RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN PAUL HAGGIS' *CRASH*

A FINAL PROJECT

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PRONOUNCEMENT

I honestly confirm that this final project entitled *Racial Discrimination in Paul Haggis' Crash* was compiled by myself without taking any results from other researchers, whether S-1, S-2, S-3 and diploma degree of any university. I also ascertains that I did not take any material from publications or someone else's works except for the references that mentioned in bibliography.

Semarang, 1st October 2019

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MOTTO

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal." – Winston Churchill

This final project is dedicated to my beloved family,

and to everyone who supports and motivates me.

Thank you for your unconditional love.

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I realize that this project is still far from perfection. Therefore, I will be thankful if there is any constructive criticism and suggestion to make this project better. I hope that this project will be useful for the readers.

Semarang, 1st October 2019

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Abstract

In this project, the writer analyses racial discrimination in Paul Haggis' *Crash.* The writer uses theory of racial discrimination by Rebecca Blank in her book entitled *Measuring Racial Discrimination* to analyse racial discrimination in the movie. The project aims to discuss the racial discrimination in the whole story of the movie. The writer analyses two kinds of racial discrimination in *Crash* movie, which are explicit discrimination and automatic discrimination. The scenes, dialogues, and evidences are used in analysing the racial discrimination in this movie. The result of this project shows that *Crash* reflects the racial discrimination in the section of explicit discrimination and automatic discrimination. In explicit discrimination, the analysis proves verbal antagonism and avoidance. It shows indirect prejudice and subtle prejudice in the section of automatic discrimination.

Keywords: Racial discrimination, verbal antagonism, avoidance, indirect prejudice and subtle prejudice.

1. Introduction

Humans who are scattered throughout the face of the earth and who live in all kinds of natural surroundings, show a variety of physical colors that seem real. Characteristics of birth such as skin color, the color and shape of hair, the shape of the parts of the face and so on indicate an understanding of race. Dobzhansky (1941) stated that races are defined as populations differing in the incidence of certain genes showing hereditary traits.

America is a large country with multiethnics and races. There are White Americans, Black Americans, Indian Americans, Asian Americans, and others. Several factors such as race, behavior, and status may contribute to racial discrimination. Rogers states that racial discrimination can be caused by races (Rogers, 2005). According to Sukmono and Junaedi (2014:60), racism has created a social history that is formed by stereotypes and discrimination. It does extermination for Black people. Understanding of racism is also supported by discrimination against a person or group of people because of their race. Racism becomes a doctrine to claim that one race is superior to others (Liliweri, 2005:29). Conley (1999) also stated that the Black-White gap remains large in America.

Crash, directed by Paul Haggis (2004), is one of the movies showing racism inspired from a real case in daily life. This project focuses on racial discrimination and ethnic tensions in Los Angeles. It tells a fictional story that appear in Los Angeles area involving the interaction of the characters racially and ethnically diverse. The film tackles the issue of race and ethnicity in a unique way. *Crash* is a special movie describing events that often occur in daily life.

Overall, *Crash* provides an overview of events based on racism. This incident leads to inter-racial clashes as follows: racial violence, such as robbery, ridicule, prejudice, negative stereotyping, sexual harassment, trafficking, etc., which between one story and another have a causal relationship within a short period of time. This is what makes the writer interested in further research.

The writer searched for previous studies discussing racial discrimination. As a result, the writer found a research written by Pieper et al (2016) entitled *Race & Ethnicity in Independent Films: Prevalence of Underrepresented Directors and the Barriers They Face*. In this research, Pieper et al (2016) explains the prevalence and experience of directors from racism / ethnic groups who are underrepresented in the film (Pieper, 2016). Other research that used *Crash* movie as the object was carried out by Hsuan L. Hsu (2006) entitled *Racial Privacy, the L.A. Ensemble Film, and Paul Haggis's Crash*. In this research, Hsu (2006) explains that *Crash* movie has racial privacy issue. In this project, the writer analyses the discriminations occur in *Crash* movie using the racial discrimination's theory from Blank entitled *Measuring Racial Discrimination* (Blank, 2004) that makes this project different from the other previous researches. The writer also uses scenes and dialogues as the evidences proving that there are racial discriminations in the movie.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Character

In the movie, character is a part of intrinsic aspect. Holman states that the character is a short descriptive pattern of a person who typifies some definite quality (Holman, 1960:79). By the quality of the character in the movie, the character makes the story alive.

Character is divided into flat and round characters. Kennedy (1991:48) explained that a flat character has only one outstanding trait of feature while in contrast, round character is more complex than flat character. Characters will give their personal impression and identity to be analysed as flat or round character.

2.2 Racial Discrimination

According to Blank (2004:40) racial discrimination occurs when a person of one racial group is treated less favorably than another and suffers negative consequences. In this case, racial discrimination can be triggered by skin color and the appearance of someone. Blank in her book entitled *Measuring Racial Discrimination* (2004:55) also stated that there are two components of racial discrimination which are treatment on the basis of inadequately justified factors other than race that disadvantages a racial group and differential treatment on the basis of race that disadvantages a racial group. Several factors may contribute to racial differences in outcomes, including differences in differential access to opportunities, socioeconomic status and others.

There are two types of racial discrimination as explained in *Measuring Racial Discrimination,* which are explicit discrimination and automatic

discrimination (Blank, 2004:56). In explicit discrimination, it includes verbal antagonism that shows racial comment or racial slur to others people, avoidance that shows how people avoid someone because of their race, segregation that shows how people exclude someone by their race, the next are physical attack, and extermination (Blank, 2004:57). The second type is automatic discrimination, which includes indirect prejudice and subtle prejudice. Indirect prejudice leads a group blaming others group for disadvantages while subtle prejudice leads a group reaction to other groups by primitive fear and anxiety responses on the basis of race, age and gender (Blank, 2004:59).

3. Research Method

This project applies two methods in analysing the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects in *Crash* movie, which are, library research and exponential approach. Library research is a method to collect the data by reading some supporting books or scientific journals and searching through the internet and DVD as the references (Semi, 1993:8). In addition, the writer also uses exponential approach. Exponential approach can be used to get the intrinsic elements needed in the research. Guerin (1992:197) states that exponential approach deals with the inclusiveness of the term suggest at once the several meanings of motif, image, symbol and archetype. In analysing a literary work, it is important to find and recognize the various factors that occur in the movie (Rosenblatt, 1977).

In order to analyse racial discrimination in *Crash* movie, the writer uses theory of Racial Discrimination by Blank (2004). This theory is used to analyse racial discrimination in *Crash* movie. It is also used to show that some characters in *Crash* movie experienced racial discrimination conducted by white American.

4. Discussion

4.1 Character

4.1.1 Flat Character

In *Crash* movie there are a lot of characters. Each character gives their own story continuously one to another. Some characters can be defined as flat character such as Choi Chin Gui. He is a man who involved in human-trafficking. He sells Philippians to people in Los Angeles. He only appear twice in the movie and only bring one story line. In the movie, there is a dialog about Choi Chin Gui. His wife is also a flat character because his husband do not bring any story line in the movie.

4.1.2 Round Character

There are many round characters in the movie, one of them is Graham Waters. He is a detective in Los Angeles that involving in many criminal cases. He is also searching for his brother who run off from his home. He brings a lot of story line started in a journey finding his brother, his relationship with his Hispanic girlfriend, and his problem as a Black in every criminal cases. This story proved that Graham Walters is a round character.

Another round character is Rick Cabot, a District Attorney of Los Angeles. He is also a round character in the movie because he brings many story line in the movie. It started from the beginning of the movie when the Black stole his car. This experiences make him confuse because he knows that he will lose the Black's voice in the election. All the round characters bring more stories in *Crash* movie that make the movie alive.

4.2 Racial Discrimination

4.2.1 Explicit Discrimination

4.2.1.1 Verbal Antagonism

In *Crash* movie, almost every character experiences racial discrimination. The first case comes from Farhad, the Persians, who experiences explicit discrimination in verbal antagonism when he and his daughter want to buy a gun in a store. It can be seen in the dialogues below,

Store Man : Yo, Osama. Plan the jihad at your own time. What do you want?
Farhad : Are you making insult at me?
Store Man : Am I making insult at you? Is that the clause that you come in English?
Farhad : Yes. I'm speak English. I'm American citizen. (Haggis, 00.06.19)

The dialogues above show how White people did verbal antagonism to the Persians. When Farhad and his daughter are discussing about the ammunition for the gun that they bought, the American comes with the words "Plan the jihad". As the appearance of the Persians looks like an Arabic, as can be seen in the data 1 in appendix, it shows that the store man conducts explicit discrimination in verbal antagonism by saying insulting words just because they look like an Arabic.

The second case comes from the scene between Shaniqua Johnson and Officer John Ryan. It can be seen in the dialogue below,

Shaniqua Johnson : I'm sorry. There's nothing else I can do.
Officer Ryan : All right. Oh you know what I can't do? I can't look at you without thinking about five or six qualified white woman that can get your job.
Shaniqua Johnson : It's time for you to go. (Haggis, 00.47.48)

Based on the dialogues above, it is really obvious how Officer Ryan as a white man did explicit discrimination in verbal antagonism to Shaniqua Johnson because she is Black (as can be seen in the data 2 in appendix). In the previous scene, Shaniqua Johnson called by him to discuss about his father's health, but he did not response it. Until he saw his father get really sick in his home, he decided to meet Shaniqua Johnson, as representative from health insurance. When Officer Ryan knew that his father's doctor did not give any improvement, he asked to have another doctor, but Shaniqua Johnson rejected it. The condition made Officer Ryan did verbal antagonism to Shaniqua Johnson by his words. Officer Ryan said that white people is more qualified rather than Black people. It proves that the scene shows racial discrimination.

The third case which proves that *Crash* movie to have explicit discrimination in verbal antagonism can be seen in the dialogue below,

Flanagan	: Fucking black people.
Graham Waters	: What did you just said?
Flanagan	: I mean, you know, I know all the sociological reason why per capita 8 times more black man are imprisoned than the white man. Schools are disgrace, lack of the opportunities, bias in judicial system, all that stuff! All that stuff! But still, it's kinda get to you, on the next level, as the black man. They just kick their hand's up to cook each other. (Haggis, 01.09.20)

Flanagan thinks that Graham Waters, as a Black, always makes disadvantages for the White. According to the dialogues, the way Flanagan describes Black people can be categorized as explicit discrimination in verbal antagonism. It shows how White people think about Black people's life.

4.2.1.2 Avoidance

Avoidance is a part of explicit discrimination that occurs in *Crash* movie. It can be seen in the data 3,4 and 5 in the appendix. Based on those pictures, there are Black people and White people in the same bus. Picture 3 and 4 show how Anthony looks at another Black who is sitting alone. While in contrast, a group of White women is sitting together in the bus. The music in the movie also describes how pathetic the situation that Anthony had. The scene and the music in the movie conclude that White people show explicit discrimination in avoidance aspect to Black people.

4.2.2 Automatic Discrimination

4.2.2.1 Indirect Prejudice

Indirect prejudice is an aspect of explicit discrimination in racial discrimination. *Crash* movie shows indirect prejudice as can be seen in the dialogue below,

Jean Cabot : I would like the locks changed again in the morning. And you might mention that we'd appreciate it if next time they didn't send a gang member.
Rick Cabot : A gang member? You mean that kid in there?
Jean Cabot : Yes, yes.Yes. The guy with the shaved head, the pants around his ass, the prison tattoo.
Rick Cabot : Those are not prison tattoos.
Jean Cabot : Oh, really? And he's not gonna sell our key to one of his gangbanger friends the moment he is out our door?
Rick Cabot : We've had a tough night. It'd be best if you went upstairs.
Jean Cabot : And wait for them to break in? (Haggis, 00.12.30)

The conversation above is about Rick Cabot and his wife Jean Cabot talking about the locksmith which is apparently is a Black man. In the previous scene, Jean faced the hard time. The Black man appointed a gun in her face and

stole her car. It caused her to have prejudice to all Black people around her, including the locksmith and her husband partner. Based on the conversation above, Jean Cabot does indirect prejudice to all Black people and blame Black people for her disadvantages. She also assumes that the locksmith will be back again with his gang to attack them.

The other cased that show indirect prejudice in automatic discrimination is when the Persian, Farhad, had faced the hard time because of misunderstanding of their race. It can be seen in the dialog below,

Farhad : Stop washing! Insurance must take picture. Okay!
Farhad's Wife : Look what they wrote. They think we're Arab. When did Persian become Arab? (Haggis, 00.49.45)

According to the conversation, Fahad's store is destroyed by stranger. It is because Farhad did not change the door that is suggested by Daniel who repaired his door. In the morning, his store is totally broken, as can be seen in the data 6 in apendix. Based on the conversation, it shows that the people who destroy Farhad's store do not like Arabic. They thought that Persian is Arabic from the appearances. This scene proves that there is indirect prejudice in automatic discrimination in *Crash* movie.

4.2.2.2 Subtle Prejudice

The next scene shows the act of subtle prejudice. Subtle prejudice leads a group reaction to other groups by primitive fear and anxiety responses on the basis of race.

Fred : This is weird for a white guy to say, but have you noticed he's talking a lot less "Black" lately? …Like in this scene, he's supposed to say "don't be talkin' 'bout that", and he changed it to "don't talk to me about that."

Cameron: You think because of that the audience won't recognize him as a Black man?

Fred : All I'm saying it's not his character. Eddie is supposed to be the smart one, not Jamal, right? You're the expert here, but to me it rings false. (Haggis, 00.46.19)

The dialogue above is between Fred (a White man and a television producer) and Cameron (a Black man and a director). As can be seen in the dialogue above, Fred is trying to deflect the conversation away from race, but Cameron accurately understands that Fred is being racist and discriminative. When Fred said that someone "talking a lot less Black," Cameron knows what Fred meant is that someone "sounding much smarter". That means that Fred equates Black as foolishly, which offends Cameron. However, to keep his job safe, Cameron has to follow Fred's request to retake the scene.

5. Conclusion

According to the discussion above, the writer concludes that the character in *Crash* movie can be divided into flat character and round character. Each character brings the movie alive. Black people, Persians, Asian, White people who appear in the movie show how racial discrimination is reflected. Rick Cabot, Jean Cabot, Graham Waters, Ria, Cameron Thayer, Christine Thayer, Anthony, Peter Waters, Farhad's family, Officer John Ryan, Daniel Ruiz and Flanagan also face the problem caused by racial discrimination.

This movie also shows racial discrimination in a part of explicit discrimination and automatic discrimination. In explicit discrimination, this movie shows verbal antagonism and avoidance. The characters in the movie show verbal antagonism through racial comments or racial slur while in avoidance the characters show avoidance by their gesture. This movie also shows the automatic discrimination, which are indirect prejudice and subtle prejudice. Through the evidences, scenes, pictures, and dialogues, the writer discovers that *Crash* is a movie showing racial discrimination toward actions, thoughts, and words.

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APPENDIX

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