
Representation of Racism in The Film "Till"

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to answer how signifier and signified are displayed in the film "Till" and what are the representations of racism contained in the film "Till". The data studied is in the form of pieces of images, sounds, text or sounds contained in the film "Till". This study is using Saussure's semiotics. It will help analyse media texts with a set of signs that have various meanings. The result of this study shows that the film "Till" contains acts of racism based on Henry and Tator's theory in the form of Individual Racism and Systemic Racism. This theory is divided from Internalized Racism, Interpersonal Racism, Institutional Racism and Structural Racism. Researchers examine each component of the types of racism such as reactions, associations, perspectives, identity, labelling, stereotypes, separatism, and discrimination.

Keywords: *film; racism; representation; Saussure; Till*

INTRODUCTION

Humans are born with different physical characteristics, characters, and traits in each person. Humans cannot choose or determine skin colour and physical shape when they are born. All these provisions are nothing but gifts from the one and only God. The different conditions of every human being were created by God with the aim that each human being could respect and respect each other's differences that occurred in society (Rhizky, 2020).

However, some humans think that a race must be higher than other races which can cause divisions and socialization rifts in all levels of society. This problem generally often occurs in the younger generation due to the lack of awareness of tolerance towards fellow humans which causes racism and racial discrimination to be considered trivial and unimportant (Nurgiansah, 2021). Racism in general is an attitude of attack in the form of statements, tendencies, and actions that are hostile to a group of people because of differences in racial identity. Acts of

racism are defined by rejection of groups of people who come from other races. The rejection can be verbal or attitude towards the community group (Minfadillah, 2016).

Racism can occur when people believe and assume that their race has the right of superiority that they inherit over other races. Racism is the main social driver of racial discrimination. Humans who have racist traits often discriminate against people from one or more races that are different from them. At a time when conflicts of discrimination between races are ongoing, many ideologies of racism are born that further restrict communication between races. One of the biggest impacts on discrimination between feelings is white supremacy (Lavalley, 2020). These supremacy and superiority traits stem from the rationale of social domination about justifying degrading and discriminating against someone based on skin colour.

The latest case of racism to occur in the United States this year is the shooting case with the victim of a black teenager shot by a white man that occurred in Kansas City, United States on April 13, 2023. The chronology of the case when a 16-year-old black teenager named Ralph Yarl was about to pick up his brother at his brother's friend's house, but Ralph mistakenly headed to the wrong address, Ralph should have headed to the address NE 115th Terrace but Ralph headed to the address 115th Street. Then the owner of the 84-year-old house named Andrew Lester shot Ralph Yarl who rang the doorbell continuously because Andrew thought Ralph was someone who wanted to rob his house (Salahieh, Romine, & Yan, 2023).

Another racism case in America was George Floyd. In America there are still human rights violations related to differences in skin color. As happened recently about the case of George Floyd's death after being crushed by a policeman named Derek Chauvin. Suddenly the world was furious after the upload of a nearly nine-minute video showing the moment when Derek Chauvin pressed George Floyd's neck using his knee. This law enforcement brutality against black people aroused the anger of almost the entire world community with the emergence of the hashtag "Black Lives Matter" (Rhizky, 2020).

The above case re-started the Black Lives Matter movement which had receded by protesting in front of Andrew Lester's house, where Ralph Yarl was shot by Andrew Lester. Because this case is not just an ordinary racism issue, but is included in adultification, which is a refraction of the racism system that attacks black children and adolescents socially, emotionally and physically and is treated like adults in general (Hafizh, 2016).

Representations of racism do not only occur in real life, but racism is also represented in films. Film plays an important role as a means of entertainment that presents various elements such as stories, dramas, events, music, humour, and other things given to the audience (Umarella, 2020). Researchers raised the film *Till* as an object of research because there are many race of the issue of racism that needs to be studied more deeply. For example, black people being murdered in America, ethnic violence in Myanmar, or educational discrimination in Slovakia (Puspita, 2021).

The information provided in this film also further confirms that the film can influence public opinion and social views through messages or information presented in the film, so that this film may provide a view of racism that raises attitudes of racial perception, stereotypes and identity formation (Elviera, 2016).

Representation is a concept that can be used to give an image about some issues. Stuart Hall's Theory of Representation focuses on the process of recording ideas, science, messages or knowledge in various physical ways and shape. It can be interpreted that precisely this theory of representation of Stuart Hall provide the benefits of signs to synchronize, describe, connecting, imitating something that can be felt, imagined, and understood by the human senses in some physical form (Surya, 2021).

Based on the above phenomenon, racism is then widely represented in a film as a medium of communication. One of the films that raised the issue of racism was *Till*. *Till* is a film released in 2022 with a background in the United States around the 50s to 60s. The film is based on true story of a woman named Mamie Till Mobley who pursued justice relentless for his 14-year-old son Emmett Till died as a result of being brutally murdered and hanged by people of skin white while visiting his cousin in Mississippi. In the course of grief, Mamie continues to fight for justice not only for her family, but also justice for black communities who still face discrimination by white people. The dark tragedy makes this film have a deep story of the black community that adds to society's perspective on the importance of tolerance towards fellow human beings. This movie also presents the history of the formation of the Civil rights Act of 1957 movement (Klub, 2023).

Based on the ideas that the researchers have explained, this study will focus on the discussion of racism in the film entitled "*Till*" using the semiotic analysis of Ferdinand de Saussure. Therefore, this study will analyse several scenes that contain the twists and turns of reality experienced by the characters as the main points of this study. The analysis in this study focuses on the symbols or messages that the director wants to convey to the audience. Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in researching more deeply the film *Till* which has various scenes of racism with different points of view with the research title "*Representation Of Racism In The Film Till (Semiotic Analysis of Ferdinand de Saussure's Approach)*".

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are some literatures to search the research gap of this study. First, come from Nathan Tjhai and Sinta Paramita with title "*8 Mile*" Movie Racism Propaganda" (2019). In this study, the problem of racism the studies are The issue raised in this study is what propaganda is done to discriminate against black people in films (Tjhai & Paramita, 2019). Second, from Emerald Surya (2021) with title *Representation of Racism in Movie: Semiotic Analyze Film Get Out*). The result was, there were three forms of racism in this movie. Those racism are prejudice of white people, discrimination against black people, and the change of black stereotype (Surya, 2021).

The gap between this study and previous research lies in the use of theory. The theory is Racism from Henry and Tator's. They describe racism as divided into two forms of racism:

racism individuals and systemic racism. Individual racism is an act and racist behavior that occurs between individuals. Typical actions and behaviors to do is prejudice, a far-fetched slur, an individual ostracism in social environments and physical and verbal violence that causes bad assumptions on a person or group. Systemic racism is a racist acts and behaviors that include entrenched policies and practices in a particular institution that results in the exile of a person or certain groups that conflict with the ruling institution.

Racism Theory of Henry and Tator

Theory of Racism put forward by Henry and Tator (2009) describe racism which is divided into two forms of racism, namely: racism individuals and systemic racism. The meaning of individual racism is action and racist behavior that occurs between individuals. Typical actions and behaviors to do is prejudice, a far-fetched slur, an individual ostracism in social environments and physical and verbal violence that causes bad assumptions in a person (Madula, Kuncara, & Asanti, 2017).

Individual racism has two types of racism, namely internalizing racism. This type of racism is an act of racism that discriminates against individuals to other individuals with racial prejudice against different races, internalized oppression, negative belief in the color of human skin or privileges that allow a race to have superiority. Interpersonal racism is racism that occurs between individuals. This is as if becomes biased when individuals interact with others who are connected with their personal race alone. These beliefs influence public interaction in the social environment (Amelia & Widyastuti, 2014).

Just like individual racism, there are two types of systemic racism that is institutional racism is racial discrimination derived from individuals or groups that carry out the orders of others who are prejudiced bad for society. Structural Racism is inequality and social inequality between races rooted in the operating systems of the community that operates in social environment by excluding most group members certain of significant participation within major social institutions (Amelia & Widyastuti, 2014).

Representation Theory of Stuart Hall

Researchers use two major theories to analyze the results of the study, namely the theory of representation and the theory of racism. Representation theory proposed by Stuart Hall became the main theory underlying this research. The main understanding of this representation theory is the use of language in delivering meaningful messages to communicants (recipients of messages). Representation in this theory becomes the most important part in processing meaning produced and exchanged between group members in a culture (Valention & Lesmana, 2023).

Representation is a cultural representation and signifying practices to see something both present and absence. This theory helps to see what meaning is trying to establish in a particular text or image. Representation is the production of meaning through language of a political

nature. This study seeks to find out what meanings are hidden in a text, especially those related to racism.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, researchers use a qualitative type of research. This research method can be interpreted as research without conducting data calculations and focuses more on understanding than predicting or controlling research data. Qualitative research methods are often also referred to as naturalistic research methods because the research is carried out in natural conditions. Qualitative methods are used so that the research results obtained are more in-depth with a flexible point of view. The results of qualitative research emphasize meaning rather than generalization. Because, meaning is actual data, existing and real data which is a value behind visible data (Sugiyono, 2017).

With the study of Saussure's semiotics, it will help analyze media texts with a set of signs that have various meanings. The purpose of this study is effort researchers in investigating the phenomenon of racism that occurs in the movie "Till" against scenes, dialogue, and behavior of the characters in the film. Researchers used Saussure's semiotic analysis because this method helps to look at the details of signs and markers to see the representation of racism in Till's film.

Table 1. Text Analysis Unit

| Category Unit | Definition Operational |
|----------------------|--|
| Signifier | Signifier in this study is a series of scenes in Movies to be split into pieces of the image (shots) that presenting the meaning of racism in film |
| Signified | Signified in the study is the meaning contained in every cut scene from the movie. Signified, then, is the result of temporary interpretation of the researcher. |

Source: Berger, 2000

For data collecting, researchers using three methods. In this study, Researchers made observations to analyse the text in the film by grouping the text that in accordance with the analysis and theory used. Then, researchers documenting scenes that contain racist messages or values, by taking a screenshot in the movie "Till". Research add some data by searching a literature study. The literature used by researchers is related with communication sciences, especially understanding film and other social sciences that obtained from books, magazines, the internet, and the movie itself.

RESULTS

The results of the analysis found that the meaning of the message in Till's film that describes various forms of racism is reflected in several scenes contained in the film. Researchers focused on two forms of racism proposed by Henry and Tator raised in Till's film, namely individual racism and systemic racism with components of racism contained such as reaction racism, association, perspective, identity, labelling, stereotypes, separatism and discrimination.

Representations of Individual Racism

Individual racism is a discrimination against ideas, skills, habits, arts and culture as well as physically connected tools and spiritual with the aim of giving a bad character to an individual or group certain at certain times and times (Lavalley, 2020). As we accept manuscripts with quantitative or qualitative approaches, then the presentation of findings should be written accordingly. The film "Till" is set in 1950s to 1960s in the multicultural United States tells of an act of individual racism committed by the skin community white against black society in which socio-cultural highlighted on discrimination of differences in skin color so that interaction and treatment characters vary by skin color.

Internalized Individual Racism is racism that discriminates individuals from other individuals with racial prejudice against different races, internalized oppression, negative beliefs in human skin color or privileges that allow one race to have superiority over other races. For example, white people think they have the right of White Supremacy who have the right to live above other races and oppress legally, especially the black race. Interpersonal Individual Racism is an act of racism that occurs between individuals, this seems to be biased when individuals interact with others who are directly connected to their personal race only. These beliefs influence public interaction and their public opinion in social circles.

Systemic Racism

Systemic racism is a difference in behavior and inequality towards individuals or groups by attacking the rights of individuals or groups that are considered inferior and more despised (Lavalley, 2020). The film "Till" presents several scenes that represent acts of biological racism experienced by characters as the main conflict, one of which has been documented by researchers. Institutional Systemic Racism is racial discrimination that comes from individuals or groups who accept and carry out the orders of others to be prejudiced against society or others. Structural Systemic Racism is racial inequality and inequality in society rooted in social operating systems of society operating in the social environment except for most members of a particular group of significant participation in major social institutions.

Table 2. Internalized Individual Racism



| No | Scene | Signifier | Signified |
|----|--|---|---|
| 1 | <p>A. Reaction</p>  <p>Minute: 20.00-20.20</p> <p>Conversation: Maurice: "You're not a white man, Bobo. You're one of us, you're a Negro."</p> | <p>Bobo's cousin Maurice said that bobo was not a white man but bobo was a black Negro.</p> | <p>A racist reaction arises based on bad thoughts and feelings of threat, so Maurice asks Bobo to avoid white people</p> |
| 2 | <p>B. Association</p>  <p>Minute: 36.30-36.40</p> <p>Conversation: Huff: "The current message to white people is to stop Negroes from voting or advancing in any way."</p> | <p>A man named Huff said that black people's right to vote or run in politics was stopped by white people</p> | <p>Association racism occurs because white people have planned and coordinated so that black people do not interfere in state politics.</p> |

Table 3. Interpersonal Individual Racism



| No | Scene | Signifier | Signified |
|----|---|---|--|
| 1 | <p>A. Perspective</p>  <p>Minute: 01.47.15-01.47.20</p> <p>Conversation: Attorney for Carolyn Bryant: "She had to kneel in the street and beg for mercy when insulting white people"</p> | <p>Carolyn Bryant's lawyer argued that Bobo should apologize to Carolyn on his knees.</p> | <p>The rallying of white people's opinions as if black people should submit to them is an example of perspective racism.</p> |
| 2 | <p>B. Identity</p>  <p>Minute: 01.19.15-01.19.23</p> <p>Conversation: Sherif: "You're Mamie? (give a paper)" Mamie : "What is this?" Sheriff: "Summons, I thought you were a haughty negro bisa membaca."</p> | <p>Sheriff Strider delivers a subpoena to Mamie.</p> | <p>The use of the word "Negro" in a pejorative tone and considers Mamie to be an identity racism</p> |

Table 4. Institutional Systemic Racism




| No | Scene | Signifier | Signified |
|----------|---|--|---|
| <p>1</p> | <p>Stereotype</p>  <p>Minute 22.23-22.35</p> <p>Conversation: TV reporter: "The grand jury has refused to indict the suspect for the murder of pastor George Washington Lee, a Mississippi Negro man killed while driving his car."</p> | <p>A TV story reported the death of a pastor from Mississippi named George Washington Lee who was a black man</p> | <p>The mass media at that time still labeled black people as criminals. So the charges involving black people as victims will be rejected by the prosecutor's office.</p> |
| |  <p>Menit 01.30.11-01.30.20</p> <p>Conversation: Pastor: "No negro in Money has ever opposed a white man and stayed alive."</p> | <p>The pastor said that if black people were not against white people, then they would still be alive akan tetap hidup</p> | <p>The conversation implies stereotypical racism that assumes blacks are an inferior race to whites so they are forced to obey by white people.</p> |

Table 5. Structural Racism Systemic

| No | Scene | Signifier | Signified |
|----|---|--|---|
| 1 | <p>A. Separatism</p>  <p>Minute: 01.29.05-01.29.09</p> <p>Conversation: Pastor: "Every white man would rather see a Negro die than breathe the same air as him."</p> | <p>The pastor explained that white people would rather see Negroes die than breathe the same air as them.</p> | <p>The pastor's explanation is a statement of separatist racism that white people still keep their distance and separate themselves from blacks</p> |
| | <p>B. Discrimination</p>  <p>Minute: 01.18.06-01.18.25</p> | <p>Mamie and her father were questioned more intensively before entering the courtroom, while white men were free to enter the room unguarded.</p> | <p>Rooms dominated by whites discriminated against blacks attended by only a few</p> |

DISCUSSION

Racism is one of the crimes experienced by certain groups. The group that often gets racist treatment is blacks, especially in America. Therefore, racism is one of the themes raised in the film. Film becomes a medium for oppressed groups. For example, the film 'Till' can help the audience the conditions frequently experienced by black groups in America during 1950s. Through analysis, the film provides an understanding that racism is not only perpetrated by individuals but has also been institutionalized.

Based on Henry and Tator's theory (2009), what is behind the occurrence of individual racism is physical differences that are considered as unique and important and become the center of attention in society while systemic racism is motivated by the emergence of differences in terms of psychology, ideology and economics. The scenes that researchers take are scenes that deserve to be researched and analysed as racism occurs in real people's lives (Madula, Kuncara, & Asanti, 2017).

What is shown in the movie is a phenomenon that occurs in real life. unfair treatment by white people as mutually agreed to oppress other groups. White people feel more powerful over black people. In this case, everything about black people is unnecessary and become ignored. So when black people seek justice, it is considered not something that should be granted by law.

In America, according to interviews conducted in an American study of 3,000 black people, racism is the biggest problem they face. 82 percent of respondents still experience racism by black people in America (Xinhua, 2022). About eight out of ten black Americans report having experienced discrimination because of their race or ethnicity. They felt hampered by employment, economic and social relations.

The presence of films with the theme of racial conflict as a form of representation of life in the real world from racial prejudice to lynching, namely the persecution of murder by the masses to individuals and groups that are contrary to the masses. Based on the Equal Justice Initiative (Morris, 2018). Nearly 25% of lynching victims are accused of sexual harassment, and one of the victims was Till's character Emmett whistling at a white woman who offended her.

Representation in this theory becomes the most important part in processing meaning produced and exchanged between group members in a culture. Representation interprets concepts in an individual's mind as the process of producing meaning using a tool, language. In this study, researchers used the film "Till" as a sign to interpret a system of representation that will form a mental representation consisting of a meaning system consisting of the conceptual system (map).

Initial system the formation of racism began with the slavery system in America in the 18th century until the 19th century. At that time, Americans believed that races, groups, tribe, or black citizens have a lower social level compared to white races, groups, tribes, or citizens in America (Baware, Lesmana, & Yoanita, 2021).

Racial social disparities in the lives of people between races can cause a disaster that can give birth to prolonged conflicts due to inequality of rights in areas of life such as in the

economic field such as tax imbalances and uneven salary receipts and based on race and skin color. In social areas such as public facilities that are intended and prioritized only for whites where blacks cannot use facilities without the permission of the local government and social development only in areas with white leaders, in the political and legal fields such as the opportunity for blacks in elections to the House of Commons is contested by white people who do not want to be equal to them (Lestari, 2019).

Racism is a discourse that has indirectly been embedded in people's minds in various fields. Through the media, racism discourse is produced continuously so that it is considered something natural to happen. The construction was carried out for a long time and became a habit of the white race. Plus the media is also controlled by the white race, which then they can arrange all the content of the news according to their interests (Rhizky, 2020).

Racism occurs because of unequal power relations. In the past, the black people who existed in America were slaves. So that its existence is not considered important. White people felt that they could colonize blacks with the power they had. The stereotype of black people is negative. In fact, they are used as dangerous parties because they often commit crimes. They are seen as people who always carry weapons and are ready to rob anytime, anywhere (Banda, 2020).

In this film there is an ideology about the idea of separating certain social groups in the space of society and can be determined as an act to separate or remove one item or group from another. There is unequal treatment experienced by individuals or groups based on multiple, usually categorical, attributes, such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, or social class of membership (Wardhani & Lucy, 2019).

Mamie's Till fights for equality and justice for her son and for all other black people to be treated appropriately as fellow human beings and normalized life for all people with different races and colours. This film not only raises the issue of racism as a mere, but also raises the issue of the crime of persecution and violence which is legally entangled in the article of persecution and murder, and therefore Mamie asks for justice for the death of her son.

Justice for blacks is difficult to enforce because of years of discrimination. Cases involving blacks as victims are considered unimportant to be investigated thoroughly. Unlike the white victims, the news will be spread and become public attention. Not all opportunities are given fairly to black groups due to white privileges that apply socially, as if there are restrictions on black groups to develop their potential in the society (Lenina, 2023).

Through this film we can see that racism in America does not only occur because of human behaviour, especially white but also reinforced institutionally. Unequal power relations make it difficult for blacks to get the same rights as other whites. Some of these factors make racism still difficult to eliminate in society. Racist practices include negative stereotypes, calls that discriminate, class and group segregation to difficulties in obtaining legal justice.

CONCLUSION

Researchers found scenes that represented racism, both individual racism and systemic racism. Representation of individual racism are seen in the scene bad thought and feeling about black people and black people cant vote in politic. Another scene show that white people White people feel more powerful and white people always use “N” word to call black people. Scene that included systemic racism are stereotype that black people as criminal, white people should make a distance to black people and they usually make a discrimination. The limitation of this study is the lack of in-depth analysis of unseen discourse. this is due to the use of semiotic analysis that reads markers and markers without identifying specific ideologies or discourses that have led to racism in America over the years. For further research can use critical discourse analysis to further explore the issue of racism.

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