

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Diversity can provide benefits to society, so mutual respect for each other is needed. However, this cannot be fully done by humans, especially in America. This country is known for its freedom, apart from that, quite a few of those who are different from the majority in America that experience discrimination, one of which is being black. The American population is white, so those with black skin are considered not part of them, resulting in discrimination. According to Wallis (2007), racism arises from domination and serves as the social and philosophical justification for dehumanizing, oppressing, and doing violence on individuals based on their skin color.

Racism, as a broader systemic issue, is fueled by these prejudices and discriminatory practices. It does not only involve individual actions, but also reflects institutional and structural inequalities embedded in society. According to Taylor & Pettigrew (2000:1400), the concept of prejudice encompasses two key components, a negative emotional or affective reaction toward the target group (antipathy) and an inaccurate belief or stereotype regarding members of that group. Definition of discrimination emphasize unequal treatment, according to Pettigrew & Taylor (2000:1400). Discrimination as opposed to prejudice is evident in people's behavior.

Racism is a phenomenon that has occurred for centuries, with racial, ethnic and cultural differences existing throughout the world. This is represented in the film *American Son* (2019). This film is essential, where racial tension is at its peak and African-Americans are increasingly developing a platform for themselves to speak out about societal injustices. *American Son* (2019) movie is an ideal object of study for exploring racial prejudice and discrimination because it unfolds within a confined setting, allowing the characters' emotions and societal tensions to take center stage. The film highlights interpersonal aspects of racism and the institutional bias within the America justice system.

*American Son* (2019) movie illustrates an African American mother, Kendra Ellis Connor, had to witness an injustice that happened to her and her missing teenage son, Jamal, due to the racial bias carried out by white police officers. The film explores the colored parents' emotional struggles and the social tensions surrounding police violence against black youth. The film explores racial issues in America. Kendra's background experiences provide a vivid depiction of how African Americans are compelled to resist not only racial discrimination, but also the systemic racism perpetuated by white-dominated society.

This research will focus on analyzing the behavior of white characters toward African Americans, highlighting instances of racial prejudice and discrimination as classified by McLemore. The writer interests in analyzing this movie because there are no previous studies about this movie which have been analyzed, as far as the writer does the library research. In the other hand, this movie also show that the character of African-American receive racial discrimination by white in many

aspects of their life. *American Son* (2019) movie gives distinctive perspective by adding more representation that reflects the real life condition of racial discrimination issues in America, which there is certain groups could be on both ends of stereotype or prejudice acts that happens in daily life. In conducting this study, the writer analyses the racial discrimination context in American through a film. Thus, the study is conducted under the discipline of American Studies.

## **1.2 Research Problems**

1.2.1 How does *American Son* (2019) reflect racial prejudice through group identity?

1.2.2 How does *American Son* (2019) reflect racial prejudice through cultural transmission?

1.2.3 How does the movie *American Son* (2019) reflect racial discrimination?

## **1.3 Aims of the Study**

1.3.1 To identify how racial prejudice through group identity is reflected in *American Son* (2019).

1.3.2 To identify how racial prejudice through cultural transmission is reflected in *American Son* (2019).

1.3.3 To analyze how racial discrimination is reflected in *American Son* (2019).

## **1.4 Scopes of the Study**

This study will analyze the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects through the dialogues and scenes in *American Son* (2019) movie which directed by Kenny Leon. The intrinsic aspects delve into an examination of the narrative elements, such as

character and characterization, setting, and conflict. In the extrinsic aspects, this study will focus on examining racial discrimination and the causes of discrimination. The writer uses McLemore theory about racial discrimination and prejudice to analyze how the *American Son* (2019) movie reveal racial discrimination.

### **1.5 Previous Studies**

Racial prejudice and discrimination have been widely studied across different field. Movies has emerged as a powerful way for exploring social issues, including racial prejudice and discrimination. Researchers have focused on how the issues of racial prejudice and discrimination are portrayed in films. Previous studies help researcher to provide a foundation to understand the issues of racial prejudice and discrimination in film. Researcher has identified several studies that explored racial prejudice and discrimination. One of the study titled *Debunking The Post-Racial Notion: A Racial Prejudice Study in American Society as Reflected in Angie Thomas' 'The Hate U Give'* by Prihatika & Rokhman (2020) examines how racial prejudice causes social issues that are prevalent among people of color, especially African Americans.

Researcher also found the study from Padma et al. (2020) with titled *Analysis of The Action of Racism on 'The Help' Film Directed by Tate Taylor* that discusses different forms of racism reflected in the movie by using McLemore's theory of racism and using Carmicael and Hamilton's racism concept to analysis. According to the study's findings, the movie depicts institutional racism. The study identified

how characters internalize negative stereotypes and how systemic inequalities further marginalize Black individuals, reinforcing broader societal racism.

A study titled *Racism Towards Black People Represented in The Film 'If Beale Street Could Talk'* by Marsela (2024) discusses about the representation of racism in the film and discusses the self-conflict that faced by the main character. The researchers utilized Stuart Hall's theory of representation and Karl Marx's conflict theory to support this study. The analysis reveals that the film *If Beale Street Could Talk* takes several forms, such as individual and institutional racism. Furthermore, racism has a highly negative effect for individual victims of racism so that many experience prolonged self-conflict to live their future lives. Similarly, another studies explore the struggles of black people to fight against racial stereotypes and systemic oppression. From the study titled *Analysis of Racism Experienced by The Main Character in 'Get Out' (2017) Movie* by Zulfa (2022) discusses the types of racism reflected in *Get Out* movie, as well as explaining the levels of racism by using George M. Fredrickson's theory of racism. This study identified two main findings. First, Chris experienced several types of racism, including subtle racism, aversive racism, and symbolic racism. Second, Chris uses different levels of racism, namely cultural racism, institutional racism, and individual racism. Another study from Irawati Ayu (2018) titled *The Struggle of Black People to Avoid Stereotypes in Angie Thomas 'The Hate U Give'* also shows how characters face discrimination, threats, and double standards in law enforcement. The writer also found that the study uses types of discrimination theory by Fishbein (2002) and uses the pattern of lifetime discrimination theory from Feagin.

Based on the previous studies, several studies are identified focus on the racial struggles faced by African American through broader societal lenses and emphasizing institutional racism and personal experiences of injustice by using McLemore's theory to examine the racial prejudice. In the other side, *American Son* (2019) explores racial prejudice that involving police interactions and racial profiling as a critical and urgent issue in nowadays' society in America. This portrayed of racial discrimination combined with the tension of a biracial family that dealing with law enforcement. Researcher found the gap that can be used to analyze *American Son* (2019) movie. Researcher used the McLemore's theory of racial prejudice and discrimination to find out how prejudice and discrimination manifests in the movie.

## **1.6 Research Method**

### **1.6.1 Data and Sources Data**

Researcher uses *American Son* (2019) movie that is directed by Kenny Leon as the source of primary data. The writer uses the dialogues and scenes of the movie as the primary data to observed. The writer does the library research by using scientific souces as the secondary data to gather data from online and offline sources. The method of library research can be used to analyze the theory of discrimination and racial prejudice in the *American Son* (2019) by examining scholarly articles, thesis, and other academic resources which available in libraries that related to the primary data.

### **1.6.2 Method of Data Collection**

In this study, data collection will be conducted through several stages to obtain material relevant for analysis. The process begins by watching *American Son* (2019) movie to understand and to identify scenes that align with the research focus. Then, during this viewing process, the researcher also gathers data by observing both scenes and dialogues that serve as supporting evidence. Furthermore, the collected data will be organized and categorized using McLemore's theoretical framework of racial discrimination and racial prejudice to facilitate deeper analysis.

### **1.6.3 Research Approach**

The writer uses a sociological approach to examine the *American Son* (2019) movie. The movie is observed and analyzed through its scenes and dialogues to identify and categorize the racial discrimination and its caused, by using McLemore's theory as the analytical framework. The theory that will be used is McLemore's racial prejudice and discrimination theory. The writer employs contextual analysis to interpret the meaning behind the characters' attitude and actions, allowing the researcher to address the research questions. By applying this approach, the writer aims to understand how the film reflects racial discrimination and to draw conclusions based on the theoretical lens of prejudice and discrimination.

### **1.7 Organization of the Writing**

In compiling this research, the researcher will divide it into four chapters as follows:

Chapter I INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of this study consist of background of study, research problems, aims of the study, scopes of the study, previous studies, and research method that also consist of method of collecting data and research approach.

## Chapter II INTRINSIC THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The second chapter consist of theories that support the researcher in analyzing and answering research problem. It consists of concepts, the definitions, and the theories that serve as the foundation for the particular study. In this chapter, researcher will explain the intrinsic aspects of the film.

## Chapter III EXTRINSIC THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter contains secondary theories related to the research topic and an explanation of the social situation in America that is relevant to the topic chosen by the researcher.

## Chapter IV DISCUSSION

This chapter contains analysis of phenomena based on existing data and answers the research problem.

## Chapter V CONCLUSION

This chapter will conclude the discussion and give the summary key points to provides a concise summary of the most important points discussed in the previous chapters.