

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Narrative of the Movie**

A 'narrative' is defined as a story that encompasses events, characters, and the actions and dialogue of those characters, whether presented in prose or verse (Abrams, 2009:233). Abrams' definition primarily pertains to literary works; however, he does not explicitly consider film as a branch of literature in his explanation. Ramrao (2016:151) further supports this notion by stating that film is an outcome of literature and that films give visual literacy, indicating a connection between the two. In this study, the narrative of the movie is analyzed through the lens of two distinct aspects: the Intrinsic and Extrinsic Aspect.

##### **2.1.1 Intrinsic Aspect**

According to Abrams (2009:63), intrinsic aspects are the elements that makes a literary works alive. Intrinsic aspects are one of the aspects in narrative. Intrinsic elements, such as, character and characterization, theme, settings, and plot (conflicts) are connected to one another to help the viewers to understand the work easily.

##### **2.1.1.1 Theme**

According to Abrams (2009:205), a theme constitutes a fundamental concept, whether implicit or explicit, that a work of imagination seeks to engage with and convince the reader or viewer. Abrams (2009:205) states that every literary work, including movie, always make an important difference between the fictional

scenes, persons, events, and dialogues that a writer describes or explains in the story. Theme is also the writer's own idea about the world, the human life, or about the human situation and they are merged to one idea which is used as a general idea of the story.

#### **2.1.1.2 Plot**

A plot refers to how characters and events are structured within a narrative or drama to achieve specific artistic and emotional impacts. It is defined by the sequence and arrangement of events and actions, all orchestrated to create intended effects (Abrams, 2009:224). In other words, plot is how a story's characters and events are organized to create certain effects. The events are arranged to make the audience feel and think in a certain way.

#### **2.1.1.3 Setting**

Setting, according to Abrams (2009:284), encompasses the general locale, historical time, and social circumstances in which a story's events occur. It consists of three main aspects: time, place, and social circumstances, which provide details about the story's events. The purpose of setting, as stated by Abrams (2009:330), is to help viewers understand the story's temporal, spatial, and social context. The setting of time refers to when the events in the story occur, aiding viewers in understanding the story more deeply. The setting of place reveals where the story takes place, offering insights into the story's events. The setting of social circumstances describes the character's situation or the social environment in which they live, influencing their behavior and daily activities throughout the story.

#### **2.1.1.4 Conflict**

Abrams (2009:265) considers conflict the most crucial aspect of a story's plot, representing the challenges faced by characters. Conflict can be internal, involving a character's inner struggles with desires and emotions, or external, depicting conflicts between characters or with their environment. External conflict arises from disagreements or opposing ideas between characters, leading to confrontation and tension.

#### **2.1.1.5 Character and Characterization**

Character, as defined by Abrams (2009:42), is a person in a story expressed to the audience through their dialogue and actions. Characters are essential to a movie, as their presence drives the narrative and provides conflict and depth. They also serve as a tool for viewers to understand the movie's themes and messages. A character's temperament, desires, and moral nature are their motivations that drive the story forward. Moreover, characterization, according to Abrams (2009:33), is the accurate portrayal of characters who actively participate in the narrative. It helps readers visualize how characters might behave, think, and interact in the story.

Meanwhile, Pope (2005:133) distinguishes between major characters, who are central to the story and drive its conflicts, and minor characters, who support the major characters in resolving conflicts.

##### **2.1.1.5.1 Major Character**

According to Pope (2005:134), major character is also called a protagonist whose always have conflicts with antagonist in a story. Major character is the center of the story. The job of major character in a story is to illustrates the story to the

viewers. Major character nearly always appears in most of the scene in the movie, whether it is as a subject or an object.

#### **2.1.1.5.2 Minor Character**

According to Pope (2005:135), minor character is used as an additional point-of-view in the story. They are used as a supporting character for the major character in order to revive the story. Minor character is usually less important character in a movie because they just help the major character to tell the story to the viewer.

#### **2.1.1.6 Point of View**

It is a filmmaking technique where the camera is placed to show the visual perspective of the audience from a specific character's point of view within the story. This technique provides the audience with the sense of seeing the world from the character's perspective, creating a feeling of engagement and empathy with the character's experiences and emotions. It allows the audience to step into the character's shoes and see the narrative through their eyes (Barsam & Monahan, 2010).

### **2.1.2 Extrinsic Aspect**

#### **2.1.2.1 The Concept of Stereotype**

In his influential study on intergroup dynamics in 1954, Allport (1979:191) defined stereotypes as "exaggerated belief[s] associated with a [social] category." This definition sets stereotypes apart from other forms of intergroup bias by framing them as primarily cognitive phenomena. While prejudice and discrimination

encompass emotional and behavioral components, stereotypes are conceptualized as the mental thoughts and expectations individuals harbor about others based on their perceived group membership. Stereotypes can be viewed as specialized mental frameworks tailored for social contexts, utilized by individuals to interpret and predict others' behaviors, often with notable inaccuracies. Additionally, the content of stereotypes tends to follow predictable patterns, largely rooted in two key dimensions of impression formation: perceptions of warmth versus coldness, and assessments of competence versus incompetence (Fiske et al., 2007: 79).

#### **2.1.2.2 History of Black American**

According to Lynch (2023: 45), almost all of African Americans are descended from slaves who were forced to migrate from their native continent of Africa to the New World to work as slaves. Twenty slaves from Africa were brought to Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619, beginning a long history of Black Americans in the nation. Eventually, the system of indentured servitude gave way to a racialized version of slavery that continued until the American Civil War. The development of the national African-American identity was sped up by the Civil War's aftermath. Civil rights campaigners like W. E. B. Du Bois reject any idea that identity was founded after the Civil War. African Americans were restricted by several laws and customs that denied them the same liberties as white people even though they were "free" in the post-Civil War era.

A significant force in the struggle against prejudice was the Human Rights Movement, which was founded by Roy Wilkins and Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1960s. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke in front of a large crowd. His speech was

intended to convey that he desired a nation that valued character over skin color in its decision-making. It could be challenging for Black Americans to learn about their family history. People usually find it difficult to locate their ancestors prior to the 1870 census because of slavery. Records of the enslaved are frequently handwritten, badly maintained, or lost over time.

### **2.1.2.3 Understanding Racial Dynamics**

Racial dynamics encompass the intricate interplay of various factors that influence how race is understood, experienced, and expressed within societies. According to Eliasson (2023:12), race is not a fixed or natural category but is socially constructed, meaning it is created and maintained through social interactions and institutional practices. This construction of race influences how individuals are categorized into racial groups, which in turn affects their access to resources, opportunities, and privileges (Eliasson, 2023:12).

At the individual level, racial dynamics are shaped by personal experiences and perceptions of race. Individuals construct their racial identities based on how they are perceived by others and how they interpret these perceptions. This construction of racial identity is not static but can change over time in response to social and cultural influences (Eliasson, 2023:15).

Moreover, racial dynamics are deeply intertwined with power dynamics. Power operates through discourses and practices that regulate and control individuals. In the context of race, power dynamics influence how racial categories are constructed and used to justify and perpetuate systems of oppression and domination (Eliasson, 2023:18).

In conclusion, racial dynamics are complex and multifaceted, encompassing the ways in which race is constructed, experienced, and contested within societies. Understanding these dynamics requires an examination of historical legacies, cultural practices, institutional structures, and individual experiences. By exploring these dynamics, we can gain insights into the complexities of race and work towards creating more inclusive and equitable societies.

#### **2.1.2.4 The Meaning of Perception**

Perception is described as the process of gathering and interpreting information from the environment. According to Perreault and McCarthy (2005:160), perception is how we gather and interpret information from the world around us. Santrock (2003:163) defines perception as "the process of organizing and interpreting sensory information to give it meaning," highlighting its personal and individualistic nature.

Selective processes play a crucial role in perception. Perreault and McCarthy (2005:160) note that people engage in selective exposure, selective attention, selective perception, and selective retention, which shape their perception of the world. Cohen et al. (2001:128) add that these processes are influenced by individual needs, expectations, and past experiences.

Luthans (2005:33) explains that perception is a complex cognitive process resulting in a unique interpretation of reality. He states, "Perception is a unique interpretation of the situation, not an exact recording of it" (Luthans, 2005:33). This uniqueness makes it challenging to predict how someone else will react to a

situation, as each individual's perception is shaped by their unique experiences and emotional responses (Cohen et al., 2001:128).

In summary, perception is highly individualistic, formed by an individual's selective exposure to information, just as individuals selectively expose themselves to certain information and interpret it through their unique lenses, they also internalize societal perceptions and opinions. Societal perceptions and stereotypes can act as external stimuli that individuals are exposed to. Over time, these societal views can influence how individuals see themselves. If society consistently portrays certain characteristics or behaviors in a particular light, individuals who identify with those characteristics may begin to see themselves through that societal lens, shaped by the emotional impact of acceptance or rejection (Amodu, 2006:150).

#### **2.1.2.4 Contemporary Racism Issue in the United States**

One of the external aspect of narrative in *Blindspotting* is deeply intertwined with the broader socio-political context of racism in the United States. The film's core revolves around this topic, shedding light on the complex and pervasive nature of racial dynamics in American society.

During the year of 2017, which aligns with the setting of the film *Blindspotting*, former police officer Roy Oliver was convicted of murder for the shooting of 15-year-old Jordan Edwards, an unarmed African-American teen, in a Dallas suburb. The incident occurred on April 29, 2017, when Oliver fired into a car carrying Edwards and other teenagers. (CNN, 2018).

The jury finding Oliver guilty of murder and sentencing him to 15 years in prison. The trial drew national attention and reignited debates on police brutality,

racial profiling, and the use of excessive force by law enforcement officers, particularly against African-American individuals (CNN, 2018).

Prosecutors had sought a minimum sentence of 60 years, while the defense argued for a lesser sentence of 20 years or less. Jordan Edwards' family expressed mixed feelings about the verdict and sentence, with his stepmother, Charmaine Edwards, stating that she would have preferred a longer sentence of 25 to 30 years. She stated that while Oliver would eventually be able to see life again after 15 years, Jordan would never have that opportunity (CNN, 2018).

Another significant racial issue during this time period was The death of Timothy Caughman, a 66 year-old Black man, in New York City. Caughman was stumbled into a police precinct late at night with stabbed wounds. Caughman died shortly after arriving at a hospital, unable to utter a word about his attacker (The Washington Post, 2019).

While collecting bottles for recycling, he was unexpectedly attacked by a white man who repeatedly stabbed him with a sword. Subsequently, James Harris Jackson, also a white man, entered a gathering of police officers in Times Square. Jackson confessed to the crime and revealing the knives used in the attack (The Washington Post, 2019).

Jackson, the assailant, later confessed that he had traveled to New York with the explicit purpose of murdering Black men, and he chose Caughman as his target because of his race. Jackson said “God has ordered us to eliminate the Negro races from the face of the earth for the good of all mankind.” Jackson was charged with murder as an act of terrorism and a hate crime (The Washington Post, 2019).

Besides racial discrimination against individuals, there are also systemic issues such as gentrification, which are deeply intertwined with racial discrimination, and also highlighted in the movie *Blindspotting*. Gentrification refers to the influx of wealthier individuals into an existing urban area, leading to increased property values and rents, as well as changes in the community's character and culture (Grant, 2003). This phenomenon has frequently been associated with racial and economic tensions in many American cities. The transformation of neighborhoods is often viewed as a social injustice, as affluent, typically White newcomers are often praised for revitalizing communities, while low-income, minority residents are often forced out due to rising living costs and profound economic shifts (Grant, 2003).

In 2017, Atlanta became a focal point in the struggle against gentrification, which particularly impacted its African American population. The city planned to use eminent domain to acquire properties in Peoplestown, claiming it was necessary for a park and pond to address flooding. However, residents saw this as a pretext for further gentrification and private development (The Guardian, 2017).

The historical context of urban renewal in Atlanta, often resulting in the displacement of black communities, deepened residents' concerns. The proposed Atlanta Beltline Project heightened fears, as increasing property values threatened low-income residents (The Guardian, 2017).

The resistance against gentrification in Atlanta, the convictions in the Jordan Edwards and Timothy Caughman cases, and the broader context of racial tensions in the United States all underscore the deeply rooted nature of racism in American

society. These events serve as a reminder of the ongoing struggles faced by African Americans and the need for continued efforts to address systemic racism and inequality. These real-life examples highlight the critical need for continuous discussion to address racism and its effects on communities across the country.

#### **2.1.2.5 Social Identity Theory**

Social Identity Theory (SIT) was first proposed by Tajfel (1978, 1979) and later developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979). It is a social-psychological theory that explains behaviors and cognitions through group processes. SIT posits that individuals exhibit group behaviors like solidarity within in-groups and discrimination against out-groups as part of social identity processes, aiming to achieve positive self-esteem and self-enhancement (Abrams & Hogg, 1988).

Groups are defined in SIT not by interaction but by members' perception of belonging and acknowledgment by others (Tajfel & Turner, 1979:40). Tajfel (1979) structured the definition of a group along cognitive (knowing about group membership), evaluative (positive or negative evaluation of group membership), and emotional (positive or negative emotions associated with group membership) components. Based on this understanding, he suggested four underlying principles of SIT: social categorization, social comparison, social identity, and self-esteem.

Social categorization involves categorizing people to simplify understanding and structure interactions. Categories create distinctions between groups (interclass) and within groups (intraclass) (Tajfel, 1979:33). Social comparison, based on Festinger's (1954) theory, is the evaluation of one's group in relation to other groups. This comparison influences social identity and self-esteem.

Social identity is defined as part of the self-concept derived from group membership and its emotional significance. Positive distinctiveness is achieved through favorable comparisons with out-groups.

Self-esteem is a fundamental motivation in SIT. Individuals seek positive evaluations of their group to enhance self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979:16). The self-esteem hypothesis, which emerged from SIT, suggests that successful inter-group discrimination enhances self-esteem and that low self-esteem motivates increased out-group discrimination. However, empirical support for this hypothesis is mixed (Hogg & Abrams, 1990).

SIT has been applied extensively in social psychology, particularly in understanding social stereotyping and inter-group relations. Despite the mixed empirical support for some aspects like the self-esteem hypothesis, SIT remains a foundational theory in social psychology. It highlights the importance of group membership in shaping behaviors and self-concept, emphasizing the roles of social categorization, comparison, identity, and self-esteem. Further developments like SCT have expanded the theory, illustrating its application across various social and psychological contexts.

### **2.3 Cinematography Elements**

Technical elements are essential in film production, and various shooting techniques are employed to introduce diversity in the work. According to Bordwell and Thompson in their book *Film Art: An Introduction* (2017:194), there are several forms of shooting, including angle, level, height, and distance. The discussion of cinematic features often revolves around camera angles and distances.

### 2.3.1 Camera Angle

The area of the camera where a scene attempt is made is known as the camera angle. The significance of a story can be determined or influenced by a camera's point of view. Straight-on angle, high angle, and low angle are the three categories that Bordwell and Thompson use to categorize the camera angle (Bordwell and Thompson, 2017:190).

A popular camera position in a movie is a straight-on angle. The camera is positioned so that the scene's object is visible to the viewer at eye level. High angle shooting is when the camera is positioned on top of a prop in a movie so that the audience can view it from above. Low angle refers to an angle that is below the object's line of sight in the movie. The thing looks to appear larger when viewed from this angle.



*Picture 2.1 Straight-on Angle (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017:188)*



*Picture 2.2 High Angle (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017:188)*



*Picture 2.3 Low Angle (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017:188)*

### 2.3.2 Camera Distance

The image's frame places us either farther away from a subject or reasonably close to it. Typically, this characteristic of framing is referred to as camera distance. Generally, the scale of human beings in the frame is used to determine the approximate camera distance. (Bordwell, 2017:190-191).

Extreme long shot is often taken from a long distance, making characters occasionally practically invisible. Typically, these images are used to describe metropolitan structures, etc. Long shot reveals the character's entire physique. Usually, a long shot is used to show the character and the surrounding landscape. The term "medium long shot" refers to a shot that includes both a significant section of the characters' bodies and some little earthy details. From the top of the head to the middle of the body, only half of the object is visible in the medium shot. Only a portion of the object is visible in the medium close-up, from the chest to the top of the head. A close-up shot is one that only includes a little portion of the subject's body, such as a hand, head, foot, or other minor component. A close-up shot is used to emphasize or display physical attributes, motion details, or other large elements. Extreme close-ups typically only reveal a portion of the face (e.g. lips, eyes, etc.).



*Picture 2. 4 Extreme Long Shot (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017:189)*



*Picture 2. 5 Long Shot (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017:189)*



*Picture 2. 6 Medium Long Shot (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017:189)*



*Picture 2. 7 Medium Shot (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017:189)*



*Picture 2. 8 Medium Close-up (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017:189)*



*Picture 2. 9 Close-up (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017:189)*



*Picture 2. 10 Extreme Close-up (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017:189)*

### **2.3.3 Sound**

Sound, which relates to audio aspects that the viewer may feel, is one of the cinematic elements of cinematography theory (Bordwell and Thompson, 2017:270). Speech and conversation are two examples of characteristics of sound that serve to convey information about the story. This feature is used by the writer

to analyze specific dialogues from the *Blindspotting* film that deal with racial prejudice and discrimination as the main source data for this study.

#### **2.3.4 Mise-en-scene**

Mise-en-scene serves as a powerful tool for filmmakers to achieve realism, ensuring that settings appear authentic and supporting actors to perform naturally (Bordwell and Thompson, 2017:113). Bordwell discussed mise-en-scène, which encompasses setting, costumes and makeup, lighting, staging, space, and time. Setting, specifically, plays an important role in storytelling. Beside serving as a backdrop for character interactions, settings can exist independently, carrying a significant role within the narrative (Bordwell and Thompson, 2017:115). The next element is costumes and makeup. The usage of color in costumes and makeup can help the audience understand the storyline (Bordwell and Thompson, 2017:119).

The next important element of mise-en-scene is lighting. It can be used to create dramatic effects by creating areas of darkness and brightness, therefore improving a composition between the subject and objects in the setting (Bordwell and Thompson, 2017:125). Different types of lighting, such as frontal, sidelighting, backlighting, underlighting, and top lighting, have distinct effects (Bordwell and Thompson, 2017:126).

Bordwell also adds that acting, facial expressions, and sound are designed by the director so that the context of the story can be understood by the audience. Moreover, the last aspect of mise-en-scene is space and time. Space refers to the area within the frame where the action happens, showing the setting, props, and characters' placement (Bordwell and Thompson, 2017:143).