WHITE SUPREMACY AND STRUCTURAL RACISM IN "THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION" BY FRANK DARABONT

Erni Rahmawati; NPM: 20177479052
English Education Programme, Post Graduate Faculty, Indraprasta PGRI University
Jl. Nangka No. 58 C, Kel. Tanjung Barat, Kec. Jagakarsa, Jakarta Selatan 12530
ernirahmawati2009@gmail.com
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyze white supremacy and structural racism of the film "The Shawshank Redemption" by Frank Darabont. The method used in this research is descriptive-qualitative which aims to describe white supremacy and structural racism in the film The Shawshank Redemption. Data is obtained, analyzed and explained based on dialogue data contained in the film, namely: 1) white supremacy that is analyzed from a) the appearances of the character using a sequence table, and b) visible glorification and invisible glorification using a glorification dialogue table, and 2) based on structural racism, using binary opposition, namely positive and negative characterization of the characters. By the sequence table, the character that is predominant in the film is Andy Dufresne (53 appearances or 49%) – in comparison to other characters that are less predominant, namely Red (30 appearances or 28%), Warden Norton (9 appearances or 8%), Tommy Wilson (6 appearances or 5%), Bogs Diamond (4 appearances or 4%), Brooks Hatlen (3 appearances or 3%) and Captain Hadley (3 appearances or 3%). From the glorification dialogue table, visible glorification gets the highest presentation of 15 dialogues or 56 %, while invisible glorification gets 12 dialogues or 44 %. This shows that white supremacy exists in American film. As for structural racism, by using the binary opposition, the negative characterization of the supporting characters is the highest with 31 data or 42% while the negative characterization of the main character is the lowest with 2 data or 3%. This shows that structural racism exists in American film based on the characterization of the characters.

Keywords: American film, drama, white supremacy, structural racism.

INTRODUCTION

Since a long time ago, the differences between white and colored people in the United States have caused a lot of damages and victims. The differences were maintained by slavery until it was ended in January 1865 when the amendment of the Emancipation Proclamation has been approved by the House of Representatives. However, in 1990s, when the era of slavery was considered to be long gone, the differences were realized by how white people treated people from other races in various forms.

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One of the issues is racism. Racism is prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior. Racism, also called racialism reflects the racial worldview – the ideology that humans may be divided into separate and exclusive biological entities called "races"; that there is a causal link between inherited physical traits and traits of personality, intellect, morality, and other cultural and behavioral features; and that some races are innately superior to others. Since the late 20th century the notion of biological race has been recognized as a cultural invention, entirely without scientific basis.

Racism occurs between individuals, on an interpersonal level, and is embedded in organizations and institutions through their policies, procedures and practices. In North America and apartheid-era South Africa, racism dictated that different races (chiefly blacks and whites) should be segregated from one another; that they should have their own distinct communities and develop their own institutions such as churches, schools, and hospitals; and that it was unnatural for members of different races to marry.

Historically, those who openly professed or practiced racism held that members of low-status races should be limited to low-status jobs and that members of the dominant race should have exclusive access to political power, economic resources, high-status jobs, and unrestricted civil rights. In general, it may seem easier to recognize individual or interpersonal acts of racism: a slur made, a person ignored in a social or work setting, an act of violence. The lived experience of racism for members of low-status races includes acts of physical violence, daily insults, and frequent acts and verbal expressions of contempt and disrespect, all of which have profound effects on self-esteem and social relationships.

However, "individual" racism is not created in a vacuum but instead emerges from a society's foundational beliefs and "ways" of seeing/doing things, and is manifested in organizations, institutions, and systems (including education). In the USA, racism was born from the ideas of white supremacy. It is the belief that glorifying the white races above all others. Thus, the different treatments to white men compare to those of other races are obvious. Yet, sometimes, especially in the work of art, the differences are more hidden.

American film has been one of the most important propaganda used for showing off American white supremacy for more than a century. Racism in film and white

supremacy are interwoven into the fabric of America that they have become virtually undetectable. Film and society are both connected to each other. Film is a reflection of society and society in turn is influenced by film. Film has been an effective racial propaganda tool. As the first universal mass medium it utilized high drama through the fixation of emotional sequences. In a simple way, we can say that effective propaganda starts just right where critical thinking ends.

Hollywood needs bad guys, particularly in action and war movies, to create drama. Through the consistent use of racial stereotypes these enemies have included the Vietnamese during the Vietnam War, the Japanese after Pearl Harbor, the Russians throughout the Cold War, and Muslims during the ongoing War on Terror. In this article, the writer will do movie review to understand the existences of white supremacy and structural racism which contributed to the theme. One of the treatments could be seen in some movies that show white supremacies over colored people, such as White Men Can't Jump (1992), Cool Runnings (1993), Dangerous Minds (1994), and The Shawshank Redemption (1994). In all those movies, the main characters are white men, which become superior figure among other races.

The particular issues of white supremacy and structural racism are pictured in *"The Shawshank Redemption*" movie by Frank Darabont in 1994. Although hidden and covered by the neutral impression of the characters, this film has shown the greatness of the white class above other classes. First written as *"Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption"* by Stephen King in 1992, *"The Shawshank Redemption"*, which produced by Castle Rock Entertainment, seems to have a hidden purpose, to give the praise to the white character. In this article, the writer will do movie review to understand the existences of white supremacy and structural racism which contributed to the theme.

The movie is played by Tim Robbins (Andy Dufresne), Morgan Freeman (Ellis Boyd "Red" Redding), Bob Gunton (Warden Norton), Clancy Brown (Captain Hadley), Gil Bellows (Tommy), James Whitmore (Brooks Hatlen), William Sadler (Heywood), Mark Rolston (Bogs Diamond), and Bill Bolender (Elmo Blatch). Their acts are the unification of many great actors who play together and blend in the story, made it into a perfect drama.

It tells the story of a banker Andy Dufresne, who is given to two consecutive life sentences in Shawshank State Penitentiary for the murders of his wife and her lover, despite his claims of innocence. Over the following two decades, he befriends a fellow prisoner, contraband smuggler "Red", and becomes instrumental in a money-laundering operation led by the prison warden Samuel Norton.

There's a glimmer of hope for Andy when Tommy, a new inmate, arrives at the prison, and it turns out he has information that could exonerate his new friend. The warden learns about it, and is none too keen to release into society someone with so much dirt on him. He has Tommy murdered, throws Andy into solitary for two months, and only releases him once he agrees to keep doing his dirty work.

The warden learns the shocking truth: for almost two decades, Andy has been chiseling away at the wall with a rock hammer and hiding his handiwork behind a series of pinup posters procured by Red, finally making his escape through the sewer pipes the night before. After another ten years, Red gets out of the prison. He discovers that Andy left him some spending money, as well as instructions on how to find him. The two friends are reunited on the beach in Mexico.

The story itself does not make us feel bored because it has emotional surprises in the middle. It means that even if the genre of the movie is drama, which is thought to be slow and boring, the tragedies act as the right patches and makes the film more meaningful. From the plot, we can see how the film is beautifully arranged, from the beginning to the end, to play with the emotion of the viewers and have impacts on their brains to start thinking about the true meaning of life, hope, and freedom. The characters in the movie represent the searching of true-self which ended in each of their own findings, how Andy Dufresne finally found justice, how Red found out what he really wanted in life and even how Warden Samuel Norton learned how to let go.

However, the perfect depiction of the character Andi Dufresne, such as handsome, intelligent, innocent, and victimized by the crime of another colored character, is one of the examples of white supremacy in a film; and the fact that Red, the colored best friend, who is in the movie telling the story of how heroic his friend is, shows a different treatment to

the character which is pictured as a person who constantly praise and adore his 'white' friend.

Even more, the majority of people in America are minorities and yet this year every single Oscar nominee was white and ninety five percent of Oscar voters where white. It is hard for Black actors and actresses to gain prominence when white people are playing their roles. Based on the background above, the writer wants to conduct a research with the title: **White Supremacy and Structural Racism in "The Shawshank Redemption" by Frank Darabont.**

Regarding to the focus of the research above, the problem in this research need to be formulated as follows:

1. How is white supremacy in "The Shawshank Redemption" by Frank Darabont?
2. How is structural racism in "The Shawshank Redemption" by Frank Darabont?

METHODOLOGY

The approach used by the writer in conducting this research is qualitative research. Tong et al. (2012:13) stated that qualitative research aims to provide a detail understanding into human behavior, emotion, attitudes, and experiences. Qualitative research is a social action based on the social reality, using interviews and observations, and other tools without using numerical analysis; using certain methods of collecting data qualitatively. Burns and Grove (2009:32) have provided their opinions that qualitative research is a systematic and subjective approach to highlight and explain daily life experiences, and to further give them proper meaning.

Sandelowski (2000:82) pointed out, qualitative descriptive is a distributed residual category and, as such, it makes visible the "porous lines between qualitative and quantitative description.. ..and between the erosion and re-invention of method" In other words, this category of inquiry may incorporate elements from quantitative and qualitative methodologies and, thus, serve as an innovative research tool.

Library research involves the step-by-step process used to gather information in order to write a paper, create a presentation, or complete a project. The research process itself involves identifying and locating relevant information, analyzing what you found, and

then developing and expressing your ideas. These are the same skills you will need on the job when you write a report or proposal.

According to Kahn and Best (2006:257), "Document or Content analysis is concerned with the explanation of the status of some phenomenon at a particular time or its development over a period of time". It means that content analysis is the interpretation of recent studies in surrounding area or topic that has been exist. In order to obtain the data, the writer uses test technique as a secondary resource in collecting data.

To conclude the method of the research, the research that the writer conducts is a descriptive qualitative research. The writer used library research to complete the research. The researcher also used content analysis to interpret recent studies in surrounding area.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Data Description and Analysis of White Supremacy

There are two ways that the writer uses to analyze white supremacy. First, by using the sequence table, the writer will analyze which character is predominant in the film. Second, by using the glorification dialogue table, the writer will analyze how the supporting characters constantly praise the main character and place him as the preferred and ideal character.

a. Sequence Table Analysis

According to Boggs & Petrie (2008), movie review theory encompasses sequence, film duration, and film elements, namely plot, characters, setting, and theme. As suggested by Fauziah & Tjahjani (2018: 25), this theory can be used to analyze the characterization of the character in connection with white supremacy.
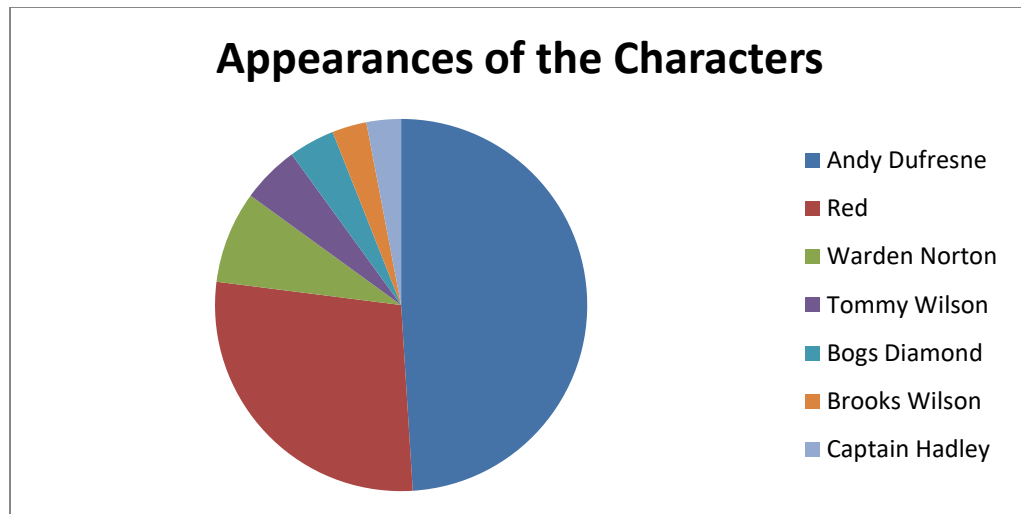
In this part, the writer uses the sequence table to analyze which character is predominant in the film based on the character's appearance whether by his physical appearance or only being mentioned by other characters.

From the monologues or dialogues that have been collected, and based on the visible and invisible glorification of the main character, the writer can present the percentage of white supremacy in the table and diagram below:

The Percentage of White Supremacy (a)

No	Characters	Total Number of Appearances	Percentage
1	Andy Dufresne	53	49
2	Red	30	28
3	Warden Norton	9	8
4	Tommy Wilson	6	5
5	Bogs Diamond	4	4
6	Brooks Hatlen	3	3
7	Captain Hadley	3	3
	Total	**108**	

Diagram Analysis of White Supremacy (a)

Appearances of the Characters

- Andy Dufresne
- Red
- Warden Norton
- Tommy Wilson
- Bogs Diamond
- Brooks Wilson
- Captain Hadley

b. Glorification of the Character

In this part, the writer uses the glorification dialogue table to analyze that the main white male character is predominant in the film based on the glorification by the supporting characters upon him. They glorification is divided into two levels: Visible Glorification and Invisible Glorification of the main character. It is important to notice that the actor chosen in this film is a white male actor, while the main supporting character is from black origin, and other supporting characters are from various ethnicities.

From the monologues or dialogues that have been collected, and based on the visible and invisible glorification of the main character, the writer can present the percentage of white supremacy in the table and diagram below:

The Percentage of White Supremacy (b)

No	Types of Glorification	Times of Show Up	Percentage
1	Visible	15	56%
2	Invisible	12	44%
	Total	**27**	

Diagram Analysis of White Supremacy

Types of Glorification of the Character

- Visible
- Invisible
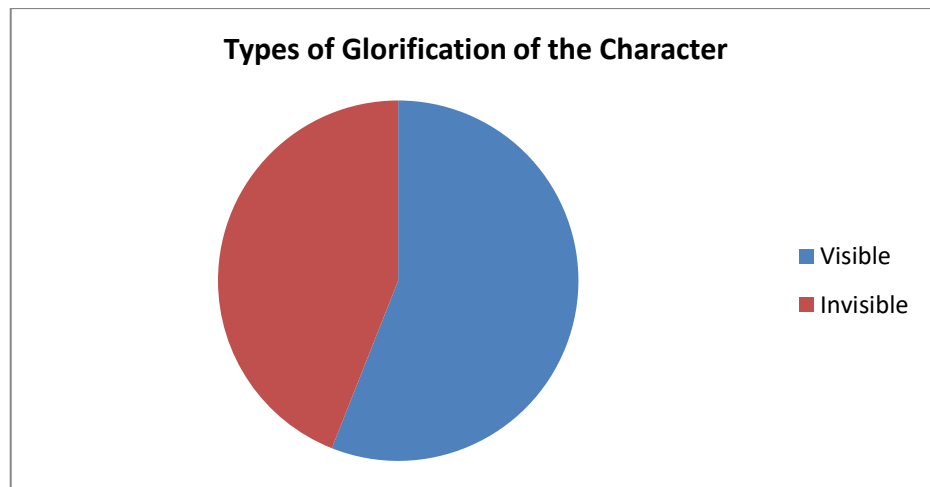
2. Data Description and Analysis of Structural Racism

Structural racism can be seen by post-colonial theory. In post-colonial theory, there is an opposite position which is called binary opposition. According to Ashcroft et.al. (2000:18), 'binary opposition' means a combination of two things, a pair, 'two', duality (OED), a widely used term with distinctive meanings in several fields and one that has had particular sets of meanings in post-colonial theory. While signs mean by their difference from other signs, the binary opposition is the most extreme form of difference possible – sun/moon; man/woman; birth/death; black/white. Such oppositions, each of which represents a binary system, are very common in the cultural construction of reality.

Thus, by using binary opposition to analyze the characterizations of the characters in the film, the writer sees that there are two opposite characteristics between the main actor and the supporting actors, where the latter are used to maintain the high-profile characteristics of the main actor. The opposite characteristics are first analyzed by looking at the characterizations the characters, such as bad><good; of are positive and negative. Yet, before the comparison can be made, whether one character has positive or negative characteristic, the writer will state the kinds of personality of such character.

From the monologues or dialogues that have been collected, and based on the positive and negative characterization of the characters, the writer can present the percentage of structural racism in the table and diagram below:

The Percentage of Structural Racism

Character	Positive	%	Negative	%
The main character (Andy)	24	33%	2	3%
The supporting characters	16	22%	31	42%
Sub Total	**40**		**33**	
Total	**73**			

Diagram Analysis of Structural Racism

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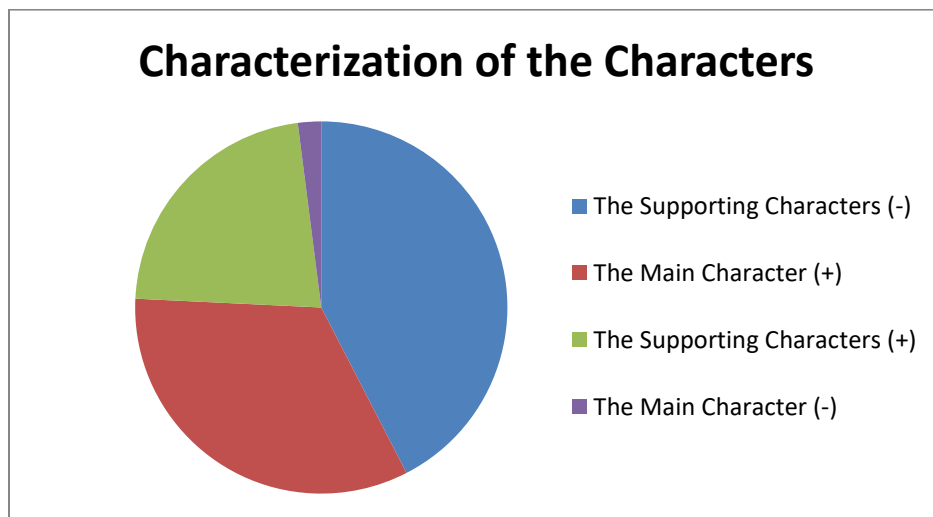
3. **Data Interpretation**

From the analysis to the film which titled "The Shawshank Redemption" by Frank Darabont, it can be concluded that there are 108 data which have something to do with white supremacy based on sequence table and 27 data which have something to do with white supremacy based on glorification dialogue table, and also 78 data which have something to do with structural racism. The analysis has two objectives. The first objective is to analyze white supremacy which is shown on the appearances of the characters and the glorification of the main actor by the supporting actor; and the second objective is to analyze the structural racism from the characterization of the actors.

a. **White Supremacy in Film "The Shawshank Redemption" by Frank Darabont**

i. **Appearance of the Characters using Sequence Table**

For the first analysis regarding white supremacy, which uses the sequence table, it shows the characters that is predominant in the film is Andy Dufresne – in comparison to other characters that are less predominant, namely Red, Warden Norton, Tommy Wilson, Bogs Diamond, Brooks Hatlen and Captain Hadley. Andy Dufresne appears in 53 out of 108 sequences, or more than half of the total sequences or 49%, making the character as having the highest appearance in the film. Red, the black-colored person, is the second dominating character by physical appearance, in which he appears in 30 sequences or 28%. Warden Norton is the white male character whose appears in 9 out of 108 sequences or 8%, which makes him the third highest appearance character in the movie. Tommy Wilson is the fourth most sequence character in the movie, with 6 appearances or 5%. Bogs Diamond is the fifth character with most appearances in 4 sequences or 4%. Brooks Hatlen and Captain Hadley have the same percentage of appearances which are 3 for each of them and the percentage of 3%.

The sequence table also shows that the predominant setting of the movie is the Shawshank Prison State (which appears in all sequences). At the Shawshank, Andy Dufresne shows his superiority in saving everybody and the

prison, whether it is by giving his friends the chance to enjoy the sunset with beer, building the library, giving Tommy Wilson a chance to develop himself in education, doing the scam to save all staffs in prison their money, and finally, asking Red to come with him. All of those scenes suggest the recognition of white supremacy. In addition, the escape also proves the white superiority as it indicated the prison is not the place for a white male person.

ii. Glorification of the Characters using Glorification Dialogue Table

In the second analysis of white supremacy, which uses the glorification dialogue table, it shows that the Visible Glorification is dominant in the film with 15 data or with the percentage of 56%, and the Invisible Glorification with 12 data or with the percentage of 44%. Visible glorification gets the highest percentage due to the fact that in this film, the supporting characters are visibly glorified the main character. Invisible glorification shows the lowest position in this film, where the compliments for the main character, by the supporting characters, are hidden in their speech. It shows that white supremacy can be seen from the glorification of the main character, which is a white male actor, where the supporting characters are placed to support and praise the main character.

b. Structural Racism in "The Shawshank Redemption" by Frank Darabont

To understand how the structural racism is constructed in the film "The Shawshank Redemption" by Frank Darabont, we have to see the binary social relation from the opposite sides between the main character and the supporting characters. There are 2 sides in binary social relation between the main character and the supporting characters, positive and negative. By looking at the positive and negative sides of the characters, the writer is able to make a comparison between the main character and the supporting characters. The positive side of the main character is dominant in the film with 24 data or 33% while the negative side of the main character is the lowest with 2 data or 3%. On the contrary, the negative side of the supporting characters is more dominant with 31 data or 42% while the

positive side of the supporting characters is lower with 16 data or 22%. From the four sides, the highest percentage is the negative side of the supporting characters which is 42%; while the lowest percentage is the negative side of the main character which is 3%. From the characterization of the characters in the film by the director, where the main character has been placed above other characters with almost every positive side, and where the supporting characters have more negative sides, which places the main character above other characters, it can be seen that racism exists structurally in film industry. Thus, it can be concluded that structural racism exists in American film.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

1. Conclusion

After the analysis has been done to the film which titled "The Shawshank Redemption" by Frank Darabont, it can be concluded that:

a. White supremacy in film "The Shawshank Redemption" by Frank Darabont

i. Appearances of the Characters Using Sequence Table

From the sequence table, the characters that is predominant in the film is Andy Dufresne (49%) – in comparison to other characters that are less predominant, namely Red (28%), Warden Norton (8%), Tommy Wilson (5%), Bogs Diamond (4%), Brooks Hatlen (3%) and Captain Hadley (3%).

ii. Types of the Glorification of the Characters Using Glorification Dialogue Table

From the glorification dialogue table, the Visible Glorification has the higher percentage of 56% than the Invisible Glorification with the percentage of 44%. The higher percentage of Visible Glorification shows the fact that the supporting characters are visibly glorified the main character which is a white male actor. Thus, it shows that white supremacy can be seen by how the supporting characters are placed to glorify the main white male character.

b. Structural Racism in "The Shawshank Redemption" by Frank Darabont

From the four sides of characterization of the characters, we can see that the highest percentage is the negative side of the supporting characters which is 42%; and the lowest percentage is the negative side of the main character which is 3%. The characterization of the characters can be seen by how the main character has almost every positive side, and how he was placed by the director above other characters, where the supporting characters have more negative sides, shows that the practice of racism has been done structurally in the film industry. Therefore, structural racism exists in the film industry.

2. Suggestion

1. To the Teachers

This film is recommended for the teachers to teach students above 17 years old who want to learn about sociology, such as prison system, discrimination and corruption; law, such as law in imprisonment; and linguistics, such as lexical, semantics, phrases, clauses, idioms, and quotes.

2. To the Students

This film is recommended for students above 17 years old who want to learn about sociology, such as prison system, discrimination and corruption; law, such as law in imprisonment; and linguistics, such as lexical, semantics, phrases, clauses, idioms, and quotes.

3. To the Next Researcher

The writer hopes that the next researcher can explore more about the same topic to broaden the knowledge regarding white supremacy and structural racism and to give more inputs for the similar study.

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