

with theatrical arts: setting, lighting, costumes and makeup, and the staging and performance of the actors. Analyzing these elements helps explain how the physical arrangement of objects and characters within the frame reinforces the overall thematic tension and power dynamics of the story (Bordwell & Thompson, 2013:113).



CHAPTER III

EXTRINSIC THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 The American Law Enforcement System

Analyzing the failure of law enforcement in a film requires a clear understanding of how the legal system in the United States is actually structured. In the US, police authority does not depend on a single central power; instead, it operates on a highly decentralized model divided into federal, state, and local or municipal levels (Soss & Weaver, 2017). Local or city police departments hold primary responsibility for daily community patrols and traffic enforcement within their city limits (Vitale, 2017). Legally, any action taken by these officers, whether an arrest, interrogation, or search, must adhere to strict constitutional constraints, particularly the Fourth Amendment, which protects citizens from unreasonable searches and seizures (Epp et al., 2014). To stop someone, officers must have reasonable and articulated suspicion of criminal activity, and they require a higher standard of probable cause or a valid court warrant to search personal property or make an arrest (Epp et al., 2014).

Unfortunately, structural damage happens when local agencies try to get away from these constitutional protections by exploiting certain administrative weaknesses. The clearest example of this institutional failure is the Seizure of Public Assets. This legal process allows police departments to permanently seize cash, vehicles, or property suspected of being connected to crimes such as drug trafficking, even if they never file formal criminal charges against the owner

(Alexander, 2010). Because legal cases are brought directly against the physical property itself, as in the case of *State v. Thirty-Six Thousand Dollars*, the true owner is deprived of standard due process rights (Holloway, 2004).

This process fundamentally distorts the justice system in two ways. First, civil forfeiture lowers the standard of proof required from the strict criminal threshold of beyond a reasonable doubt to the lower civil threshold of merely a preponderance of the evidence, granting local police enormous discretionary power (Alexander, 2010). Second, in many states, the law allows local police departments to retain the cash and property they seize to fund their own institutional budgets (Vitale, 2017). This creates a direct financial incentive for police to target citizens for their wealth rather than focusing on public safety. This systemic shift from fighting crime to generating revenue marks the point at which law enforcement fails to fulfill its mandate, transforming police into self-funded, autonomous entities that threaten civil rights.

3.2 Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a way of looking at things that started in the mid-1970s, developed by scholars like Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, and Jean Stefancic. They wanted to examine how race, power, and the law in the U.S. are connected, especially after some of the progress made during the 1960s civil rights movement began to be undone (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993, 2017). The theory says that racism isn't just about individual people acting on hate or prejudice. Instead, it's a deep and widespread problem that is built into the laws, rules, and systems that government and institutions use (Delgado &

Stefancic, 1993, 2017). CRT challenges the usual idea that laws are neutral, fair, and don't favor any group. It says that just having equal laws on paper doesn't fix real problems of unfairness. Instead, it lets old power structures stay in place without being questioned (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993, 2017).

CRT is built on several connected ideas that help understand how systems of power and inequality work, which can lead to oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993, 2017). It starts by pointing out that racism is common and normal, suggesting that biased systems are the usual way things work in society, not something unusual. This makes unfair treatment by organizations seem like a regular and acceptable part of how things are done (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Second, using the idea of interest convergence, CRT shows that racial improvements or legal help for minority groups are usually only accepted when they help the dominant group in terms of money, economy, or power (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993). Third, structural determinism looks at how legal rules and government systems limit big changes by keeping conflicts within safe paths that support the current situation (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993). Finally, CRT uses counter-storytelling and stories from people outside the majority to challenge common "stock stories," reveal the excuses used in procedures, and show the real experiences of people who face unfair systems (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993, 2017).

3.3 How is Louisiana USA in the 2020s

In the 2020s, Louisiana faces significant socioeconomic difficulties, entrenched criminal justice problems, and ongoing racial inequalities, alongside several notable examples of civic resilience. The state faces extensive systemic

poverty, impacting almost nineteen percent of its residents, in addition to the lowest national rates of labor force participation among prime-age individuals and youth involvement. These financial difficulties overlap with a strained criminal justice system characterized by exceedingly high incarceration rates, unequal policing methods, pre-trial detention challenges, and a lack of trust in institutions within local communities. Moreover, significant public health weaknesses, including reduced life expectancy and elevated social isolation, exacerbate the state's persistent structural stress. In spite of these deep-rooted institutional and material challenges, Louisiana possesses localized advantages, such as being at the forefront of press freedom protections, making slight improvements in fundamental educational test scores, and experiencing increasing rates of community volunteerism. (Better Louisiana, 2026; State of the Nation Project, 2026)