serve as a protective factor against the negative effects of discrimination. These findings make an important contribution to this research on flexible racial-identity navigation. Especially, the result shows how Birdie's shifting identities in *Caucasia* not only help her survival in racial identity but also build psychological resilience. Therefore, the article increases the understanding of how multiracial individuals cultivate resilience through the active management of their racial identities. The research also shows that multiracial identities can be a source of strength and resilience.

The last one is the article from P. M. Dashing and Dr. D. Causally that was published in March 2024 by PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore, "Explores the theme of resilience in Stephen King's novella "Rita Hayworth and Shaw shank Redemption." that analyzes the way and the strategies of resilience that used Andy's character, in "Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption" focusing on his determination, survival strategies, and the power of hope. The finding of the study is the concept of resilience as a transformative ability to navigate life's challenges with courage and optimism. The study concludes that the novel offers a profound exploration of the human spirit's tenacity.. Dashing, P. M., and Causally, D. (2024) examined the subject of resilience in Stephen King's novella "Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption." This article not only highlights the significance of comprehending resilience as a transformative ability to face life's most challenging issues with courage, dignity, and unwavering optimism, but

it also makes a significant contribution to this research on racial identity navigation, defense mechanisms, and resilience in the context of a multiracial society.

1.4. Research Questions

1. How does the author portray the development of Birdie's racial identity using Freud's concept of defense mechanisms?
2. How does the author represent the development of Birdie's resilience in response to societal expectations and racial identity in *Caucasia*?

1.5. Scope of the Research

In this Research, the writer limits the analysis of Birdie's journey in navigating racial identity issues and resilience due to her biracial girl. This study focuses on the main character, Birdie, while involving several other characters, helps gain a more detailed understanding of her journey in developing racial identity and resilience. This Research aims to analyze the novel *Caucasia* by Danzy Senna through Freud's psychological perspective of the id, ego, and superego along with denial and repression. A deep textual analysis is conducted on, Birdie, who grapples with a complex racial identity and resilience. This Research delves into Birdie's internal conflicts related to self-perception, her external struggles in facing societal expectations, and the ways she addresses problems to achieve self-stability.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to investigate the development of Birdie's racial identity in Danzy Senna's *Caucasia*, examining the significant racial challenges she faces and how they affect her racial identity. This Research will also analyze the social pressure Birdie faces and how it affects her behavior. In addition, this study will investigate how Birdie uses resilience and defense mechanisms to deal with racial challenges and social pressures, as well as the

psychological impact of "racial passing" (hiding racial identity) on Birdie, focusing on how Birdie tries to deny her Black heritage and how she deals with her feelings of confusion, and being excluded from people around her.

