

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Literary works conveys more than just personal expression or private contemplation; it is also about culture and society (Eagleton, 2002). Many authors often found themselves influenced by these factors and even inserting real-life issues that affect a society within their novel as a form of criticism or commentary towards their situations (Duhan, 2015). The common issues discussed in the modern era are usually heavily related to injustice, racial discrimination, and the consequences that come with it. This study analyses a young adult African American novel by Angie Thomas titled *The Hate U Give*, published in 2017. The author brings criticisms regarding America's discriminatory treatments towards different races, how hatred can fuel generation after generation, and the trauma it brings.

The problem regarding racial injustice and discrimination against the people of colour has been a common issue, especially in the United States of America. Matthew, D. C., (2017) provides distinction between racial injustice and discrimination by stating that racial discrimination is the act of harshly treating someone because of their race, while racial injustice refers to a bigger systemic issue of unfair treatment and uneven chances for individuals because of their race. Racial injustice may be found in patterns of discrimination across institutions and systems, whereas racial discrimination is a particular symptom of a larger issue. One of the most current well-known cases of the status quo being the George Floyd incident in 2020, in which a black man was murdered during arrest by the Minneapolis police officers held a knee

to the neck for 9 minutes and a half as other cops barred bystanders from helping (Hill, et al., 2020). This created an uproar by the public whose seen clips on the internet, a third of the US population reporting a feeling of anger and sadness (Eichstaedt, et al., 2021). It created the Black Lives Matter Protest of 2020. People around the world march while chanting the name of the fallen victims of injustice and many of them even began tearing down statues of known slave owners in America. The black community and many others demanded to defund the police force due to their lack of morality and neutralism when it comes to handling suspects from the minority groups. The victims that survived this mistreatment and the family members of those who did not, began to speak up against the discrimination and agree with the notion of defunding.

However, this itself is not a new occurrence. Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give* was published in 2017, during the time of Donald's Trump inauguration; He's a well-known politician that has strong conservative values and has made racial comments regarding his predecessor and America's first black president, Barack Obama. Donald Trump is also infamous for building a border wall between America and Mexico as a sign of refusal with the idea of accepting migration from Latin America by using the wall as a deterrent. Moreover, the travel ban for Muslim countries was also enacted in January. And finally, the attorney general of the U.S. Justice Department, Jeff Sessions, shelved 14 cases of police brutality done to black citizens with the reasoning of not wanting to reduce the officers' morale in April (Jones, 2017). Both the second and third events can be seen as a form of racial profiling and all of them as racial discrimination. This further proves the point of relevancy on the issues that happen in the novel.

The novel created controversy with its unabashed depiction on communities' issues themed on race as well as their depiction of teens using profanities, it was banned 17 times from school libraries and curriculum in 2021-2022 and became the 6th most banned novel in America according to CBS News (Martin, 2022).

The Hate U Give (2017) by Angie Thomas is a Young Adult novel that discusses racial discrimination and the consequences that follows, it also brings nuance on the trauma of racism that can be passed on from one generation to another. The novel tells the story of a sixteen-year-old black girl, Starr Carter, that flees between her poor and black predominant neighbourhood with her very posh and urban prep school where most of the students there are white. Tragedy struck her world when she witnessed her childhood friend, Khalil, being shot dead by a police officer who mistook the brush on his hand as a weapon. Starr, who was at first a quiet girl that tries to not cause any tension or look different in her school, became outspoken about the incident. The novel tells the story of how she tries to juggle between her two worlds, but still fight for the injustice that happened to her friend and learn what it means to be a good person as she grows. The main issue of the novel itself brings forth common problems faced by minority groups regarding police brutality and racial profiling that still happen in real life. The causation of these events created a rift between each racial group followed by racial discrimination, so the group has less power within that society, which in this case is the black community. This gap between communities creates alienation and homogeneity within a community, as well as trauma that gets passed on from generation to generation. The trauma in the novel can be seen with how the abbreviation of the novel *The Hate U Give* is based on the tattoo from Tupac Shakur,

an African American rapper, written 'THUG LIFE'; the acronym for 'The Hate U Give Little Infants Fucks Everybody'. This shows how hate as well as fear can be taught and passed down to the younger generation by their parents.

There are previous studies regarding *The Hate U Give* that analyses different aspects of the novel. Levin (2020) published an article titled *Finding the 'Herstorical' Narrative in Angie Thomas's The Hate U Give* which brings forth the effect of literary work and how it can push social activism and change by shaping the ideologies of the Black Lives Matter Movement. By providing the perspective of a normal Black teenage girl and how she faces hardship as well as the living situation in a post-racial America, the author evokes a sense of companionship to the readers which then instigate for the demand of a changing system and equity of justice. Rizky (2020) builds their thesis on this study by focusing on researching the general theme of racial discrimination experienced by the characters Starr and Maverick Carter, which are categorized on individual discrimination, institutional discrimination, and the struggle that comes with it. It is shown how each of the characters carry their individual race identities with the character Starr Carter being insecure with her lower status compared to her school friends, but later becoming braver to speak about the injustice that was going on. This contributes to the study as it narrows down the scope of discrimination to a more in-depth analysis on individual discrimination instead of the institutional level.

There are also many studies conducted that apply the Othering theory. A journal article by Pirzadeh (2019) focused on doing a comparative analysis between Mirza Waheed's *The Collaborator* and Nadeem Aslam's *The Blind Man's Garden* by applying environmental Othering in order to analyse the codification of war strategies and

transformation of the minority's landscape into militarized areas. *The precarious lives of India's Others: The creativity of precarity in Arundhati Roy's The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (Mendes & Lau, 2020) argues on how the author may risk undermining the criticism of India's socio-economic injustice by presenting a cast of characters that revel in their precarity and openly celebrate how creative these minority groups have grown in their situations of extreme precarity which can then create a sense of 'other'. Another article titled *The Othering of Majority and Minority Groups in Lessing and Ajidarma's Literary Works: A Postcolonial Analysis* (Kurnia, Nurgiyantoro, & Fitri, 2021) applied the Spivak's theory of Othering in order to analyse two literary works, Lessing's "No Witchcraft for Sale" and Ajidarna's "Clara" in an effort to reveal the issues regarding discrimination of African native and Indonesia-Chinese community through the lens of post-colonialism. The study found that even when stemming from different historical backgrounds with various nationalities and cultures, it can still produce similar outcomes of discrimination. There is also a study which discusses the depiction of intergenerational trauma, or otherwise known as transgenerational trauma, within literary work. Salam and Mahfouz (2020) analysed Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses* by using this theory to find the correlation on how the idea of a 'home', whether as a temporal or spatial space, can be seen as a form of cultural identity. The article discusses how diaspora from one's country creates displacement as well as trauma due to the loss of identity and culture, in this novel depicted by the Palestinian refugees.

This paper will focus with the issue on the portrayal of racial discrimination acts, specifically ones that alienate a certain group of people due to not fitting the 'norm' of

that particular community whether in a crude or subtle manner within the novel *The Hate U Give* (2017) by Angie Thomas, while also highlighting the collective trauma that was taught by the characters to their children and how it affects their relationship as well as their perspectives on life. The state of the art on existing research related to Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give* predominantly centres on its exploration of racial identity, police brutality, and activism. Scholars have highlighted the novel's significance in shedding light on contemporary social issues and its impact on young adult readers. Studies have discussed the representation of racial tensions and the Black Lives Matter movement in the book. However, limited research has delved specifically into the complex relationship between othering and intergenerational trauma within the novel's narrative. The novelty of the research is the examination of how themes of Othering and intergenerational trauma is depicted within Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give* (2017) and what is the corelation between one. While previous studies have explored these concepts separately, the research analysis focuses on the portrayals of these themes within the context of marginalized communities along with identifying the main distinctions of Othering and intergenerational trauma portrayed in the novel.

The novel is analysed using two different theories within this study. The base theory is postcolonial literary criticism, because the paper focuses more on the effect of colonization of the novel. This study mainly focuses on the characters, their relationship and treatment towards each other, and the social divide by applying a specific postcolonial theory, that is Gayatri Spivak's theory of Othering, to further the plot. Second, Dr. Vivian M. Rakoff's theory regarding intergenerational trauma.

This study applies the Othering theory by Gayatri Spivak in 1985, because it is important to note the subtle issues that also arise within the novel as Starr Carter tries to face while she juggles both of her worlds and still fights for the justice of her people. The 'Othering' refers to the discourse within a society in which a group is seen as the 'other', thus creating views where the minority is excluded or alienated for not following the 'common' norm that are placed within that society. The process of 'Othering' can be done in various ways, the most common one being a group of people being homogenized into a collective amalgamation of 'them' and in turn forces those minorities to acclimate to avoid being 'othered' (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007). This is most obviously seen in the novel with the always existing 'us' vs 'them' mindset between the characters of different races and how there are essentially two worlds that exist within *The Hate U Give* novel, the poor-ridden black community that Starr lives in and the poshly gated community of the white people that she goes to school to.

Furthermore, it can also be seen that most of these actions of Othering and racial discrimination creates trauma. The pre-existing scare and trauma that some of the younger characters have stems from their parents and the older generation's experiences is seen as a collective form of trauma. This distrustfulness and hypervigilance over other people through teaching and unconscious habits from parents to children is a sign of intergenerational trauma. Intergenerational trauma is known as a psychological effect that happens collectively due to the epigenetic trait that comes with it. Children rely on their parents as their example and rely on them for their developments. This caregiver role holds a heavy burden and unresolved trauma from

the parents can influence their offspring, seen with the character Maverick Carter with his children (Mucci, 2013).

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the authors present two research questions, as follows:

1. How does essentialization, stereotype, and structural violence in Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give* portray the Othering?
2. How does collective grief, attachment disruptions, and sociocultural & economic disparities in Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give* portray intergenerational trauma?
3. What is the correlation between the Othering and intergenerational trauma in Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give*?

1.3 Purpose of The Study

To firstly examine the portrayal of the Othering theory through essentialization, stereotyping, and structural violence in the novel *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas. Then, to examine the portrayal of the intergenerational trauma through collective grief, attachment disruptions, as well as sociocultural and economic disparities shown from the novel *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas. Lastly, to analyse the correlation between Othering and intergenerational trauma from the novel *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas.

1.4 Scope of The Study

The study focuses on the novel written by Angie Thomas titled *The Hate U Give* published by Walkers Book Ltd, London, in 2017. The novel contains 438 pages divided into 26 chapters. The study is done by analysing the narration and the dialogues that are presented within the novel using the two theories: Othering, and intergenerational trauma.

This novel is chosen due to the relatability regarding racial discrimination and how it can cause a divide between different racial communities within the United States, as well as bringing new nuance regarding the influence of a collective traumatized victims of social injustice towards their children and their views in life.

1.5 Significances of The Study

Theoretically, the study is expected to provide new nuance and better understanding of Othering and intergenerational trauma as branches of postcolonialism; to enhance the readers' knowledge on the issue of Othering on how essentialization, stereotype, and structural violence further portrays it; to enhance the readers' knowledge on the issue of intergenerational trauma collective grief, attachment disruptions, and sociocultural & economic disparities further portrays it; as well as the correlation between the Othering and intergenerational trauma.

Based on practical significance, the study is expected to contribute to increasing the related studies of postcolonial literary studies, specifically the theory of Othering. As well as a reference study to the psychology of trauma, especially the portrayal of intergenerational trauma within the recent literary works.