

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Every side of life has differences, especially in physical form and behavior, and cultural and racial differences are natural, in this world various tribes and cultures coexist, creating a diversity.

From that difference does not automatically give someone the right to commit racist acts or discrimination just because of the issue of one's origin. Racism is a form of action that distinguishes, limits or chooses based solely on race and ethnicity.

Racism is formed because of conditions where inferior groups are dominated, utilized, controlled, and socially and physically oppressed by superior groups (Neubeck & Neubeck, 1997: 269). There are many forms of racist practices that have occurred in society, both consciously and unconsciously. However, until now, discussions about the issue of racism still often arise and become a serious problem, especially in multicultural and multiethnic countries, one of which is the United States.

Even unconscious acts of racism are often displayed in the media, especially in movies. One of the film industries that often depicts the role between black and white races is the American film industry, Hollywood. Film as a mass communication media plays a very important role. McQuail (2009: 36-37) says that with its wide

reach, film is also often used as a tool of propaganda and the spread of a message for the purpose of the maker, and although it predominantly looks entertaining, films tend to often show learning and propagandist elements in it. Therefore, if the making of a movie has a hidden meaning and message behind its making.

In 2016, there was a movie that retold the history of racism against black people. *Hidden Figures*, a movie produced by Theodore Melfi that was adapted from the *best seller* novel in New York, *Hidden Figures; The American Dream and The Untold Story of Black Woman* by Margot Lee Shetterly. In this movie, it is clear how the injustice committed by white people against black people as a society that has the majority status that treats black people in the United States.

Based on the background that has been described, researchers are interested in analysis the meaning and symbols contained in *Hidden Figures* related to an act of racism. This research uses semiotic analysis with Roland Barthes' theory. The reason researchers chose this movie is because the story in the movie is not only interesting but also has a good meaning in real life. Unlike the movies in general, conveying the message of cause and effect in the actions taken. And the problems and characters in the movie are in accordance with real human life. Therefore, the title of this

research is "**Racism in the Movie *Hidden Figures* (A Semiotic Study)**".

1.2. Statements of the Problems

Based on the background above, the problems raised in the study include:

- 1.2.1. What are the symbols of racism reflected in the movie *Hidden Figures*?
- 1.2.2. How is the meaning of the symbols of racism in the perspective of Roland Barthes semiotic analysis?

1.3. Scope of the Study

Based on the explanation above, in order to limit the problem and make the research easier, it focuses on what symbols are reflected in the *hidden figures* film and how to eat racism symbols in the perspective of semiotic analysis of Roland Barthes?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

Based on the problem formulation above, the objectives of this research include, to identify the symbol of racism reflected in the film *hidden figures* and describe how the meaning of the symbol in the film *Hidden figures* perspective Roland Barthes semiotic analysis?

1.5. Significance of the Study

1.5.1. Theoretical Significance

This research is expected to be a place to foster critical thinking skills by addressing the observations of the wider community about the symbols of racism discrimination, especially in the film Hidden Figures. So, when people understand what the symbols of racism look like, there will be very few incidents of discrimination when racism occurs. And it is hoped that it can make a new, more creative contribution to the development of science.

1.5.2. Practical Significance

Hopefully, the results of this research will be useful to many people and beneficial to practitioners. It is a growing contribution to research and writing and knowledge about movies. In this study, the author hopes that readers can learn more about how all can prevent racist practices. And in this study, the researcher hopes that everyone who reads this study can better understand what discrimination based on one's race is. Through this, the researcher hopes that the whole society will become more tolerant and respectful of each other.

1.6. Review of Related Literature

Before conducting research, the researcher's first step is to review several scientific papers that are related or close to the research being

conducted by the researcher. Researchers first conducted a literature review, including:

The first study was conducted by Nugraha and Ardi in 2022 with the title "The Meaning of Racism in Film (A Semiotic Analysis of the Short Film *Flag Merah Putih vs Radikalisme*)". The purpose of this research is to explore and explain the symbols that represent racism in *My Flag Merah Putih vs Radicalism*. The results obtained in this study contain two elements, namely prejudice and negative stereotypes against veiled groups as a form of radicalism and discrimination against veiled women. These stereotypes and assumptions are caused by the influence of negative stigma against women who wear the veil and carry a black and white flag and are the target of media and cultural developments. Until then, acts of discrimination against the group also continue to occur. The similarities in this study use a qualitative descriptive analysis model and Roland Barthes semiotics, while the difference lies in the object of research.

The second study was conducted by Masyur and Suprayogi in 2021 with the title "Semiotic Analysis of Racial Discrimination Issues in *IP Man 4: Finale*". The problem raised in this research is what are the signifiers and signified of racism in the movie *IP Man 4: Finale*. This research uses Charles Sander Peirce's semiotic approach to support the research. The results obtained in this study are that there are 6 scenes of racist behavior in the film *IP Man 4: Finale*, and racist

behavior itself is not only carried out by local people against immigrants, but also carried out by immigrants against local people. This may be due to discrimination by natives against migrants because it is based on differences in race and perspective. In addition, this research uses a semiotic analysis model and qualitative description method, the difference is in the research subject and the authors both use Roland Barthes' theory.

The third study was conducted by Afrizal and Setiawan in 2020 with the title "Representation of Racism In the "The Birth of Nation" Movie (Roland Barthes Semiotics Analysis). Researchers are interested in exploring the meanings and symbols expressed in the movie The Birth of Nation related to the representation of racism. This research uses Roland Barthes semiotic with qualitative method. The results obtained in the study were ten scenes of racist actions and behaviors that emerged from the adgena in the film The Birth of Nation are personal, institutional, and stereotypical racism.

From the three studies above, they all analysis objects in films. All previous studies used Roland Barthes theory and qualitative descriptive analysis as a research method. The researcher's difference is seen from the title of the film with a different film genre, while the researcher took a film with a drama genre. By using these three journals as a reference for researchers to explore signs from Barthes'

semiotic point of view to be able to explain symbols and the meaning of denotation, connotation and myth.

1.7. Theoretical Bases

This study uses Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to find out how the symbols and signs that appear depict racism in the 2016 film Hidden Figures, produced by Theodore Melfi. Barthes' semiotic theory explained in Vera's book (2014), Barthes revealed that the language we use every day is a sign system that reflects the assumptions of a society at a certain time.

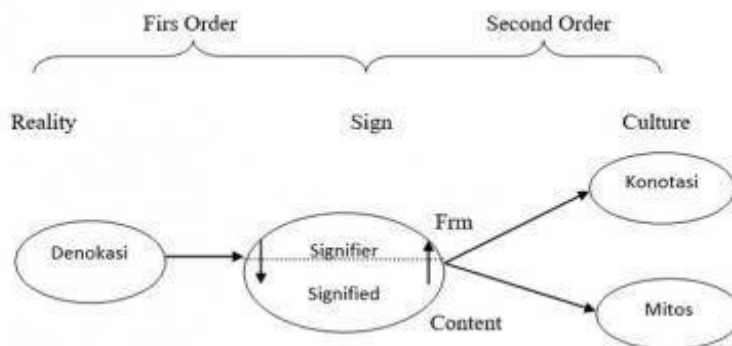


Figure 1.1: Two Orders Significant from Roland Barthes
 (Source: Fiske, in Sobur. 2004: 127)

Barthes in his semiology explains that denotation is the first level of signification and connotation is the second level of signification (Sobur, 2016). Denotative is the first level in Barthes' view which is closed. It can be said that denotation is the true and socially agreed meaning in accordance with reality. In contrast to connotation, which has open meaning or can be called implicit, indirect, and

uncertain meaning so that it can realize new message interpretations (Wiranto, 2016). Connotation in Barthes is identical to "Myth" which functions as a revealer and truth-teller for dominant values in a certain period. Myth itself is included in the second level system and myth contains a sign that has several markers in the form of a three-dimensional pattern of signifier, sign, and sign (Vera, 2014).

1.8. Racism

The phenomenon of racism has existed for centuries and even impacted the caste system and slavery. To this day, it still happens around us, even around the world. Without realizing it, some people feel more perfect if they excel in everything.

Racism is an idea or theory that says that the causal link between inherited physical characteristics and certain characteristics in terms of personality, intellect, culture or a combination of all of them, gives rise to the superiority of certain races over others. (Daldjoeni, 1991, p.81).

Racism is an understanding that rejects a group of people based on another race. Racism arises or can arise when a society of minorities who have abnormalities from the biological generality that exists in the citizens of that society, and he arises or can arise because a small group or minority cannot defend themselves. As a

result, white supremacy arises to the detriment of other people of color (Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1998:50).

Types of Racism

Carmichael and Hamilton (1967: 28) Racism is both overt and covert. Racism has two closely related forms: actions by individual whites against individual blacks, and actions by the white community as a whole against the black community. Carmichael and Hamilton divide racism into two types such as:

- Individual Racism

Individual racism occurs when a person of a certain race makes rules and acts harshly towards another race. Because the other race is under their control. Individual racism consists of overt acts. Blatant acts by individuals such as discrimination, abusive words, voices or opinions received that cause death, injury, destruction of property, or denial of services or opportunities of any kind.

- Institutional Racism

Institutional racism is the actions of the majority against an institutionalized minority. Institutional racism is more subtle but no less destructive. Institutional racism involves the policies, practices, and procedures of institutions that have a negative impact such as education, employment, public facilities, healthcare, and opportunities for any minority

group. Oppression is the systematic targeting of one social group by another social group that has access to social power.

Figure 1.2: Racism Analysis Model

Individual Racism	Institutional Racism
Behaviour	Labor
Attitude	Law
Socialization	Health
Personal Interests	Economy
Needs	Politics
	Housing
	Religion

Source: www.bcpl.lib.md.us/~sglover/def.html (20 Januari 2023)

History of Racism in America

Differences in ethnicity, race and religion in a region and even in a country are natural. However, these differences often cause problems. These problems often stem from discriminatory practices, unfair treatment, and even harsh treatment of disadvantaged minority groups. It is not uncommon for this treatment to lead to the regulation of mobility space and the formation of separate rules by the majority group over the minority group, leading to racial discrimination.

According to history.com (Mullen, 2018, p. 3) After the American Revolution, many colonies (especially in the north, where slavery was less important to the economy) began fighting against British oppressors. Through leaders like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, slave owners in Virginia took cautious steps to limit slavery in the newly independent state and enacted laws that explicitly recognized the institution, ensuring the right to exclude "persons employed as laborers". Many states in the North abolished slavery by the end of the 18th century, but the institution was particularly important in the South, where blacks formed the basis of a minority population and an economy dependent on the production of crops such as tobacco and cotton.

In the United States, racism not only occurs in real life, but racism itself has spread across social networks, including film. Cinematic media often features acts of racism against certain groups in the plot, although these acts of racism are often displayed with certain symbolism.

1.9. Film

In today's global context, the name film is familiar to our ears. There are many film that start from the idea of someone telling something in the film he will make (produced) and there are also film whose stories are based on true stories so it is very interesting to make a film. Film is also defined as a play (story) with footage of

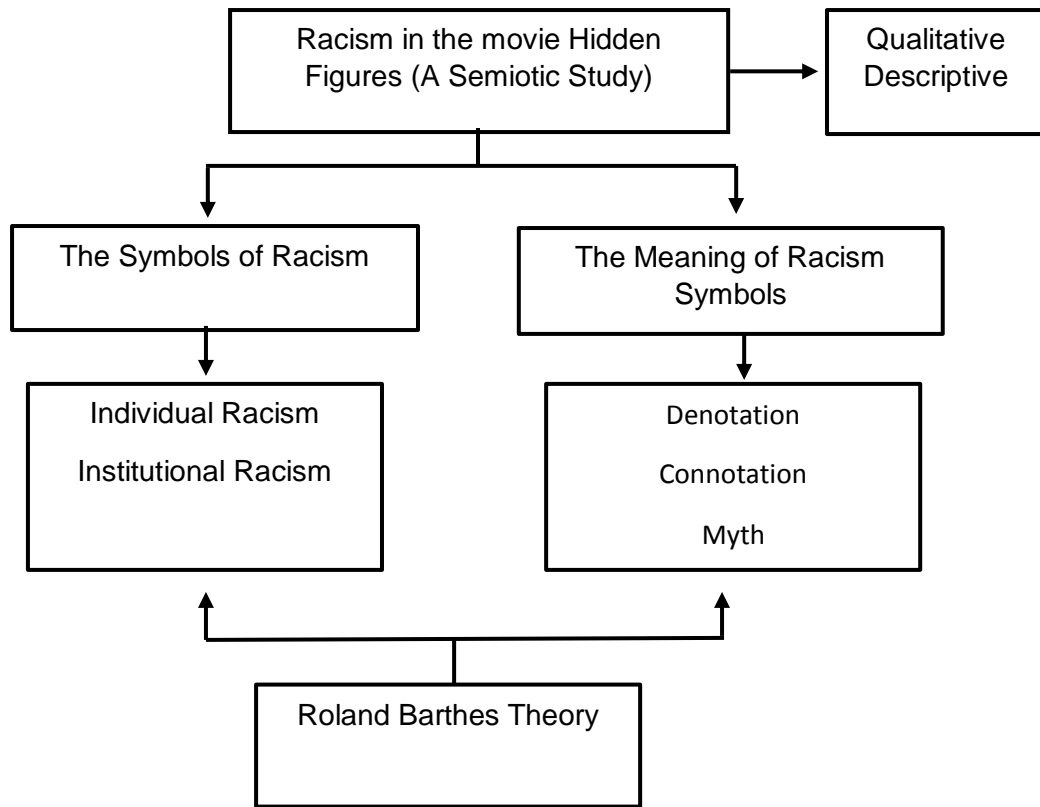
life. Based on the projection of society, the film becomes a record of reality (Stuart Hall, 1997).

Alex Sobur (2016) in his book explains that from the beginning of the invention of film, it is a record of the reality that grows and develops in society. Text is an analytical study of the "language" of movies, especially texts that are interpreted according to the way the system represents them (Turner, 1999: 48). Film as a text provides meaning so that film can be used as a means to construct a person's perspective on an event in society.

Besides being able to influence the emotions of the audience, films are also a portrait of the daily life of the society in which they are made. Film always record the reality that grows and develops in society, then project it onto the screen. Usually, the social reality adapted into film is combined with entertainment and knowledge in the form of cultural, social, and political values. Like in the film *Hidden Figures*, there is a scene where Katherine wants to make coffee, the coffee pot is separated and written in color (black).

1.10. Conceptual Scheme

Figures1.3: Conceptual Scheme



1.11. Method and Technique

This research uses semiotic analysis and uses a qualitative descriptive method. This descriptive research was used to explore the meaning of racism in the movie Hidden Figures. Research is used as a means to collect the necessary data. After collecting the data, the researcher will analysis the data qualitatively.

1.11.1. Kinds of Data

1.11.1.1. The Primary Data

The main data of this research is the data obtained from the semiotic analysis of each scene that contains scenes related to racist acts in the Hidden Figures movie, from the results of these observations, the data is then collected and processed to be able to support this research.

1.11.1.2. The Secondary Data

Data is used as a support and complement to primary data in this study. This data is taken from a number of library materials such as magazines, books, internet media and other documents related to the object of research. The author also seeks additional data through other sources to support this research.

1.12. Technique of Collection Data

Data collection methods are techniques or ways that researchers can use to collect data, and data collection instruments are tools selected and used by researchers in their activities to collect data so that these activities become systematic and easier.

In this study, the researcher acted as an instrument as well as a data collector. The procedures used in data collection are: (1) Observation, and (2) Documentation, which is as follows:

1.12.1. Observation

This research uses observation data collection techniques by directly observing and observing the dialogues in the Hidden Figures film by using the semiotic analysis learning method. By recording, selecting and analysis according to the model used by the researcher.

1.12.2. Documentation

The documentation technique is a complement to observation in qualitative research. Documentation is more often used because it is a stable source. Then, the results or data are managed and the data that has been collected is reviewed. The overall data will be presented to support some bibliometrics findings which will then be analysis.

1.13. Technique of Analysis Data

The data analysis process begins with reviewing all available data from the data sources collected. Once primary and secondary data is collected, it will be clarified based on the research questions that have been identified. Analysis means describing or separating, so analysis data means breaking down data or interpreting data so that conclusions can be drawn. Researchers chose to use Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis model because Barthes' theory is consistent with the deconstruction mechanism to find out the denotative, connotative and mythical meanings contained in the

Hidden Figures film and adjust the problems contained in the problem formulation.