

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the research

Self-esteem is an individuals' subjective evaluation of their own worth. Self-esteem encompasses beliefs about oneself as well as emotional states, such as triumph, despair, pride, and shame. Self-esteem itself involves the confidence, happiness and self-image. In the other hand, it also shapes the way of thinking, causing the changing attitude of someone whether it will be positive or negative result and even it can be a standard of failure and success. If the factors needed to form self-esteem are not obtained, then there is a possibility that someone will experience low self-esteem.

According to Tyson, low self-esteem is the belief that we are less worthy than other people and, therefore, don't deserve attention, love, or any other of life's rewards. Indeed, we often believe that we deserve to be punished by life in some way (16). From that statement, it can be concluded that feeling of being loved, getting attention and awards in one's own worth or abilities are the important factor built a better self-respect or self-esteem.

Low self-esteem is characterized by a lack of confidence and feeling badly about oneself. People with low self-esteem often feel unlovable, awkward, or incompetent. According to researchers Rosenberg and Owens, who wrote *Low Self-*

Esteem People: A Collective Portrait, people with low self-esteem tend to be hypersensitive. They have a fragile sense of self that can easily be wounded by others.

Low self-esteem is an interesting topic to discuss because it is one of the complicated personalities in human's life. Therefore, the research about low self-esteem has been discussed by numerous researchers. One of the researches is done by Nicole M. Overstreet and Diane M. Quinn. They write an article entitled *Contingencies of Self-Worth and Appearance Concerns: Do Domains of Self-Worth Matter?*. They studied 115 Black and 222 White college women as the model that examined whether staking self-worth in certain domains was associated with decreased or increased body surveillance and appearance satisfaction.

In literary work, the society is sometimes reflected as two forms, both good and bad values. Therefore, doing the research about low self-esteem can also be done through analysing literary work. In its corrective purpose, literature has a function as a reflection of the society that makes them realize their mistakes and make improvements. The improvement can be a biggest part of one's life, such as low self-esteem. Society is one of the major components that influence one's self-esteem. Actually, all things can be an important component toward self-esteem. Therefore it is safe to say that it can be a fatal cause of low self-esteem too. Low self-esteem also built through the way society treats a person, including how society in a novel treats someone. For example, how white people treat black people.

There are many books that describe the suffer of African-American people who have darker skin. They often show the hardship and many of them show a fatal consequence too. It can be affects their physic or their mental. For example, Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* is one of those books that talks about how black people overcoming the racist action. But, the worse thing is that some characters suffer from low self-esteem because they lack of appreciation toward themselves. Pecola Breedloves is one of the examples who suffer from low self-esteem. The effect is that she really desires for blue eyes. Meanwhile, Claudia, is a girl whose people surrounding her, including Pecola, desire everything white people stuffs. She is not interested by those stuffs. But, she does feel that she is lack of beauty when she faces a racist action. Worst, they even discriminate within the black people too.

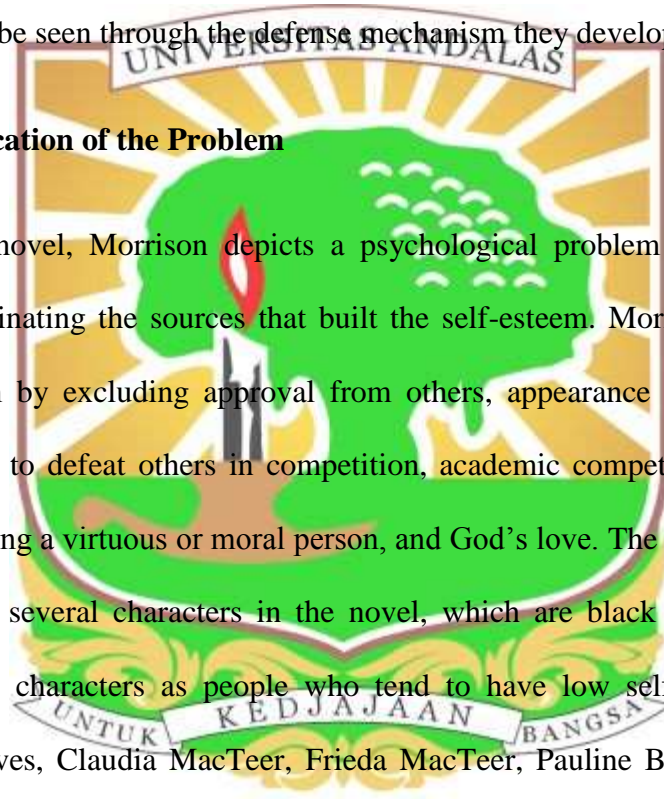
In "Building Self-Esteem", Ponton states "low self-esteem is often linked to depression or anxiety. If your emotions feel overpowering or out of control, one way to build self-esteem around this issue is to learn to manage your mood and gain control over your feelings. Some people are able to do this with the help of friends and family. Others need to work with a mental health professional to manage the problems that may lies beneath the surface of low self-esteem" (2018). Based on the explanation, the author believes that low self-esteem can affects someone badly. However, human always do strategies to protect themselves from any harm, physically or mentally such as low self-esteem. Human always defend themselves, because if someone is mentally ill does not defend herself and the illness becomes worst, it can be a dangerous thing.



The writer chooses low self-esteem as the topic because the writer curious about the way Morrison shows the struggle of black people who live through low self-esteem. The writer also sees the different kind of ways of black people in protecting their pride from discriminative society, especially the one who is stronger than others, either the discrimination from white people or black people. This causes low self-esteem towards the weaker one. The different kind of ways of protecting themselves can be seen through the defense mechanism they developed.

1.2. Identification of the Problem

In this novel, Morrison depicts a psychological problem named low self-esteem by eliminating the sources that built the self-esteem. Morrison presents the low self-esteem by excluding approval from others, appearance (that accepted by society), ability to defeat others in competition, academic competence, family love and support, being a virtuous or moral person, and God's love. The low self-esteem is experienced by several characters in the novel, which are black people. Morrison describes many characters as people who tend to have low self-esteem, such as Pecola Breedloves, Claudia MacTeer, Frieda MacTeer, Pauline Breedloves, Cholly Breedloves, etc. They are black people and they experience the absence of at least one source of self-esteem. Morrison uses them to show the existence of low self-esteem in the novel as the depiction of the real situation of that time. But, Morrison focuses more on Pecola Breedloves and Claudia MacTeer as the representation of black people about how they defend themselves from low self-esteem. Based on their



defense mechanisms, Morrison shows different attitude in overcoming low self-esteem.

1.3 Scope of the Research

In order to focus the analysis, the writer limits the analysis into two subjects. First, the writer limits the sources that create self-esteem. The sources of self-esteem consist of approval from others, appearance, ability to defeat others in competition, academic competence, family love and support, being a virtuous or moral person, and God's love. The writer believes that the sources that play a more big role in the novel are approval from others, appearance, and family support. Therefore, the writer limits the research into those three domains. Besides, in order to see the defense mechanism developed by the characters, the writer also limits the characters into two characters, Pecola and Claudia, as representation of black people who undergone low self-esteem.

1.4 Research Questions

This research is aimed to answer the following questions :

- a. How does the author depict low self esteem undergone by the characters in *The Bluest Eye*?
- b. How do characters overcome the low self-esteem?

1.5 Objectives of The Research

Generally, this research is aimed to enrich the analysis of *The Bluest Eye* in the studies of literary work in the field of psychological criticism. Specifically, this

research is proposed to analyse low self-esteem as shown by Toni Morrison in her novel *The Bluest Eye*. This research also explains the way Toni Morrison describes characters' defense mechanism to overcome low self-esteem in the novel.

1.6 Review of Related Studies

Numerous critics have conducted studies about *The Bluest Eye*, the result shows that not many articles examine more about low self-esteem in *The Bluest Eye*. On the other hand, the writer also did find some articles and thesis that would help the writer in this research to enrich its sources. The writer found several studies and research articles that talking about Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, they are *The Analysis Of The Main Character's Resistance Against Traumatic Experience As Seen In Frances Hudgson Burnett's The Secret Garden: Freud's Tripartite Model Analysis* by Brian Cesar (2018), *Unresolve Psychological Problem in Dennis Lehane's Shutter Island* by Ahmad Lutfi (2018), *Misconstruction of Love and Lack of Self-Esteem In Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye* by Louis Mendy (2014), and the last one entitled *Contingencies of Self-Worth and Appearance Concerns: Do Domains of Self-Worth Matter?* by Nicole M. Overstreet and Diane M. Quinn (2012). Some of them are helping the research by giving explanation about self-esteem, the rests are helping the writer to comprehending defense mechanisms.

First is Brian Cesar's thesis (2018) entitled *The Analysis Of The Main Character's Resistance Against Traumatic Experience As Seen In Frances Hudgson Burnett's The Secret Garden: Freud's Tripartite Model Analysis*. The author states that the traumatic experience of the main character in this novel, Mary Lennox, is

caused by her parents' abandonment and everyone who gave her such not enough attention when she was in her childhood. It caused her to grow up to be an aggressive, temperament, disrespectful, and depressed child. She often treats other people impolitely and becomes what the writer calls her as "a tyrannical selfish little girl". These misbehaviours that Mary experienced can be categorized as a response to defence mechanism. However, she slowly changes when she finds a secret garden and starts to taking care of it. There, she regains her emotional and physical condition, as the garden becomes prettier, and so does her attitude toward other people. Two others minor characters mentioned in this novel, Colin and Dickon, which are believed by the author as the symbol of "id" and "superego", respectively, also helps the main character in regaining her mental and physical health. This was proven when she is already succeed in overcoming his traumatic experiences through displacement that she has done toward her secret garden which then plays a big role in regaining her mental and physical health.

Second is Ahmad Lutfi's thesis entitled *Unresolve Psychological Problem in Dennis Lehane's Shutter Island*. He discussed about the hallucination problem Andrew Laeddis illustrated in Dennis Lehane's novel Shutter Island. In this thesis, the author analyzes the hallucinations experienced by Andrew Laeddis and how he can recover from these psychological problems. To analyze these problems, literature psychology theory was used by Sigmund Freud (theory of psychoanalysis) and the theory of self defense mechanisms by Anna Freud. Based on the results of the analysis conducted, the writer concluded that Andrew Laeddis experienced three

types of hallucinations, namely: visual hallucinations, auditory hallucinations and temporal illusion (unable to distinguish time and place). Andrew also developed two self-defense mechanisms, namely, denial of reality and regression, because the id owned by Andrew Laeddis was so dominating and the ego was very weak, making doctors in Shutter Island fail to treat Andrew Laeddis. In other words Andrew Laeddis cannot return to being a normal person because he failed to overcome the hallucinations he experienced.

The next is an article written by Louis Mendy, entitles *Misconstruction of Love and Lack of Self-Esteem in Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye*. Here, the author states that the cause of loss of self-esteem on the main character of this novel, Pecola Breedloves, can be concluded into two motives. First, for the reason that she lives in the society where she is considered ugly merely because of her black skin whereas the true conception of beauty is white-skinned with blonde hair and blue eyes has led not just herself but also the African American girl or women who likely to hate herself or themselves, and in some extent, anything related to their own race. The second cause is the poverty of her parents has to face and violent that she confronts. Every day, she encounters a lot of mistreatments. Together, these two causes occur because of the misconstruction of love. Consequently, her low self-esteem made she thinks she will receive anyone's attention if she looks like the standard ones. Therefore, she just wanted her eye to be blue. She even thinks that she is having the bluest eye in the end of the story.



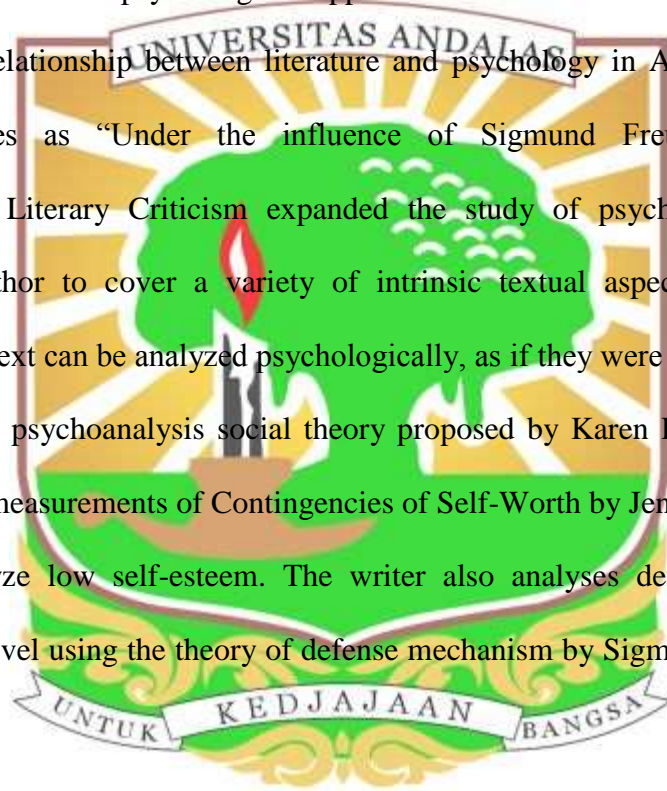
The last study is done by Nicole M. Overstreet and Diane M. Quinn. They write an article entitled *Contingencies of Self-Worth and Appearance Concerns: Do Domains of Self-Worth Matter?*. They conduct a research which included 115 Black and 222 White college women as the model that examined whether staking self-worth in certain domains was associated with decreased or increased body surveillance and appearance satisfaction. This article examines the seven domains of self-worth proposed by Crocker and Wolf toward the women, whether could these domains effect to their feel about their body appearance or could not. In this research, the author examined models from two different backgrounds, black and white women. The result shows that white women reported that their self-worth strongly be based on competition, approval from others, appearance and family support. On other hand, black women based their self-worth on god's love. This research also examined the relation between the domains of self-worth and body surveillance and appearance satisfaction. Related to the appearance and approval from others, this will result the increasing of body surveillance and decreasing of appearance satisfaction for both, black & white women. While on the other hand, god's love causes less body surveillance for black women, but not for the white. Whereas, family support affects the appearance satisfaction for white women, and not for the black women. This research helps the writer to know how the contingencies of self-worth work toward one's self-esteem.

Those researches help the writer to enrich the knowledge about the topic being discussed. The writer finds those studies and articles are helping the research

nically. Several studies help the writer to understand how the defense mechanisms are applied and analysed. Other articles help the writer to understand how low self-esteem happens in the story. Therefore, the writer sees those researches as the additional sources and the measurement in understanding the topic.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The writer uses psychological approach to elaborate this analysis. Klarer described the relationship between literature and psychology in *An Introduction to Literary Studies* as “Under the influence of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism expanded the study of psychological features beyond the author to cover a variety of intrinsic textual aspects. For instance, characters in a text can be analyzed psychologically, as if they were real people.” (89) The writer uses psychoanalysis social theory proposed by Karen Horney using and the theory and measurements of Contingencies of Self-Worth by Jennifer Crocker and Wolfe to analyze low self-esteem. The writer also analyses defense mechanism shown in the novel using the theory of defense mechanism by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939).



Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism

Applying psychoanalytic criticism in analyzing the literary work means to see what the literary work itself can tell the reader about human being’s psychological relationship to the real-life issues (Tyson 35). It means the issues that related to the real-life can be analyzed with this criticism. “Literature and the other arts, like a

dream and neurotic symptoms, consist of the imagined, or fantasied, fulfillment of wishes that are either denied by reality or are prohibited by the social standards” (Abrams 248).

The psychoanalytic theory was developed by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). All of Freud’s work depends upon the notion of the unconscious, which is the part of the mind beyond consciousness which nevertheless has a strong influence upon our actions. Psychological criticism in literature usually deals mainly with the authors, characters, and the reader. As Norman Holland stated in his book, *Holland’s Guide to Psychoanalytic Psychology and Literature and Psychology* (1990), “psychologies, however, deal in the first instance not with poems or stories, but persons. Hence, psychological criticism will discuss the author, some member(s) of the author’s audience, a character, or ‘the language’” (30).

Horney: Psychoanalytic Social Theory

To understand the basic concept of low self-esteem, the writer uses Psychoanalytic Social Theory proposed by Karen Horney. Karen Horney, who was born in Germany in 1885, was one of the first women in that country admitted to medical school. There, she became acquainted with Freudian theory and eventually became a psychoanalyst and a psychiatrist.

In Feist and Feist’s book of *Theories of Personality*, he states that “Karen Horney’s psychoanalytic social theory, argues that social and cultural conditions, especially during childhood, have a powerful effect on later personality. (Feist and

Feist, 2008:169) Horney accepted many of Freud's observations, but she objected to most of his interpretations, including his notions on feminine psychology" (170).

Horney argues that people who do not have their needs for love and affection satisfied during childhood develop basic hostility toward their parents and, as a consequence, suffer from basic anxiety. The desperate need of love can't be good for oneself. Rather than benefiting from the need for love, it attempts to result in increased hostility, basic anxiety, low self-esteem, and a continuous extreme need for love and affection.

The concept that Horney Proposed has a strong relation with the second theory the writer used to analyse. In Contingencies of Self-Worth, Crocker and Wolfe propose the components that presumed to be the social and cultural influence, that take role as the builder of one's self-esteem.

Contingencies of Self-Worth: Theory and Measurement

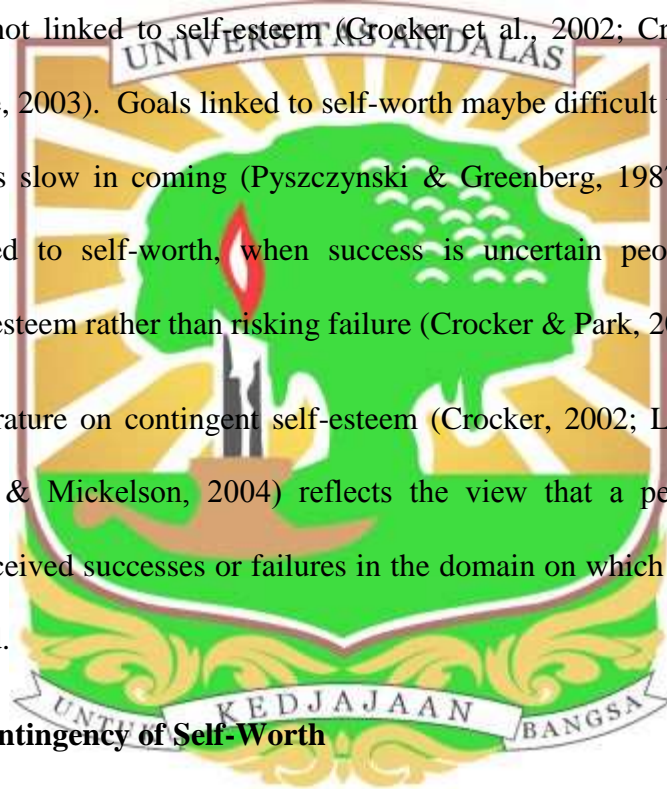
In Jennifer Crocker's journal Contingencies of self-worth: Implications for self-regulation and psychological vulnerability, the author states that contingencies of self-worth are used as a source of motivation and a psychological vulnerability. This means that contingencies of self-worth can cause one to strive for success or weaken one's self-esteem. Contingencies of self-worth are associated with validation of one's abilities in the domain of contingency, and students spend more time on activities related to their specific domains of contingency.

Contingencies of self-worth represent the domains in which goals are linked to self-worth (Crocker, 2002; Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Wolfe & Crocker, 2002). Like all goals, these goals have self-regulatory consequences; people seek to achieve success and avoid failure in domains on which self-worth is contingent (e.g., Carver & Scheier, 1998). However, success and failure at goals linked to self-esteem result in intense affect and extreme fluctuations in self-esteem relative to equally important goals that are not linked to self-esteem (Crocker et al., 2002; Crocker, Karpinski, Quinn, & Chase, 2003). Goals linked to self-worth maybe difficult to disengage from when success is slow in coming (Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1987). Because these goals are linked to self-worth, when success is uncertain people may opt for protecting self-esteem rather than risking failure (Crocker & Park, 2003).

The literature on contingent self-esteem (Crocker, 2002; Leary et al., 2003; Park, Crocker, & Mickelson, 2004) reflects the view that a person's self-worth depends on perceived successes or failures in the domain on which the person's self-esteem is staked.

Domains of Contingency of Self-Worth

According to Crocker and Wolfe (2001), contingencies of self-worth, which is sometimes is abbreviated as CSW, is a personal belief about the thing or the person one must be look like or must do to obtain a sense of self-worth, which eventually can effect one's motivation, behaviour, cognition and affect.



Crocker and Wolfe (2001) proposed that good and bad events that people experienced related to seven domains of self-worth, more or less, will raise and lower temporary feelings of their self-esteem and these fluctuations in state self-esteem have motivational consequences. Increases in self-esteem means that they feel good and decreases in self-esteem mean that they feel bad of themselves. Therefore, whether people have high or low self-esteem, they however pursue the emotional high and connected it with success and try to avoid the emotional lows that accompany failure in these domains.

Consequently, contingencies of self-worth control behaviour. The measure focuses on seven domains based on internal and external sources of self-esteem in previous research and theory proposed by several researchers, those are: others' approval, appearance, defeating others in competition, academic competence, family love and support, being a virtuous or moral person, and God's love.

1. Competencies

Self-esteem is derived in part from evaluations of one's specific competencies or abilities (e.g., Coopersmith, 1967; Harter, 1986; Rosenberg, 1979). In some research, it shows that academic competence plays an important role in influencing the self-esteem of children in elementary school. While for the high school students, there are some categories which influence the academic outcomes, such as teachers' evaluation, school grades etc. While for the college student, their self-esteem be based on a wide variety of competencies.



2. Competition

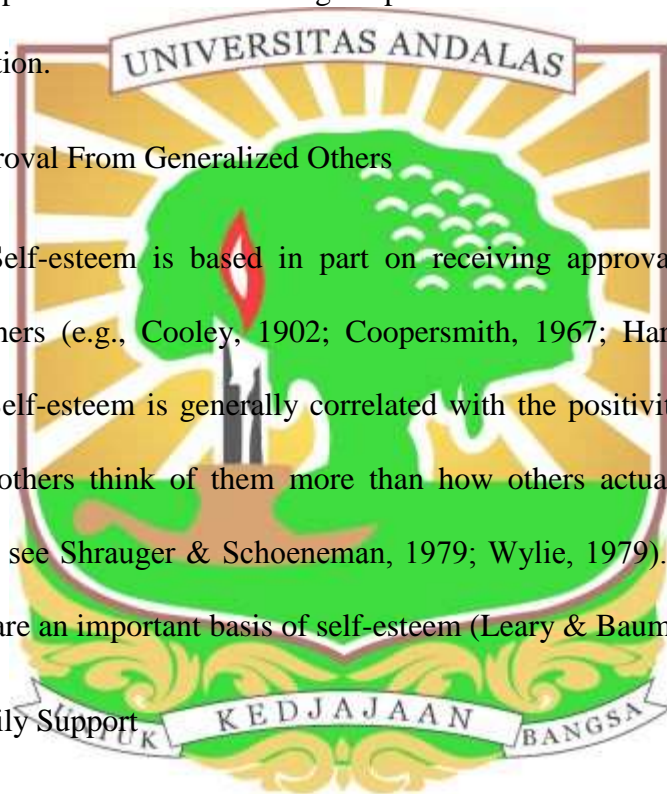
According to Cross & Madson (1997) and Josephs, Markus, & Tafarodi (1992), stated that for certain people, it is believed that men, especially, are assumed to derive their self-esteem from considering themselves better than others. They probably be based their self-esteem less on competence than on being superior to others—outdoing them in competition.

3. Approval From Generalized Others

Self-esteem is based in part on receiving approval and acceptance from others (e.g., Cooley, 1902; Coopersmith, 1967; Harter, 1986; Mead, 1934). Self-esteem is generally correlated with the positivity of what people believe others think of them more than how others actually see them (for reviews, see Shrauger & Schoeneman, 1979; Wylie, 1979). Others' views of the self are an important basis of self-esteem (Leary & Baumeister, 2000).

4. Family Support

The affection of close others may be particularly important to self-esteem (Bartholomew, 1990; Bowlby, 1982; Coopersmith, 1967). Attachment theory, for example, argues that mental models of the self as loveable and worthy of care and support are central to secure attachment (Bowlby, 1982; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). Perceived approval or love from family members is related to global feelings of self-worth (Harter, 1986). Our



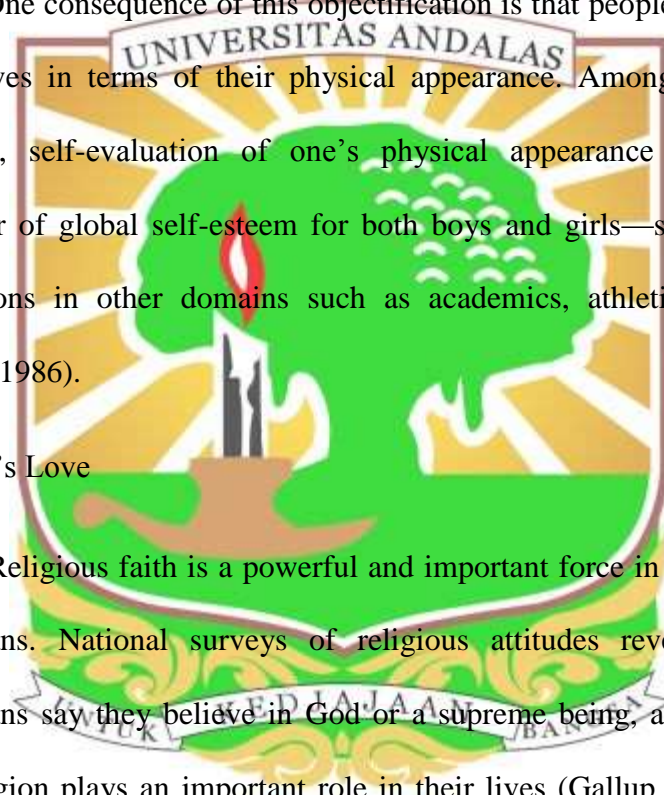
measure focuses specifically on love and support from family, because almost all college students could potentially derive self-esteem from this source.

5. Appearance

People in general, and females in particular, are evaluated in part on the basis of physical appearance (for a review, see Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). One consequence of this objectification is that people learn to evaluate themselves in terms of their physical appearance. Among adolescents, for example, self-evaluation of one's physical appearance is the strongest predictor of global self-esteem for both boys and girls—stronger than self-evaluations in other domains such as academics, athletics, or popularity (Harter, 1986).

6. God's Love

Religious faith is a powerful and important force in the lives of many Americans. National surveys of religious attitudes reveal that 90% of Americans say they believe in God or a supreme being, and two thirds say that religion plays an important role in their lives (Gallup & Bezilla, 1992). Intrinsic religiosity, which refers to the degree to which individuals internalize and express commitment to religious beliefs, is moderately and positively associated with self-esteem and other aspects of psychological well-being (e.g., Baker & Gorusch, 1984; Bergin, Masters, & Richards, 1987; Nelson, 1989). Religion may have positive effects on self-esteem through the belief



that one is loved, valued, and unique in the eyes of God (P. Benson & Spilka, 1973; Blaine & Crocker, 1995; Spilka, Shaver, & Kirkpatrick, 1985).

7. Virtue

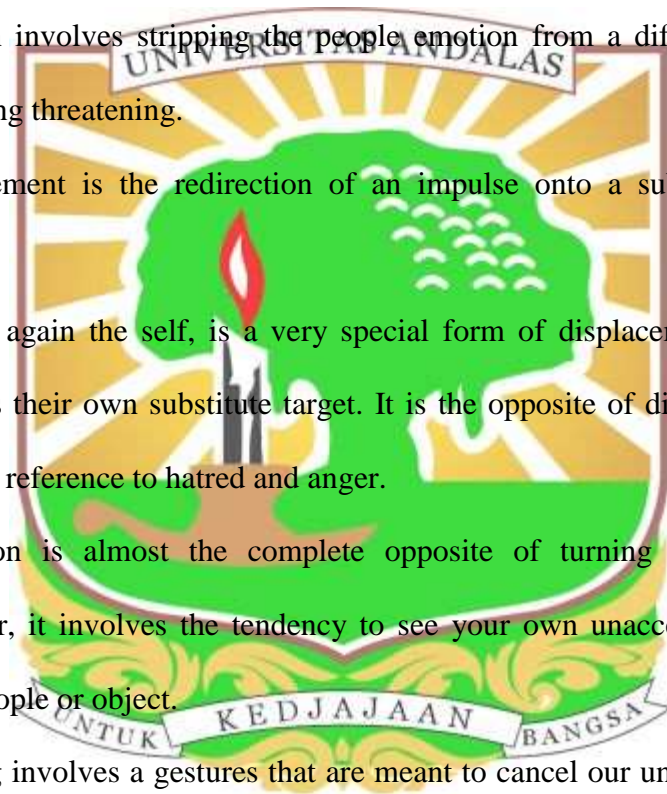
Another potential contingency of self-worth is one's moral adequacy or virtue (e.g., J. Benson & Lyons, 1991; Coopersmith, 1967). Adherence to a moral code may lead to the judgment that one is a good, moral, and worthwhile person (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991).

In order to protect ourselves from negative thoughts or feelings such as guilt, anxiety, or in this case, low self-esteem, human normally develop defense mechanisms to protect themselves.

Sigmund Freud: Self-Defense Mechanisms

A defense mechanism is an unconscious psychological mechanism that reduces anxiety arising from unacceptable or potentially harmful stimuli. The ego deals with people's demands of reality; the id, and superego (Freud 1920:32). But when anxiety becomes overwhelming, the ego must defend it as best as it can. The way ego defends itself is by unconsciously blocking the impulses or distorting them into a more acceptable form. It means that the ego changes the impulses into a less threatening way. These techniques are called ego defense mechanisms, and as written by George Boeree (1997) in his book *Sigmund Freud: Personality Theory* states that has already divided several principles about these techniques.

1. Denial is blocking external events from awareness. If the certain situation is too much to handle, the person just refuses to experience it.
2. Repression is not being able to recall a threatening situation, person, and event.
3. Asceticism is one that most people never heard, but it has become relevant with the emergence of the disorder called anorexia.
4. Isolation involves stripping the people emotion from a difficult memory or something threatening.
5. Displacement is the redirection of an impulse onto a substitute object or person.
6. Turning again the self, is a very special form of displacement. The person becomes their own substitute target. It is the opposite of displacement itself, which is reference to hatred and anger.
7. Projection is almost the complete opposite of turning against the self. However, it involves the tendency to see your own unacceptable desires in other people or object.
8. Undoing involves a gestures that are meant to cancel our unpleasant thoughts that happened in the past.
9. Regression is a movement back in psychological time when the related person is faced with stressful situation.
10. Acting out is performing an extreme behaviour in order to express thoughts or feelings the person feels incapable of otherwise expressing.



Feist and Feist in their book entitle *Theories of Personality* also mentioned another types of defense mechanism, named reaction formation. **Reaction Formation** is form of defense mechanism that adopting a disguise that is directly opposite its original form. (35)

Besides, the writer also uses another type of defense mechanism that proposed by Ernest Jones. He introduced the term **Rationalization** to psychoanalysis in 1908. While Jones credits Sigmund Freud with the critical insight “that a number of mental processes owe their origin to causes unknown to and unsuspected by the individual” he writes that rationalization occurs because people feel “a necessity to provide an explanation”. (Jones 1908) Ernest Jones described human beings as rationalizers whose behaviour is governed by “the necessity of providing an explanation.”It is defined as the inventing of a reason for an attitude or action the motive of which is not recognized.

1.8 Research Methods

This research uses qualitative method. Baxter states that qualitative research is one of the types research that collecting and analyzing the data in non-numeric form (2010: 65). Presenting the analysis in this research is using descriptive method. The writer presents the problem that found in the novel.

The research is conducted by following three steps methods which are collecting the data, analyzing the data and presenting the result.

1.8.1 Collecting the data

The data for this research are taken from two sources which are primary data and secondary data. The primary data collected from a comprehensive reading of the novel *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison. The novel used as the data resource about low self-esteem depicted in the novel. The secondary data are taken from credible article and research from a trusted website, essays, and college student's thesis.

1.8.2 Analysing the Data

The data analysed by reading the book several times focusing on the phenomenons that happen and considered as the clue for and to support the finding of the research. The analysis about low self-esteem is done based on the Psychoanalytic Social Theory by Karen Horney and the theory of Contingencies of self-worth. The results is low self-esteem in the novel caused by the absence of self-esteem domains of contingencies, such as approval from others, appearance, and family support. The analysis about defense mechanism that use theory proposed by Sigmund Freud results in several types of defense mechanism, such as displacement, reaction formation, rationalization, and acting out.

1.8.3 Presenting the Result of Analysis

The result presented through thesis paper and presentation. The qualitative and descriptive method presented in composing the result of the research. The quotation of the novel included as the data and evidence which the writer explain and discuss in the description as the analysis.