



**INTERSECTIONALITY OF RACE, GENDER, AND CLASS IN SHERRI L.
SMITH'S *FLYGIRL***

THESIS

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**KEMENTERIAN PENDIDIKAN, KEBUDAYAAN, RISET, DAN
TEKNOLOGI
UNIVERSITAS JEMBER
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
2023**



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THESIS

This thesis is submitted to English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Jember University, as one of the requirements for degree Sarjana Sastra in English Studies.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents, Imam Afandi and Nurul Afidah, and my brother, Muhammad Ziad, thank you for all the sincere prayers and support throughout my life until I was able to finish this research.

MOTTO

“I will walk slowly enjoying every step of the journey. At my own pace, following my own rhythms.”

-Mark Lee-

DECLARATION

I sincerely declare that this thesis entitled “**Intersectionality of Race, Gender, and Class in Sherri L. Smith’s *Flygirl***” is an original writing. I proclaim that the discussion and result that elaborated in this thesis have never been accomplished for any degree of publication. With all of my consciousness, I clarify that the reference sources used as data in the preparation of this thesis have been acknowledged.

Jember, 06 September 2023

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, I would like to thank Allah SWT. Due to His grace and mercy, I can finish my study and this thesis. I also want to express my deepest gratitude to those who have helped and supported me in every single stage of my study.

1. Prof. Dr. Sukarno, M.Litt., the Dean of Faculty of Humanities.
2. Indah Wahyuningsih, S.S. M.A., the Head of English Department, Faculty of Humanities.
3. Dr. Eko Suwargono, M.Hum., as my first advisor, Erna Cahyawati, S.S., M.Hum., as my second advisor, Dra. Supiastutik, M.Pd., as my first examiner, and L. Dyah Purwita Wardani S W W, S.S., M.A., as my second examiner, thank you for the best guidance and advice for the improvement of this thesis writing.
4. All of the lecturers of English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Jember University who have given me the valuable knowledge during my study.
5. All of the staff of Faculty of Humanities, and the librarians of Jember University who given me the good services.
6. My beloved parents, Imam Afandi and Nurul Afidah, and my brother Muhammad Ziad, thank you so much for all the support, sincere prayer, and your endless love.
7. My best friend, Agnes, who has motivated, encouraged, and supported me in any situation.
8. My dearest friends in “Kelompok Belajar”, Aghnia, Atikah, Rivaldo, Burhan, and Alga, thank you for being good friends and always helping me in my hard times.
9. Finally, big thanks to me for trusting every process, for doing all this hard work, and thanks to me for never quitting.

Jember, 06 September 2023

Nova Annisa

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menjelaskan representasi interseksionalitas dari ras, gender, dan kelas yang dialami oleh perempuan kulit berwarna di Amerika tahun 1940-an. Dalam penelitian ini terdapat dua hal yang dibahas. Pertama adalah bagaimana permasalahan interseksionalitas ras, gender, dan kelas yang direpresentasikan oleh Ida sebagai karakter utama dalam novel *Flygirl*, dan yang kedua adalah apa tujuan penulis serta bagaimana posisi kritisnya dalam memandang interseksionalitas pada novel tersebut. Manfaat studi representasi ini bertujuan untuk membentuk bagaimana kaum minoritas dilihat oleh masyarakat dan bagaimana mereka melihat diri mereka sendiri. Selain itu, posisi kritis penulis dalam memandang interseksionalitas pada ras, gender, dan kelas diharapkan dapat mengurangi diskriminasi serta menunjukkan bahwa dalam karya sastra, terdapat makna yang bernilai untuk masyarakat. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori representasi dari Stuart Hall dengan metode pendekatan diskursif. Teori representasi dipilih untuk mengetahui makna dibalik isu interseksionalitas yang ada dalam novel dan dikaitkan dengan konteks sosial saat novel diciptakan. Hasil studi representasi ini menunjukkan bahwa Ida mengalami interseksionalitas ras, gender, dan kelas dalam bidang pendidikan dan pekerjaan. Untuk melawan interseksionalitas tersebut, ia melakukan *racial passing* menjadi perempuan kulit putih agar keinginannya sebagai pilot saat Perang Dunia II dapat terwujud. Hal tersebut Ida lakukan karena di Amerika tahun 1940-an, terdapat hukum Jim Crow yang memisahkan setiap orang berdasarkan rasnya, dan lebih menguntungkan ras kulit putih. Sampai saat ini, ketidakadilan ras, gender, dan kelas pada bidang pendidikan maupun pekerjaan masih menjadi isu yang perlu perhatian lebih dan belum sepenuhnya tuntas. Melalui novel ini, posisi kritis Smith sebagai penulis menunjukkan bahwa dia menentang diskriminasi berlapis terhadap perempuan melalui karakter Ida saat ia melakukan *racial passing* dan menyesalinya. Hal ini karena perempuan kulit berwarna dapat melakukan hal lebih untuk menunjukkan kemampuannya. Selain itu, dalam Deklarasi Kemerdekaan Amerika menyatakan bahwa semua orang dikaruniai hak tertentu yang tidak dapat diganggu gugat, termasuk perbedaan ras, gender, dan kelas pada setiap orang.

SUMMARY

Intersectionality of Race, Gender, and Class in Sherri L. Smith's *Flygirl*; Nova Annisa, 180110101028; 2023: 60 pages; English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Jember.

Flygirl by Sherri L. Smith is a novel that tells the story of a woman named Ida Mae Jones who has a great desire to be able to fly planes and become a pilot. Unfortunately, this desire is hindered by her race, gender, and class, which forces Ida to struggle to make her dream come true. This situation makes Ida trapped in the shackles of intersectionality. Ida is a woman of color living in Louisiana and works as a maid in a white family named Mr. Wilson. Here, Ida represents a lower-class woman of color who fights injustice in her environment.

This story takes place in America in the 1940s during World War II. At this time, the practice of racism and patriarchy is still strong. Women of color are severely restricted in their range of motion. They are excluded from society and do not accept just one discrimination but two or more. In this novel, the author tries to show the readers that women of color experience layered injustice and how she fights against it all. These injustices make women of color want the same freedoms and equal rights as white women or black men to live as they wish.

There are two discussions in this research. The first is about how Ida Mae Jones, in the 1940s, struggled against the intersectionality of race, gender, and class in getting education and work. Then, it is connected with the social context in 21st-century American society, where the novel was first published. The second is how Smith, as the novel's author, views the intersectionality of race, gender, and class issues experienced by women of color in *Flygirl*. This study uses representation theory from Stuart Hall with a discursive approach. This theory is used because the object of this analysis uses text from novels, and there is a relationship with a specific historical event as the context. This discussion

uses a qualitative research type because the text is the primary data in this analysis.

The result of this thesis shows that in *Flygirl*, the intersectionality of race, gender, and class makes it difficult for Ida to gain freedom because of the marginalization she experiences. To change her life to be a better condition and to realize her dream, Ida, with lighter skin than others, doing racial passing. However, that decision makes Ida leave her family, and then she regrets it. The racial passing to be white is a shortcut for people of color to get a better life, since white people is a dominant and powerful at that time. Nowadays, the intersectionality of race, gender, and class is still an obstacle for people to obtain their rights. The difference between educational facilities and employment opportunities only benefits certain parties and marginalizes women of color who belong to the lower class.

Then, the critical position of the author throughout the novel shows that Smith opposes layered discrimination against women of color. Smith conveys her motives through Ida. From that, Smith is protesting against the limitations and injustices experienced by women of color. Discrimination against race, gender, or class is an issue that deserves to be eliminated since the Declaration of Independence in America states that everyone has the right to have their way of life. Based on that, the declaration should be offered not only to white people but also to black people in America.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Some people live in a multicultural environment. Every human being has different characteristics and personalities. The difference among human can be seen in their physical characteristics such as skin color, height, body shape, even the type of hair. If there are many differences in a region or country, then it is a natural thing. Hence, in this chapter consists of several sub-chapters to explain the basic way to do the research. They are the background of study, research topic, research questions, and the goals of study.

1.1 Background of Study

Intersectionality is a combination of sources of oppression such as race, gender, class, and others that the dominant party plays in various settings (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001: 51). The idea of intersectionality discusses the consequences of various forms of discrimination that can contribute to creating layers of inequality between women and men, races, and class. Intersectional discrimination experienced by a person can have a different impact from another person who is only subject to one form of discrimination (United Nations, 2001: 9). Crenshaw (1989: 140) examine women of color are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and anti-racist policy discourse. It happens because they do not simultaneously describe the interaction between race and gender, but both stand-alone with different subjects. Therefore, the intersectionality experienced by women of color is more significant than just a problem of racism and sexism.

Intersectionality of race, gender, and class is a problem faced by someone who receives discrimination in layers. As in the case when individuals are born to have a non-dominant race, they tend to be mistreated by groups that have a majority race. Wolf & Guin (2012: 2) state that belief, action, or attitude which attack subordinate individuals or group based on their race is called racism. Zulfikar & Muslim (2019: 2) explain that white people practice their force of being white by segregating black people through bigoted demonstrations that

dehumanize them as humans peer downward at black and treat them as non-person. Besides racist attitudes, being born as a woman can be unfortunate too. It is because women were still challenging to consider in society. Most people still believe that the role of women should be responsible for household and childcare rather than doing work outside the home like men (Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014: 219). It shows that if we were born as women and unfortunately have a minority race, women must try even more challenging to fight for the rights because being colored is guaranteed to have a level below white people. Being a woman of color means that she should face double trouble as society gives her a lower status than a man, and then she must face the racial issue of being a part of black people (Priambodo, 2009: 2). Not only being born as women of a minority race, but one of the other difficulties experienced by woman of color is when they are in the low-class. At that time, low-class women did not have the advantage of realizing their dreams like women who were born in the upper and middle classes. That is because lower class women have limitations in their lives such as not having enough finances and because of their racial minority. However, Kraus et al. (2012: 563) argue that it is possible for people to shift their social class position if the individual wants to move up or down in the social class hierarchy but it depends on the context, such as changing the class culture.

In the early 1960s and 1970s, African-American women's experiences were shaped by race, gender, and class which resulted in a lack of space for solving the problem of social inequality because of the complexity of problems they faced (Collins & Bilge, 2016: 3). The injustices that woman of color receive come to her repeatedly. Differences in race, being born as a woman and being in a low social class make woman of color experience much oppression. Instead of being separate practices of oppression, the three are mutually reinforcing. Intersectionality is a way to understand and analyze the complexity of injustice experienced by a person, which is formed by many factors and influences each other (Collins & Bilge, 2016: 3). Thus, the three interrelated problems (race, gender, and class) can be the focal point of this research.

Based on the above phenomena, literature can be a tool to voice the forms of injustice that often occur in society. It includes how the relation of racial discrimination, gender, and class toward woman of color is also expressed through literature as in the Sidiki & Aboubacrine (2018) research that explains the racial and gender meanings in African female literature. The use of literature is intended to relate to human experience in real life, because a literary work can be logically presented as it may take place in reality or it is a reflection of life (Nurhamidah et al., 2019: 195). One of the fascinating literary works to study is the novel entitled *Flygirl* by Sherri L. Smith. This novel tells the story of a female main character named Ida Mae Jones. This character is described as a woman who comes from a family with black skin and less well-off that lives in Louisiana, South America. It is said that Ida works as a maid in white family's house. She works to raise a lot of money to achieve her dream. Ida Mae Jones has a passionate desire to become a pilot and fly using her father's plane. Ida learned to pilot an airplane through her father. Unfortunately, Ida's eagerness to fly is met with many obstacles. She failed to get a license when she did the test at Tuskegee. It happened not because she is not an expert but because she is a woman. In addition, Ida's mother also does not like her daughter's desire to become a pilot and fly plane. She thinks that it can endanger her daughter. However, Ida has big ambitions to raise much money to go to Chicago to get a license. Because in Chicago, it does not look at a person's gender and skin color. *Flygirl* by Sherri L. Smith describes the setting during World War II. At that time, the American army opened enrolment of female pilots to help during the war. However, the registration only applies to women with white skin color. It make Ida go back and forth to register until she finally get the courage, lie to pretend to be white, and fake her license to be accepted as a Women Air Force Service Pilot (WASP). She is doing it only to realize her dream of becoming a female pilot from colored skin. She wants to prove that woman of color can also have the same opportunity even though what she did was a mistake.

Flygirl by Sherri L. Smith was published in 2008 and has a historical fiction genre since the story take place in the past. I choose this topic to analyse

and represent how the character, a non-white woman, struggles to achieve her dreams. Therefore, I assume that there are things that the character of the novel sacrifices and strives for to make acceptable in her environment where the majority is white. In this research, I want to examine the representation of the intersectionality of race, gender, and class suffered by woman of color in the novel.

Additionally, I use the representation theory by Stuart Hall. Representation is a process in which meanings are produced and exchanged between members of a culture that involves language, images, and signs that represent something (Hall, 1997: 15). Hence, this research focuses on examining and revealing the intersectionality problems of race, gender, and class from Ida Mae Jones' character that fights the injustices she receives from the society. With this research, I will investigate on whether or not the actions taken by Ida can positively impact reducing unfair behaviour such as racism, discrimination based on gender and class by society. Furthermore, this research hopefully can clarify the motives and ideologies constructed through narratives related to the contextual setting and position of the author.

1.2 Research Questions

The main point that will be discussed in this research is how the representation of the intersectionality of race, gender, and class in Sherri L. Smith's *Flygirl*. To find the answer of this problem and based on the background and topic above, several questions are consisting of:

1. How is the problem of intersectionality of race, gender, and class represented in the novel?
2. What are the writer's purpose and her critical position?

1.3 Goals of the Study

The first goal in this representation study is to shape how minorities are viewed by society and how they view themselves. Then, the author's critical position in viewing the issue of interscetionality hopefully can reduce unfair treatment towards the weak and to show that through literary work, there is a valuable meaning.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of theoretical background which supports this research. This chapter consists of two discussions; those are the previous research and the theoretical framework.

2.1 Previous Researches

The first previous research is a thesis by Andrew Walter Davis (2006) entitled “Constructing Identity: Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality in Nella Larsen’s *Quicksand* and *Passing*.” This study shows the identity construction of African-American women in the novel Nella Larsen entitled *Quicksand* and *Passing*. In this study, Davis examines the textual representation of race, social class, gender, and sexuality, as well as stereotypes of African-American women’s identities. The result of this research shows that the two novels do not describe the representation of African-American women who can express their rights and, at the same time, criticize the society that robs them of their rights and identity. I use this article as previous research because this article discusses the same topic about the relation of race, gender, and class experienced by female characters in the novel. Therefore, I hope to get information about inequality caused by discrimination of race, gender, and class accepted by women of color. Our research is different because I used Hall’s representation theory the novel *Flygirl* by Sherri L. Smith, and Davis used Louis Althusser’s ideology theory and Frantz Fanon’s identity theory with two novels by Nella Larsen that is *Quicksand* and *Passing*, as research material.

The second previous research is a thesis by Frida Eriksson (2015) entitled “The Representation of Three Characters in *The Help*” She analyzed the novel about the racial issue in Southern US about the relationship between white people and black people. The result of this thesis is the relationship between white people and black people fails to show in a good way (black people are not treated as individuals but as maids) which causes the narrative to seem patronizing. Racial issues also fail to be depicted in the novel because the author eliminates terror and

only focuses on the relationship between the boss and maids. The contribution of this previous research to this study is the information and knowledge about racism that happen in the US, which is the same place as the novel I used in this study. Moreover, this can become a guideline about the racial act in a racist society.

The third previous research is Calvin Nugroho Pangerti (2019) thesis entitled “Racial Passing in American Racism in Sinclair Lewis’ *Kingsblood Royal*.” This research uses Sinclair Lewis’ novel, which represents the racial passing of a white man that decides to switch his race identity to become black. This research was conducted by using the representation theory by Stuart Hall with the discursive approach to analyze the object of the novel. He also uses this theory because the context of the novel has a relation to a historical event in America’s 1940s. The results of this study were the existence of racial passing in America in 1940 because of the pressure of society, and it was not only someone’s choice. I use this article because there are similarities in the topic that discusses racism in America 1940s, and we use the same theory as well. However, we have a different novel which I use Sherri L. Smith’s *Flygirl*. Then, the contribution of his thesis for my study is to give information and depictions of racism in the US 20th century.

This research is new to discuss how a woman of color should deal with society to make her dream comes true. I researched this because unlike those researches focusing only on racism, mine tries to explore racism in intersection to gender and class as represented in Smith’s *Flygirl*.

2.2 Representation Theory

The theory that I will use in this research is the representation theory by Stuart Hall. Hall explained this theory in a book entitled *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*. This chapter will clearly explain representation theory and its approach. This theory is suitable to use in this research because it can help analyze the intersectional problems faced by the character in the *Flygirl* novel.

The term representation produces meanings in the form of concepts in our minds through language. To represent something is to describe an image similar to what we see in our minds or senses. Hall (1997: 15) argues that representation uses language to say something meaningful by involving signs and images so that others can understand it. Cavallaro (2001: 38) state that the study of representation must consider goals such as cultural phenomena, philosophical perspectives, and ideological programs. Representation is also tied down with ideology. As ideology is a worldview that was invented by culture, representation itself becomes a vehicle of the dominant ideology.

“The concept of representation is also intimately connected with that of repetition: it could be argued that words, for example, are representations which only acquire meaning to the extent that they may be repeated - namely, used again in different contexts. When we speak or write, we never create anything from scratch: rather, we reiterate what was already there, we literally re-present. Moreover, no representation is immediately and unequivocally connected with an underlying reality.” (Cavallaro, 2001: 39)

It means that representation is the concept of repetition of something that already exists. However, we can see the repetition from the different contexts used. There are two systems of representation, namely mental representation and language. Mental representation is a system in which all objects correlate with concepts in our heads. Without it, we cannot interpret anything meaningfully at all. It happens because meaning depends on a system of concepts and images in our minds that can represent the world and allow us to refer to things that are inside or outside our heads (Hall, 1997: 17). Language is involved in forming meaning because it must translate the conceptual map in our minds into the same language. A sign is a term used for words, sounds, or images that contain meaning. Signs represent the concepts and conceptual relationships we have in our heads that together make up the system of cultural meaning. These signs are arranged in a language that allows us to translate our concepts into words, sounds, or images, then use them as a language to express and communicate our meanings and thoughts to others (Hall, 1997: 18). So, it can conclude that mental representation is the relationship between an object and a concept in our heads,

and language is used to realize that representation into meaning to be expressed to others.

Hall (1997: 24) describes three approaches in the theory of representation. They are reflective, intentional, and constructive. The Reflective Approach shows that language works to reflect something in the real world. Hall (1997: 24) calls it mimetic. The Intentional Approach suggests that the speaker or writer expresses his unique meaning to the world through language. These meanings are issued depending on what the speaker or writer means in looking at the world (Hall, 1997: 25). The Constructionist Approach explains that material objects do not have meaning because we determine meaning using a representation system. Shortly, the constructionist approach explains the meaning that depends on the symbolic function of the object. The constructionist approach is non-ontological because it deals with social, constructed, symbolic, and relational. Certain sounds or words can represent concepts that work in language to convey a meaning that is called to signify (Hall, 1997: 26).

In the constructionist approach, there are two approaches, namely the semiotic approach and the discursive approach. The semiotic approach is influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure, while the discursive approach is related to Michael Foucault (Hall, 1997: 15). The discursive approach discusses discourse. In Cavallaro (2001: 90), Foucault describes discourse as a structure in which the subject is formed as a mind or body, which is described as a series of restatements that explain a cultural object and can provide concepts or terms that can be studied or discussed. Hall (1997: 6) clarify the discursive approach is more concerned with the effects and consequences of existing political representations. In addition to studying how language and representation produce meaning, the discursive approach also looks at how knowledge is generated by discourse related to power, rules, construct identity, and defines how certain things can be represented. Discourse is the meaning that can be regulated. The use of discourse is to discuss representations of knowledge using language. Hall (1997: 44) states that Foucault defines discourse as a group of statements that provide language to speak about

how to represent knowledge about particular topics at particular historical moments.

In discourse, there are two concepts, namely language and practice. Foucault explain that discourse constructs a topic that produces objects from our knowledge and regulates how a topic can be studied together (Hall, 1997: 44). Foucault emphasized that the production of language and meaning is through discourse (Hall, 1997: 44).

“Discourse, Foucault argued. never consists of one statement. one text, one action or one source the same discourse, characteristic of the way of thinking or the state of knowledge at any one time (what Foucault called the episteme), will appear across a range of texts, and as forms of conduct, at a number of different institutional sites within society. However, whenever these discursive events 'refer to the same object, share the same style and support a strategy common institutional, administrative or political drift and pattern' (Cousins and Hussain. "1984. pp. 84-5), then they are said by Foucault to belong to the same discursive formation.” (Hall, 1997: 44).

It means that there will be many things that can be used as discourse. The discursive formation also occurs when a discursive element refers to the same object, so there will be shifts and non-institutional, organizational, or political patterns. Thus, it says that discourse has an essential role in constructing meaning in the text. The concept of discourse is based on where the meaning comes from (Hall, 1997: 45). The presence or absence of a material that exists does not affect the existence of meaning because meaning can be found while there is the discourse in it.

2.3 Intersectionality of Race, Gender, and Class

The definition of race basically is a group of individuals with a shared region of birth, have differences in skin color and some other characteristics of other group's appearance, which is currently understood as arbitrary social construct (Braun et al., 2013: 1365; Diaz-Leon, 2013: 1148; Nyborg, 2019: 139; Schaefer, 2008: 47). Barker (2008: 247), in his book entitled *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, explains the concept of race, which refers more to human biological and physical characteristics such as skin pigmentation. According to him, things like 'intelligence' and 'ability' of humans are often associated with things that stand out from the human physique. Thus, humans are grouped or classified based on their race in a hierarchy of social and material superiority and subordination. Barker argues, this is the root of racism that is establishing power and established by power.

Racism is an act of discrimination such as superiority and inferiority committed by a majority group to a minority group. One definition of racism from a sociological point of view is culture which refers to the number of human schemas about understanding the world that can affect the social connotations of the group (Shiao & Woody, 2021: 496). This racist treatment grouping people according to the race they belong to. For example, people who are classified above the line of humanity are socially recognized for their humanity, have rights to their lives, and have easy access to economic activities. On the other hand, people with certain racial groups who are minorities are considered inhuman and even referred to as non-humans. They have no rights as human beings and have difficulty accessing anything for their survival (Grosfoguel, 2016: 10). In a book entitled *The Jim Crow Laws and Racism in United States History* by Fremon (2014) explains that in America, there is Jim Crow Law. Fremon stated that it originated from a show performed by Thomas "Daddy" Rice in the 1820s, who seemed to mock black people by dressing in rags while dancing ridiculously and singing the song "Wheel about and turn about and jump just so, every time I wheel about I jump Jim Crow." Since then, the term Jim Crow has come to refer to black African Americans. Then in the late 1800's, the "Jim Crow" laws were

passed and limited the freedom of black people such as African American and regulated their way of life. An example is the separation of public facilities for whites and black.

Next discussion is gender. Many people assume that gender and sex are the same, but both of them are totally different. The concept of sex and gender has been explained by Cavallaro (2001: 108), in his book entitled *Critical and Cultural Theory*. He states that traditionally the term sex is biologically referred to the difference between males and females that is regard to their reproductive functions and to the activity leading to reproduction. Cavallaro then explains that gender is a term used to go beyond the reductionist approach to femininity and masculinity by cutting off biological and social relations and emphasizing the socio-political certainty of gender. In short, sex is biological, and gender is a social construct.

Tyson (2006: 86) emphasizes that gender is more directed at society's culture as masculine and feminine. That is, men and women are not born masculine and feminine just like that. However, the society that is built the construction. Therefore, gender is referred to as a social construct. Society considers that men as masculine are superior, rational, strong, protective, and assertive, and women as feminine are inferior, emotional, weak, nurturing, and submissive (Tyson, 2006: 85). The cultural hegemony illustrated by men makes society prioritize and give plus value to men, thus upholding masculine traits. Fajriyah (2016) elucidate that gender is a social structure because the behavior of men and women is always related to the structure of society. The structure is also considered a constraint because it affects individual activities at the interactional and institutional levels. The interactional level is that if individuals want to imitate the behavior of others, it is necessary to filter through gender differences. Meanwhile, at the institutional level, it is stated that the workplace, education, and other formal organizations are built based on gender differences and formal rules in a society. Thus, the existence of this causes gender inequality to occur in everyday life.

Gender inequality is discrimination based on gender, which causes one gender can have the privilege and be prioritized over the other. When we talk about gender inequality, women are usually the ones who are often disadvantaged than men, even though it is in the same position. Gender discrimination happens at work as well. For example, just because a woman of color has a different race or ethnicity from a white female co-worker, she experiences discrimination like being harassed, paid less, evaluated more harshly, or passed over for promotion because of the combination of her gender and her race (Equalrights, n.d.). In today's field of work, discrimination against gender is gradually decreasing but not wholly disappearing.

“Institutional actors more often use facially gender-neutral policies in ways that treat women and men workers differently. In doing so, these decision makers may not perceive themselves to be discriminating, or at the very least, do not want others to perceive them as discriminating.” (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011: 781).

In America 1940s, women began to participate in outdoor work during World War II. They are allowed to be able to help with jobs outside the home to help stabilize the family's economy. At that time, women's safety did not get much attention, so they were vulnerable to accidents when doing work, even with the salary given was also not high. Therefore, when men return from war, many women feel resentful and leave these outside jobs because their rights are not fully fulfilled (Santana, 2016: 6). In addition to discrimination against women, some intersections refer to race. In this case, women of color have more limited employment opportunities than white women. Minor differences in treatment are also seen in the way employers treat women of color and white women workers. Because of this, the race of women also plays a role in determining other people's views of them (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011: 783).

Class is often used to identify people based on their social stratification. Class also referred to as hierarchical concept that refers to differences in economic level, family background, occupation, and status or position in society. The concept of class concerns the horizontal stratification of a population based on wealth, occupation, status, and also cultural differences which are also related to

socio-economic power in society (Barak et al., 2010: 75; Jakopovich, 2014: 2). The class itself is divided into three categories: upper class, middle class, and lower class. Groups of people in the upper-class category will be elementary to do whatever they want without a hard struggle. It is significantly inversely proportional to the group of people in the social class below it—especially the lower-class group who have to fight very hard to fulfill their needs.

Tyson (2006: 55) states that people in the upper class tend to have privileges such as a luxurious lifestyle, are not affected when there is an economic downturn, and of course, have financial security. While the middle-class group is people who can have financial stability compared to the lower class, they are often hit when there is an economic downturn that can worry about their financial future. Finally, the lower class are those who are economically oppressed; they are also those who struggle the most for their survival in the event of an economic downturn due to limited means to improve their fortunes.

The intersection of race, gender, and class discusses the relationship of discrimination between race, gender, and class experienced by an individual. This layer of discrimination is often experienced by women of color that is not in the upper-class strata. Croteau et al. (2002: 252) in their research entitled *A Qualitative Study of the Interplay Between Privilege and Oppression*, they state that an individual with one or more oppression within himself will find it challenging to be recognized by a group that has privileges. For example, a woman from black race and in the lower class. Furthermore, if an oppressed group can layer their oppressed status (known to the public) with one of their privileges, then that privilege is not very beneficial for them. For example, a white woman who is also a lesbian. In this study, I will discuss the intersectionality of race, gender, and class in Sherri L. Smith's novel *Flygirl*. Therefore, the support concepts about race, gender, and class will help me find the relationship between discrimination experienced by the character in the *Flygirl* novel.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains how to collect data and conduct analysis in this research. There are three points that I will describe that is the type of research, data collection, and data processing and analysis. Therefore, this chapter is expected to help me understand the collection and processing of data which is finally presented as a result of the research analysis.

3.1 Type of Research

This research uses qualitative research method. Qualitative research method in literature is concerned with the meaning that researcher see in social situations and interpret it from a particular point of view and tend to be subjective (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It can help me to collect data and gain a deeper understanding of race, gender, and class. The qualitative type focuses on descriptive data, analyzes social problems, and does not use numerical procedures. Therefore, this research is categorized as qualitative research because the data analyzed in this study are taken and collected from sentences, dialogues, and many statements from *Flygirl* novel. I also use this type of research to analyze the data that I have obtained using the representation theory of Stuart Hall (1997) to find representations of the intersectionality of race, gender, and class in the novel and the critical position of the author.

3.2 Data Collection

The data I use in this research is divided into primary and secondary. These data are collected and processed to obtain information related to this research. I use primary data taken from the novel *Flygirl* by Sherri L. Smith. In this primary data, I read carefully to understand, collect, and highlight several dialogues, sentences, and statements that imply the injustice in race, gender, and class, as well as their intersectionality in the novel. I also use secondary data or supporting data taken from books, journals, news, and trusted websites to explain

the condition of the United States in the 20th century related to race, gender, and class and helps me explain the author's background include her socio-cultural context that shapes her view. With the supporting data, I hope can find the context of creation in *Flygirl*, such as the relevance of issues about race, gender, and class from the 1940s to 2008, when the novel was produced. Thus, I will find out the author's background and motives for creating this novel and understand the topic better for analyzing to answer research questions.

3.3 Data Processing and Data Analysis

In order to analyze the issues contained in the *Flygirl* novel, data processing and data analysis are essential steps to explain after the necessary data have been collected. The first step I do in data processing is to classify all critical information from the data I get. This grouping of data is organized into two parts. The first data group is data related to intersectionality of race, gender, and class suffered by the main female character and the second one is her responds to overcome it.

The next step is to analyzing textual data that I have grouped to answer the first research question. Analyzing textual data, can help me to explain meaning that is constructed through language in the intersectionality of race, gender, and class in *Flygirl*. To find the discourse constructed in the novel, I use a discursive approach in representation theory. I will relate the problems in *Flygirl* with the context of when the novel was produced, the condition of America in the 20th century and its views on race, gender, and class,

The final step in this analysis is to explain the critical position of the author that is represented in the novel. To find the critical position can be revealed from the results of the first research question and connected with the writer's life to seek her views on the intersectionality of race, gender, and class. The relationship between social conditions when the novel was published and the time setting in the novel is also one of the supporting data to find the critical position of the author. The critical position is use to show the author's purpose, motive, and

her partisanship on the intersectionality of race, gender, and class in *Flygirl*. It can show that whether she criticizes or legitimates those issues in the novel. Based on explanation above, data processing and data analysis will help me conclude the analysis result later.

CHAPTER 4. DISCUSSION

The fourth chapter of this research discusses about representation of intersectionality (race, gender, and class) problems that happens in *Flygirl* by Sherri L. Smith. This representation can be found with textual analysis that explain in Ida's life about her problem in facing racial discrimination and layers with gender inequality and also class stratification. In this chapter, I try to analyze the living conditions of Ida Mae facing intersectionality in the novel using the constructionist approach of representation theory by Stuart Hall. The textual data that I use in this study is the dialogue and narrative in *Flygirl* from Sherri L. Smith. Also, I use contextual data in the form of US social conditions in the 20th century related to race, gender, and class. Then, I try to find the author's ideological position in this novel.

4.1 Representation of Intersectionality of Race, Gender, and Class in *Flygirl*

In this sub-chapter, I will explain the focus of this research on the intersectionality discourse represented in Sherri L. Smith's novel *Flygirl*. There will be two points of discussion in this sub-chapter: the intersectionality experienced by the novel's main character in education and intersectionality in job. The intersectionality will refer to the relationship between race, gender, and class as discrimination experienced by Ida, the novel's main character, and how Ida responds to this discrimination. Therefore, I use representation theory to represent the injustice experienced by Ida and determine the intersectionality discourse in the novel *Flygirl*.

The novel *Flygirl*, written by Sherri L. Smith, is a story about a woman of color named Ida Mae Jones in achieving her dream of being able to work as a female pilot. Being born as a woman from a colored race and a low social class made it difficult for Ida to get her dream job. It is because race, gender, and class at that time became a special consideration and a rule in society. The rules are like the existence of Jim Crow law which separates a group based on race, and the existence of gender discrimination and social class that women of color accept.

This situation can make women of color marginalized from their environment and increasingly powerless to obtain rights such as education and employment. Because of that, Ida struggles and make more sacrifices until she is willing to leave her family. Ida wants to prove that race, gender, and class do not prevent her from realizing her desires.

Furthermore, in conducting this research, I used a discursive approach to link text data with the novel's contextual background and the author's social background. *Flygirl* took place in the United States in 1940 since the US represented more racial, gender, and class discrimination. Martin et al. (2014) revealed that American society is post-racial, especially in Louisiana as a one of setting of place in *Flygirl*. In America, intersectionality becomes a strategic identity dilemma for people who experience a combination of discrimination, especially women of color. This criticism can be said as a challenge to the civil rights movement and anti-discrimination jurisprudence which only displays the representational nature of middle-class black men and white women (Jaunait & Chauvin, 2012: 1). Then, this will also be related to the background of the writer who created this novel in 2008. From here, the meaning that the writer will convey will be seen regarding the intersectionality of race, gender, and class experienced by Ida in terms of education and work.

4.1.1 Intersectionality in Getting Education

This point explains the intersectionality of race, gender, and class in terms of education experienced by the novel's main character, Ida Mae Jones. The novel *Flygirl* talks about Ida's aspirations as a woman of color from the lower class who wants to fly an airplane and her struggle to get a license to pilot an airplane. However, her desire is constrained by race, gender, and class, making her fight harder to get the license.

Intersectionality is experienced by Ida Mae Jones, one of which is her efforts to get the education to have a license to pilot an airplane. In Louisiana, where Ida lives, there are no opportunities for women of color to pursue further

education after leaving school. Most of them work as domestic servants in white families (Smith, 2008: 12). It makes it difficult for Ida as a woman who has colored skin and is at a low social class level to achieve her goals.

Women of colored who live in a social environment where most white people live are often marginalized. Marginalization in the Merriam-Webster dictionary is a term used to refer to the position of a person or group in a marginalized and powerless situation. While in the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries dictionary explains the notion of marginalization as a process or result that makes a person feel unimportant and has no influence in any way. It is also a process by which a group of people can put another person in a position of not having any power. According to J. M. Hall & Carlson (2016: 201), women of color with intersectionality in race, gender, and even class are considered less able to rid themselves of the marginalization they receive.

“We’re going to have to clean this house a hundred more times if you’re going to get the money to go to Chicago.” (Smith, 2008: 12)

The narrative fragment above explains the work that Ida is carrying out. Ida, as one of the racial minority groups, works as a housemaid in a white family named Mr. Wilson. Ida’s job is low paying, and she has to work extra hours to earn much money. Ida aspires to go to Chicago to get an education and a pilot airplane license because she does not get this opportunity in her own city. This situation places Ida in a position of intersectionality regarding her race and class. American society then considered people of color to be included in the lower-class category because they had no power and were only allowed to do jobs considered lowly. Sidiki & Aboubacrine (2018: 967) explain that Westerners have strategies to exploit, marginalize, and discriminate against people of color based on their skin color. White people do this intending to maintain the superiority and hegemony of the white race over the black race economically and culturally through the power possessed by the white race. That way, people of color, especially women, will feel very marginalized and have limited freedom if they do not do something to change their lives.

“You can fly, no doubt about it. But no woman’s gonna get a license out of me. Go home, Miss Jones. You’ve failed”

“That better place is Chicago, the Coffey School of Aeronautics. Owned and run by colored people, like me. Teaching men and women alike. No matter how long it takes me, that’s what I’m working toward.” (Smith, 2008: 13)

The quote above describes Ida’s failure to take the test to fly an airplane at Tuskegee to get her license. It is the beginning of her dream to be able to go to Chicago. She failed the exam at Tuskegee only because Ida was a girl. From this, it can be seen that the failure experienced by Ida is a form of discrimination that woman of color accept. Even though Ida has good skills in flying planes, it cannot change the fact that she is just a woman of color from a low social class. It shows that the instructor who give the test flight to Ida is a patriarch. This patriarchal attitude can be seen when someone prioritizes men over women (Wells, 1998: 46). This patriarchal attitude regards women as weak and should not do outdoor work. This discrimination made Ida even more determined to be able to go to Chicago as soon as possible so that her wish would come true. Smith represented Chicago as a city that better protected the rights of people of color. Chicago itself is called the “City of Refuge” for African Americans who seek freedom from all slavery and racial subordination (Reed, 2015: 212). Chicago is described as the safest place for people of color because only in Chicago is there a flight school for people of color called The Coffey School of Aeronautics which was first founded by a black man, Cornelius Coffey, in 1938 (Deltamuseum, 2022). By taking the test at a flight school in Chicago, Ida feels she does not have to worry about the discrimination she often experiences in Louisiana. Therefore, Ida had to work even harder because the intersectionality she received was about her race, class, and gender.

“Girl, I know better than to tell you to give it up. You’ve got the flying bug just as sure as your daddy did, but some days I think it’s more trouble than it’s worth. More money than it’s worth, too.” (Smith, 2008: 12)

The moment above is Ida’s mother’s disagreement over her daughter’s desire to study in Chicago. She does not want Ida to get a license and do work that could endanger her safety. Ida’s mother thinks the job Ida had dreamed of is dangerous and women should not do it. Apart from that, their economic constraints were also one of the reasons why their mother opposed Ida’s wishes. That is because if they want to get a license to fly an airplane, their family has to spend money too. It is considering their status as ordinary citizens who do not get proper access from the government. Economic problems, which became one of the reasons for not realizing Ida’s desire to go to Chicago, immediately showed that their family was described as a lower-class family. For people of color who belong to the lower class, money is precious for their daily needs. As seen in the quote, “...My mama’s back home right now saving up bacon fat and counting ration stamps so her family can live another day...” (Smith, 2008: 214), which explains how Ida’s family can survive daily. Therefore, Ida’s mother supports her daughter in continuing to do her regular daily job as a housemaid in a white family rather than having to pursue her dreams which she dreams of. All of this makes Ida feel that she has no support from anyone and has to fend for herself to achieve her goals.

“...Airplanes and fuel are reserved for the war effort, not for colored girls who dust crops without their licences.” (Smith, 2008: 27)

The quote above is Ida’s surrender. In this position, she feels she does not have any right to be able to get something she wants. Ida admit her inferiority by saying that a colored girl would not get fuel for her plane, especially since she do not have a valid license. The attitude shown by Ida illustrates that a woman of color from a low social class cannot do anything for her needs, even though she is a skilled person. It represents race, gender, and class as the most influential things in someone’s life. Kimberle Crenshaw (1989: 148), in her paper entitled *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of*

Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics discusses that the experience of intersectionality in the 20th century in America was not given much attention because those who claimed injustice it is a black woman or woman of color who has two or more problems in her life. If someone is only faced with one problem, it is easy for him to get what he wants. For example, the quote "... I'd heard he had passed other colored pilots at the base..." (Smith, 2008: 13) explains that a colored man can pass the exam to get a license to fly an airplane even though he is not part of the white race. It shows a slight lightening in the life of a colored man because he is not a woman. However, if she is a people of color and a woman, there is not much she can do.

"...only a handful of colored people knew how to fly. Yes, there was Bessie Coleman, she was one of the first, and a few people up north, but in Slidell, Louisiana, heck, in all of the South, not a single colored man or woman could fly." (Smith, 2008: 32-33)

The narrative above describes the situation in the northern and southern regions, which look slightly different. Ida says Bessie Coleman was the first woman of color in the upstate to be licensed to fly. It happened because she could study in France and train there (National Air and Space Museum, n.d.). It proves that in America, there are few opportunities for people of color to develop their abilities, so they have to do it elsewhere, especially in the southern region where the existence of people of color is not cared for. African Americans living in the North had few opportunities to attend school. At the same time, in the South, more African Americans faced more significant limitations (Boukari, 2005: 4). This situation prevented them from getting an education. They are exiled like outsiders and are not given freedom regarding education or decent work. The places black people had to go were also distinguished from white people. Boukari (2005) showcases that white people will not allow their children to attend the same school as black people. Louisiana has been called the most prominent racist place in the United States. Martin et al. (2014) contended that race in the US, according to scientific researchers, has a relationship with education, poverty, and crime. It makes race an influential factor in all aspects of American social life.

“But then sometimes it’s like when I tried to get my license. If you’re colored, you get the short end of the stick. If you’re a woman, you get the short end of the stick. So what do we get for being colored and women?” (Smith, 2008: 36)

The quote above illustrates Ida’s indifference as a people of color and woman. The passage “Short end of the stick” reflects society’s treatment of people of color and women. It can be said that as a woman of color, she does not get any relief and tends to be the most backward society. Feelings like this are an attitude of marginalization that makes women with colored skin become increasingly marginalized and are not considered to exist by society. They also do not receive assistance from any party. As Crenshaw (1989) said that women of color do not simultaneously describe the interaction between race and gender, but race and gender stand alone with different subjects. It can create complex encounter of oppression. This results in no opportunities for women of color to obtain education or employment. Injustices like this will continue to happen to them if they do not do anything to fight this discrimination.

The novel *Flygirl* by Sherri L. Smith has a setting in Louisiana in the 20th century, in the 1940s, to be precise. At that time, much discrimination was experienced by people of color, especially women. This novel reflects how a woman of color experiences intersectionality in her environment, making it difficult for her to get what she wants. One of the intersectionalities that occur is when a woman of color character in the novel tries to get an education at a flight school in order to have a license to fly an airplane. It is explained in Boukari (2005: 8) entitled *20th Century Black Women’s Struggle for Empowerment in a White*, in Louisiana in the early 20th century, traditionally, black women had little access to education and could only work from home. It suggests that the position of women of color will be considered valuable if they do not go out of line, that is, are not highly educated and do not hold office jobs. Despite education, women of color can only receive education to do household chores well, not to study at higher education to elevate their race and class. An example is what Ida wanted, that is to get a flight school education and a pilot license. Boukari (2005: 8) also explains that in the South, various community groups that act as providers of

education funds are very opposed to education for people of color. One of the Tuskegee's trustees, named Baldwin stated that African Americans only needed to learn the science of manual labor and the limits of their "natural environment". It is against the education of people of color. Due to the intersectionality between race, gender, and class, as well as the divisions experienced by women of color, most do not get the same education as white people. It caused most of them not to continue their higher education and ended up in lower-class jobs at that time (Boukari, 2005: 8). Therefore, if a woman of color wants to achieve her dream of getting the education she wants, then she has to go to a place that at least values her existence more.

As we know, this novel was published in the 21st century in 2008 to be precise, which of course, contains certain aims and objectives that the author wants to convey. By knowing the social context when the novel was published, we can find the relevance of the intersectionality of race, gender, and class towards women of color. Until now, inequality based on race, gender and class is still the leading cause of societal discrimination. Fryer (2014) explains that in education, there is an achievement gap between white and black school children. For example, at the same level, black children tend to be more behind than white children. It is because black people often receive different facilities from white people, which impacts their continuity in receiving this education. Darling-Hammond (1998) states that black people receive inequality regarding educational resources where they have fewer resources than white people. It is found chiefly in South America, which has the lowest capacity in terms of education. Therefore, it can be said that a person's race still influences the level of education he will receive from childhood to adulthood. Not only racial factors but a person's gender and class are also still influential in determining the continuity of his education. Quoted by Arao (2016: 139), many black women still experience sexism, especially those with children who find it difficult to get an education and are more expected to look after the house and raise their children. Meanwhile, the report from UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2017) entitled *Realisation of the Equal Enjoyment of the Right to Education by Every*

Girl, about the problem of cost, which is one of the factors women cannot continue their education to a higher level. That is because the parents live in poverty and cannot afford to pay for their daughter's schooling. It is also exacerbated by gender bias, where parents prioritize men's education so that they have better careers in the professional field. At the same time, women are limited to only being responsible for the household and care. Even though today's American society has ended injustice, some problems are still far from over because racism, sexism, and other discrimination still appear in their education system (Hamilton, 2020).

Based on the context above, it can be said that Ida, as the main character of *Flygirl* novel, represents how difficult it is to be a woman of color who is hindered by her race, gender, and class in getting an education. Like the time Ida could not get a pilot's license at her own city because of her race and gender and had to work hard as a maid to go to Chicago to fulfil her dream of flying. The issues of the intersectionality of race, gender, and class experienced by women of color in achieving education have existed since the early 20th century and are outlined in the novel *Flygirl*. This issue is still relevant to readers in the 21st century because educational injustices are still caused by a person's race, gender, and class.

4.1.2 Intersectionality in Getting Job

The intersectionality that Ida received do not stop at the obstruction of her education, but when she got her dream job. Ida has the ambition to be able to fly planes by working as a pilot. However, this desire is again hindered by race, gender, and class. Ida, as part of the black race, wanted to prove that people of color could also get jobs commensurate with white people, even though she is a woman and come from a low social class. Ida realized her desire to fly an airplane by becoming a member of WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilot), intended for women to help fight during World War II in 1940s.

Ida as a woman of color belongs to the powerless group. She was born as a woman, belongs to the colored race, and low social class making her powerlessness even greater. The situation of powerlessness is not always related to the position of the lower class against the upper class, but this also occurs with women who are considered to have a lower status than men and result in the exclusion of women in terms of employment. Smith tells this novel using the setting during World War II, which occurred around the 1940s. Ida as the main character of the novel was asked to stay at home when Thomas did his job outside to help in the war.

“Take care of Mama, Ida. Take care of Grandy, of Abel, of yourself, too. There are important things in this world that a man’s got to do. But we do it for our families. I’ll fight for our country, to keep you all safe. You just make sure everyone’s still here when I get back.”
(Smith, 2008: 23)

The narrative fragment above describes Thomas’ prohibition for Ida to interfere in the wars that took place in their country and order her to look after their family at home. The narrative above explains the patriarchal actions carried out by Thomas. Thomas still feels that Ida must listen to him and obey whatever Thomas says as a woman. The sentence above emphasizes that men have to fight outside while women must remain at home. Both of these aim to protect their families but in different ways. Thomas felt that men were obliged to protect their race from all threats, and women only needed to be at home to look after their families without doing anything else. In this way, this represents the traditional gender role played by men towards women. Women of color were considered less capable than men of defending their race against outside threats.

“Because ideological and descriptive definitions of patriarchy are usually premised upon white female experiences, feminists and others informed by feminist literature may make the mistake of assuming that since the role of Black women in the family and in other Black institutions does not always resemble the familiar manifestations of patriarchy in the white community, Black women are somehow exempt from patriarchal norms.” (Crenshaw, 1989: 156)

Although women of color are exempt from patriarchy according to white people, in their own families, the colored race, women are still at a low level. Women are expected to be able to obey what is desired by men. It is experienced by Ida, who gets a ban from her family to do the job she wants.

Smith (2008: 29) writes in her novel that Ida feels that women do things that are not comparable to men when there is a war. She thinks women have contributed less to help the country because they only do light work, such as stockpiling sugar and collecting rubber. However, according to Jolene, it was a natural thing for women to do because they were not involved in the war. She believes that it is only natural for women to work from home. Ida, who disagreed with Jolene's thoughts, protested this because, in her opinion, women like them could do more work to help soldiers on the battlefield, such as female soldiers or nurses. The quote says that Jolene opposes Ida to breaking free from the shackles of intersectionality that limit work for women of color. The sentence “Ida, those women are either man hungry or funny in the head. No, ma’am, we are exactly where we belong.” (Smith, 2008: 29) explained Jolene’s opinion about women working in the military only to fulfill men’s lust. So, it would be safer if women of color remained where they were without going beyond existing boundaries.

As we can see in the quote above, Ida’s experience of intersectionality did not only receive support from her family but also her friend. The people around Ida do not support her desire to develop and fight the injustices that women of color receive in the field of work. It can be seen from Jolene’s statement that said “Men do the fighting, Ida Mae. Women take care of the home. You can be proud of that. It’s enough. Too much, sometimes, but it’s more than enough.” (Smith, 2008: 30). The statement explained that women of color should be resigned to

remaining in their position and should not take the risk of putting up a fight that might harm them. Quoted from Mullenbach (2013) stated that when World War II occurred in America, many factories needed female workers. But they refused to hire women of color and preferred to recruit only white women. It was because, at that time, America accepted acts of racist behavior committed by its citizens, which was not a law violation. Therefore, Jolene thinks it is useless if women of color want to do jobs that are “unusual” to them, such as Ida’s desire to be able to work as a volunteer pilot during World War II. Women of their race had lower class ranks and would not have had the opportunity to work on equal footing with white men. Women of color with low education usually work outside the home only as store clerks, waitresses, house cleaners, or maids for white families and of course, with very small salaries (Mullenbach, 2013: 11). Ida is expected by her environment not to cross the line and stay where she is now.

“Just say ‘Sweetwater, Texas,’ and I know it’s whites only. Texas is as Jim Crow as it gets. Come to think of it, all you really needed to do was say ‘army,’ and I could have told you how it would go. Sorry, Ida Mae. It’s a pretty little dream, but it’s only that.” Jolene sighs dramatically. “You should’ve just become a nurse.” (Smith, 2008: 35)

The above passage describes Jolene’s response when Ida tells her she would register as a WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilot). WASP is a United States military program that assigned more than 1,000 civilian women to perform non-combat military aviation duties during World War II. WASP was the first woman to fly a United States military aircraft (Ray, 2016). Jolene broke Ida’s wish by warning her that their training ground in Texas would make things difficult for Ida. That is because Sweetwater, Texas, is one of the places with high racism in America. Based on that, it can be argued that it would be difficult for black people to come to Texas because of the strong segregation and discrimination there. Price (2021) in his article entitled *A Historical Look at Jim Crow Laws in Texas*, explains that there are many poor farmers and primarily are African American in Texas. Many Texans exclude them from society and placed them in a special place for black people only. White people in Texas once explained in a magazine article

why they are racist towards black people, it is because white people there think that negroes are poor, dirty, rags, and uneducated people and because they have black faces (Tischauer, 2012: 61). In addition, Jolene, who ordered Ida to become a nurse instead of having to join the military, illustrated her disapproval of gender equality in the work done by men and women. In other words, Jolene regretted Ida's wish to endanger her safety.

“That’s not the same thing, Abel. I need my own pilot’s license to apply. All the flying and studying in the world won’t make up for that.” (Smith, 2008: 39)

The quote above explains Ida's surrender to the intersectionality she received. Her younger brother, Abel, forced Ida to continue registering as a WASP. However, Ida also felt doubts because her race, gender, and low class made her unable to do anything to be able to work according to what Ida wanted. It shows that it is doubtful for women of color to pass the WASP selection because they prefer white women.

“I can’t stop smiling. They let a Chinese girl into the WASP program. A real Chinese girl. That means there’s hope for me, too. “You should sign up,” Abel says, like he’s reading my mind. “Should I?” “Yeah, why don’t you?” Why not? I think, but then the other reasons come knocking. “For one, I don’t have a license—” “Daddy does.”” (Smith, 2008: 38)

The moment above describes an opportunity for Ida to join the WASP. Ida was desperate because she thought only white women could register until Abel discovered that Asian woman descent with non-white skin could join there. Ida was even more excited to try to register using her late father's license. She plans to fake her father's driver license to make it look like it is hers. Therefore, to fight intersectionality and because of Ida's powerful desire to make her dream come true, Ida finally decided to do racial passing and dared to register as a WASP member.

The term racial passing is used by people who make changes to their racial identity to be accepted in an environment that has a majority race. It means by a people of color (nonwhite) that represent themselves as a white (Dawkins, 2012).

When a person doing racial passing, they will change all about their past identities. She did this because her skin looked light enough for a race transfer. Ida got her light skin from her white father. Therefore, Ida is a mulatto. The term mulatto, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is someone who has mixed race from black and white parents.

“The more you sound like a country cousin, the less they’ll want you, Negro or not. So, stop saying ‘gonna’ and get yourself downtown before you chicken out. And every time you think of turning back, remember this is your war effort. Do it for your brother. Just go.” (Smith, 2008: 43)

According to collinsdictionary.com the word “country cousin” describes the condition of someone who can be said to come from a small village and will feel foreign or surprised by the situation in a big city. So, when Jolene told Ida not to act like a “country cousin”, the aim was that Ida would not look old-fashioned and her disguise would not be found out. Someone who looks like a “country cousin” will be looked down upon and will not be considered even if he is from the Negro race. The narration above illustrates that Ida Mae, who comes from the black race and the lower class, must change all of their ways of behaving if she wants to do racial passing. It includes the way of speaking, speaking style, appearance, and the behaviors of black people. That way, the racial passing that Ida did would be successful and not be caught by other people. Ida totally changed her appearance from looking like a maid to now turning into a classier woman. She confidently wears nice clothes and looks like a movie star (Smith, 2008: 44). Ida’s appearance represents the style of an elegant and classy white woman, Ida, who at first looked like an ordinary maid, now looks like a lady. It is Ida's way of fighting the intersectionality of her race and class by dressing like a white woman. That way, no one will realize that Ida is actually an ordinary maid who pretends to be an upper-class white woman.

When Ida registered and was accepted as a WASP, she informed her mother and her family about this. Ida confessed to her family that she registered as a WASP by pretending to be white. Of course, her mother did not agree and was disappointed with Ida’s decision. She did not even want to be called mama by

her daughter because of the appearance her daughter was wearing. Ida's mother said that any accessories on Ida's body would not change the fact that she was part of the colored race. According to her, Ida would not be able to pass and become a white race like her husband. Ida's mother thought that the racial passing would seriously harm her daughter (Smith, 2008: 50-51). Indirectly, her attitude showed that she does not like white people and is against anything they do. In addition, she is afraid that maybe her daughter would be caught lying, which would become a big problem for her. The character of Ida's mother represents the anger of black race people over the existence of racism and injustice that they have so far received. White people in the South often harass, persecute, and marginalize black people. But they did not want blacks to leave the South because later they would have nothing to turn them into backbreaking and low-paying jobs (Fremon, 2014: 42). Therefore, Ida's mother is against her daughter's decision and does not want her child to be part of the white people and left her.

“Are they paying for you to go?” Mama asks. Those are the first words she's said on the subject since the fight in the kitchen over a week ago. I glance down at the table, the letter memorized already. “No, Mama. They say I've got to pay my own way. But it makes sense, right? I mean, I haven't actually become a WASP yet.” “But I've got my Chicago money I've been saving. I can pay my own way.” “Chicago,” Mama says with a shake of her head. “I should never have let you carry on about that.” (Smith, 2008: 59)

There is an intersectionality of gender and class. Ida's mother considered the costs that Ida might have to spend on the program while their family still really needs money for their daily living expenses. Apart from that, her mother also talked about Ida's initial wish to go to Chicago for an aviation education and about the pilot license. Her mother regretted not forbidding Ida to keep doing that from the start. It represents Ida's Mother leaning towards traditional gender roles in terms of work, which requires women to stay at home and not do dangerous outside work. This is also shown in the sentence “Or mothers like mine, who want their daughters to have a normal life” (Smith, 2008: 195). From this, it can be seen that Ida does not receive support to escape intersectionality, not even from her family.

“Listen to me, girl. Because you are young and you don’t know, I’m here to tell you: you cross that line, you cannot cross back just as you please.” (Smith, 2008: 55)

The above passage explains that the result of Ida’s racial passing will separate her from her family, and their community will no longer consider her. Therefore, Ida’s Mother warned Ida not to do anything that would harm her. That is because if someone has done racial passing, they have left their old identity and cut ties with those who were related to them for a long time. However, Ida remains adamant that this is the only way to fulfill her long-standing wish.

“You’re a fool, Ida Mae. At least when a girl passes for white down here, it’s to have a better life. Not to end up dead. You are a colored girl, no matter how high yellow you look or how white you act. The army don’t even know who your family is. If something happens to you, you think they’ll write a letter to some colored folk so we can collect the body?” (Smith, 2008: 184)

The quote above explains one of the consequences of Ida’s racial passing. If Ida becomes a WASP and bad things happen, it is hard for Ida’s family to hear about her. Moreover, if Ida’s secret is revealed, white people will not bother themselves to take care of women of color. Even if they did tell, it would take much money to be able to take care of it. It is because Ida’s family comes from the lower class with a mediocre economy.

Racial passing like what Ida did is mostly done by people of color in America in order to have a better life. African-Americans mostly practiced the existence of racial passing itself around the late 18th and mid-20th centuries. When they pass, they are declared white and must leave their families, friends, and communities with no thought of returning to their places of origin (Hobbs, 2014: 4). After being able to become a white person with a new identity, those who do racial passing are sure to get an advantage in their life. Doing passing in the old century makes a person free from the categories of subordination, oppression, and slavery (performed by the white race to the black race) and even gets special rights to gain access to social and economic opportunities (Ginsberg, 1996). However, it is also possible that there are sacrifices and losses that they have to get for the consequences of the racial passing that they have done.

Ida eventually qualified to become a WASP and went on to train in Texas. Since then, she has been known as Jonesy and has friends Patsy and Lily. While being part of the WASP, Ida was filled with worries that would continue to haunt her if she was caught pretending to be white. Even though Ida has successfully become part of the WASP, she still feels belittled as a female soldier and is seen as not having the proper skills.

“The kitchen is safer than the sky, ladies. Let that be a lesson to you. Next?” (Smith, 2008: 89)

“That’s not proper decorum for a military pilot, Miss Jones,” he warns me. I can hear the disappointment in his voice. “Or for a young lady,” he adds. “How many girls is he going to try to dump before he realizes we’ve learned our lesson?” I ask Patsy as she steps up the flight line.” (Smith, 2008: 91)

The quote above explains how the treatment received by women in their activities in the military. Male military instructors are tough on women as if they do not deserve to be there and help in the war. The sentence “The kitchen is safer than the sky” illustrates the patriarchal attitude of the instructor. There is also an explanation that, at that time, the military was not intended for women, which was indicated by the absence of women’s-only toilets. It represents the environmental conditions in America during World War II, where women were still considered unsuitable to join and help on the battlefield. The military instructors tried to bring down the female pilots so they would fail and not continue their activities as WASP. This attitude shows that even though they have worked in an outside environment, women may still be considered inferior. They are still forced by the stigma that shows women should stay home and do household chores. In addition, the instructor’s sentence “...that is not proper decorum for a lady” (Smith, 2008: 92) describes his annoyance at an action that, according to him, is not under the innate attitude of a woman who should be polite. The term “Lady” itself, based on the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is a designation for women with rights and authority as superior social figures. Usually, the nickname “Lady” was only reserved for upper-class white women because it was considered an honorable title. Therefore, there is also state that “She said a proper lady didn't have to make

her own bed.” (Smith, 2008: 74) it describes the differences in social class between white women and women of color. Upper-class white women as a “lady” are used to having maids who help with their household chores. The maids were mostly women of color who were considered low class for doing the work.

“They’ve been using the WASP to do dirty work since the program started. Testing planes that aren’t fit to fly. ‘If a girl can do it, so can a man.’ That should be the army’s new motto.”

“My grandfather told me that war is about sacrifice. We don’t get any medals for the things we do. We don’t get a parade when we go home. That’s for the boys. And I’m sure they’ll deserve it. My brother deserves it and then some. But what my granddad didn’t know is that women sacrifice all the time.” (Smith, 2008: 214)

The quote above is discrimination against the WASP by male soldiers. Female pilots are deliberately only used as “testing tools” by male soldiers. They gradually test women to do heavy work that can harm women, aiming that if women can do it, men can do it more. It is an example of the placement of women in the military still below men and, of course, in a low position even though they are both army pilots. Meanwhile, the second quote explains that if women have tried, struggled, and sacrificed their best, their efforts tend to be underappreciated in helping men’s work. Especially if Ida as a woman of color is honest about her lies, then society will not accept her. This feeling will not be felt by white women who mostly only have one injustice and they do not feel what it’s like to be hobbled by other people’s rules (Smith, 2008: 214).

“...how there’s always a man at the bottom of everything we do? Why, I bet men do all kinds of things that don’t involve women.” Men are not the only soldiers in this fight. Whether they like it or not, whether the army wants it or not, we’re WASP. And we’re helping to end this war. But don’t forget, we came to fight a war. When it’s over, go home like a good little girl...” (Smith, 2008: 227)

The quote above explains the protests expressed by women because they feel unfair about the treatment they receive. It is because everything that women do is always through the approval of men. Women are not given the freedom to do whatever they want. The narrative explanation above represents women’s

difficulties in obtaining their rights at that time. Women's performance is not seen entirely and only becomes the shadow of men. The sentence "go home like a good little girl" (Smith, 2008: 227) shows that it is natural for a woman not to be outside the room but to remain at home like a good girl. It once again represents the existence of patriarchy which was still strong in American society during World War II. Therefore, as a woman who is a woman of color, it is obvious not to be expected to be in the same work environment as men. Because the sentence above implies that white women are hard to accept, especially with women who is colored.

"I'm serious, Ida. You're a damn good pilot. Why not come fly for me?" I blink, surprised and pleased, but mostly surprised. "Well, for one thing, I'm a woman. You might be fine with that, but will your customers be?" (Smith, 2008: 231)

The quote above is Jenkins' offer to Ida to work as a pilot for his company. But Ida refuses it because she realizes she is a woman many people still underestimated if she doing this job. On top of that, she is a woman of color pretending to be white. It will put her in danger if Ida's identity is exposed. So, it can be said that the quote above shows that post-World War II, gender equality has begun to be accepted by society. Of course, in this case, the priority is white women, which makes women of color one of the backward ones. Ida cannot continue to lie about her identity because no matter how hard she fakes her identity to achieve her desires which are hindered by race, gender, and class, she is still a woman of color who is not recognized by society (Smith, 2008: 129). Therefore, some outside jobs, such as office jobs, prioritize white women first and do not see women of color even though they both have the same skills.

The intersectionality that Ida experiences in the field of work is very difficult for her if she does not pass her race and pretends to be white. Because it was challenging for women of color at that time to have the opportunity to get suitable and decent jobs. It is in line with the reality at that time, which was explained by (Mullenbach, 2013) in her book entitled *Double Victory How African American Women Broke Race and Gender Barriers to Help Win World War II*. She

explained that at the start of World War II, the American government held a particular training program for women which aimed to train women to have skills that could help in warfare. One of them is that women are trained in aviation, such as engine repair and maintenance. During this training, the women also received higher pay than their usual job, domestic work. However, after completing the training, women of color still experience difficulties getting jobs according to what they have learned. It happens because society is still racist towards them and considers black women incompetent. For example, one company in America refused applications from women of color to work there because they considered women of color to have sweaty hands and did not have the original intelligence to do high-skilled work even though they had previous training. Therefore, the skills of women of color do not guarantee that their life will be easy in getting a job because their race is still the main determining factor. It caused women of color to remain in the same position and place at that time. On the other hand, some women of color could qualify to work in the military during World War II. It only happens temporarily. Because when the war is over, women of color will be back where they belong. They will return to work with low-paying household chores. It is the same as when Ida finished her job as a WASP and had to give up her uniform and return to being a poor woman of color working in Mr. Wilson. All of this shows about Jim Crow's law that existed in 20th century American society. This law mentions acts of racism by separating white and black people.

Furthermore, there is context relevance when the novel *Flygirl* is published. It is in the environment of American society in the 21st century. It can show whether a person's race, gender, and class still influence work in this modern era. In America, issues of race, gender and class are still the main topics, especially in the field of work. Ford (2023), in her article *Historical Unemployment for Black Women and Men in the United States: 1954-2021*, explains that the unemployment rate for black people, both men and women, is also relatively high. According to data from the BLS, the unemployment rate for black men and women has doubled that of white men and women since the 1950s. In 2009-2011, unemployment for black women was 14.1%, certainly higher than

for white women. Meanwhile, in 2019, black women had an unemployment rate of 5.6%, which is still twice that of white women. Therefore, it can be said that the unemployment trend for blacks is two times that of whites and has persisted since 1954 until now. Many companies or workplaces do not want to employ black people, especially women from that racial group. Ford also said that racial to-gender inequality in the field of work is a form of oppression that black people in America have not overcome. It cannot be separated from the consequences received by black people related to their race and gender, which will also affect their class level. Women of color also tend to earn lower wages in their jobs. Bleiweis et al. (2020), in their article entitled *The Basic Facts about Women in Poverty* explains that because of the expanding gender roles, women are considered to have to work with low skills and have an underestimated workforce system. It causes women of color to be segregated into jobs and inevitably earn lower wages than white women. Bleiweis also gave an example in 2018, there is a job for women that has an average weekly wage that is close to or below the poverty threshold. It makes it very difficult for women of color who are in the lower-class level to be able to make their lives prosperous. That is because they work in non-professional fields, such as being a housemaid, which only pays a little. Therefore, it can be said that race, gender, and class are still one of the reasons why black people experience injustice at work to this day. They are still doubted about the skills and abilities, so people still think that black people, especially women, are less reliable in some jobs. Even though women can be accepted to work outside, if they are in the lower class and mainly belong to a minority race, it will still be difficult and useless. It because women of color with lower class still have no power.

The *Flygirl* novel represents a real phenomenon about the intersectionality of race, gender, and class during World War II. Because, at that time, race, gender, and class were still the determining factors for someone to get a job. People with colored skin are considered lower class people; if she is a woman, it will be more difficult for her to get equal rights with other people. However, if someone wants to continue fulfilling his desires, he must sacrifice everything he has. One of the

ways that the character of the novel, Ida, does is to become part of the white race to be accepted by society and realize their ideals.

4.2 Critical Position of The Author

The critical position shows the author's purpose and motive for the intersectionality of race, gender, and class in *Flygirl*. To find the ideological position of Sherri L. Smith as the author of *Flygirl*, I will relate the author's background to the social context when the novel was published.

Flygirl is a novel that won the "2010 Best Books for Young Adults" award from the American Library Association. Sherri L. Smith wrote *Flygirl* and published her novel in 2008. *Flygirl* is a historical fiction novel set during World War II in the 1940s. This year is a time when racism against black people is still rampant. White people think that people of color, especially women, belong to a lower class. Therefore, women of color are often restricted in their rights and activities. Besides race and class issues, patriarchal culture is still strong in America. Women are often sidelined in the field of education and employment. Moreover, if a woman of color comes from a lower class, she will not be given the same educational and job opportunities as men or white women.

Flygirl depicts a situation in the 1940s where women of color experienced intersectionality of race, gender, and class. Ida, the novel's main character, represents the struggle of women of color against intersectionality. In realizing her dream, Ida does not receive support from her family. They think Ida's wishes will harm her race, especially since she is a woman, and her low class will make it difficult for her if something that requires a lot of money happens. Ida's character in *Flygirl* represents how marginalized women of color struggle to realize their dreams, which society opposes. In *Flygirl*, Ida does racial passing to fight the injustice she has received. However, she does not find support from her family. Racial passing at that time was not approved because someone had to leave their community. Racial passing to be white is used to get a better life since society leans more toward white people.

In an interview on the YouTube channel Literary Aviatrix (2021), Smith said she wrote *Flygirl* inspired by a radio documentary about the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). It is an organization of female pilots who served to assist the military during World War II. When World War II occurred, WASP was tasked with towing targets for aerial gun practice, conducting flight trials of new aircraft, or conducting demonstration flights. Smith then combined the prejudices faced by African Americans at that time and juxtaposed them with the prejudices faced by women. Smith was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, as a black woman with no privileges in her life. The story of her mother, who lived in New Orleans from the 40s to 50s, is one of her inspirations. Smith wants to show readers that women of color can do the same work as men, even though she faces intersectionality.

Smith's disapproval of injustice towards women of color is shown when Ida does racial passing to be accepted by society, but it is denied by her community (black race). It means that if she stays within her original racial line, she will have difficulty going against her intersectionality, which can lead her to be ostracized by society. Because white society was very influential at that time, a person had to be white to be accepted by society and realize her wishes. Ida can not be herself because the white and black races were separated then. It represents the segregation of Jim Crow laws that separated the white and black races in the 1940s. Tischauser (2012) in his book entitled *Landmark of the American Mosaic Jim Crow Laws*, explains that Jim Crow is a term used to legalize the separation of each individual based on race, gender, class, or religion within existing boundaries and was first recognized in the Southern United States. In other words, this separation will create inequalities in the way of life of white and black people, where white people have all the power, privileges, and wealth. In contrast, black people live with various discriminations and hardships. Jim Crow law, a system of prejudice and discrimination, reflects the attitude of some white people in the South American who do not want anything related to black people Tischauser (2012: 61).

Not only that, Smith also aims to fight for the rights of women who should get an appreciation for their work. In her interview, she said that previously,

WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilot) had yet to receive good appreciation. They are only considered a part of civil service and not an official auxiliary force. In 2010, WASP received the Congressional Gold Medal (National Air and Space Museum, n.d.). It is a medal given to individuals or groups who have performed outstanding deeds or acts of service to the security, prosperity, and national interests of the United States of America. That way, Smith also campaigned for women and fought for equality regardless of race and background. Smith uses woman of color in *Flygirl* because she is valuable and deserves recognition. Sesko & Biernat (2009) mention in their article that black women are often less visible than other groups (black men or white women) and struggle more to be seen and heard by society. In addition, black women also have no power because of their low class. It is shown in a study which stated that black women had the highest poverty rate of all other racial and gender groups (Brown, 2012: 247-248). It results in black women being more likely to be marginalized from society.

Based on the story in *Flygirl*, Smith opposes layered discrimination against women of color. She shows the readers about the struggles and sacrifices of women of color to realize their dreams in the face of injustice, but there are still many who do not appreciate it (Smith, 2008: 214). Through Ida's character, Smith shows that not only white men or women from the upper class can achieve the goals they want. The Declaration of Independence in America 1776, said that "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." (US 1776). Based on that, the equal rights of American citizens have been regulated since 1776, and race or skin color should not be a barrier to realizing someone's wishes. However, due to Ida's state of intersectionality, Ida has to be willing to sacrifice everything for what she wants. So, Smith wants to show the readers that women of color should be able to fight for their rights to equality, freedom, and justice without any hindrance.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

Flygirl is a story by Sherri L. Smith that contains the intersectionality of race, gender, and class experienced by a woman of color named Ida Mae Jones. Ida has to fight to realize her dream of becoming a pilot. Smith represents the intersectionality experienced by the main character in two ways: intersectionality in education and intersectionality in job. Ida represents how the woman of color struggles to achieve her dream amidst the racial and patriarchal society. This analysis found that the intersectionality of race, gender, and class for women of color is difficult to obtain freedom because of their marginalized status in society and they experience more than one discrimination.

Using the representation theory from Stuart Hall (1997), I found the discourse of intersectionality represented by Smith in her novel. *Flygirl* takes place in the United States during World War II in the 1940s. At this time, many discriminations and injustices were experienced by women of color. It is because of the Jim Crow Law that is still the legal law for American society at that time. Jim Crow separated white and black people, so they were not in the same place and did not get the same treatment. This law shows that white people get better facilities and freedom than black people. Also, in the 20th century, American society was patriarchal. One example is the existence of institutional discrimination against women, where position or even salary depends on a person's gender. This situation makes women more backward and difficult to get equality. So that, it seems like women should not cross the line to be equal to men. It indicates that apart from their race, become women of color also receive unfair treatment because of their gender. Additionally, when women of color are in the lower-class condition, they will be more powerless. Therefore, Ida does the racial passing by pretending to be a white woman to change her life into a better position to fulfill her desires.

The result analysis of the intersectionality of race, gender, and class in *Flygirl* shows that woman of color experience marginalization because of their

race, gender, and class. Woman of color who has brighter skin can use this condition to plunge into the white community. Being white will give her the opportunity to elevate her social status. So, for women of color, being white also elevates her class from low class to looks like an upper class. It can make people respect her without being looked down upon, like a woman of color in general.

Smith resists discrimination against women of color. Smith conveys her motives through the character Ida, who does racial passing, leaves her family and friends, and finally regrets her actions. She regrets this action because women of color can struggle more to show their abilities than having to lie about being white to be accepted. It is an effort to fight against the limitations and injustices experienced by women of color. Smith wants to show the readers that discrimination against race, gender, or class is an issue that still requires more attention and deserves to be eliminated because the USA Declaration of Independence states that everyone has the right to have their way, regardless of race, gender, or class. So, as long as the person has good abilities, regardless of who they are, there is nothing wrong with giving them a chance without discriminating against others.

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