

## **CHAPTER 2 THEORIES**

### **1.1 Theoretical Framework**

The writer utilizes Abrams's objective approach to analyze the intrinsic elements used in the mini-series which are theme, characters, setting, conflict, and plot. Whereas the extrinsic elements will be analyzed using critical race theory approach.

#### **2.1.1 Intrinsic Elements**

The two essential elements of a film are its narrative and cinematographic elements.

##### **2.1.1.1 Narrative Elements**

###### **2.1.1.1.2 Characters**

According to Abrams, characters are the individuals that play roles in a dramatic or narrative work whose thoughts and experiences can be interpreted by audience through their dialogues and actions (Abrams, 2012:33).

###### **2.1.1.1.3 Settings**

According to Abrams, the setting of a narrative work encompasses not only the physical location where the events unfold but also the historical era and social context in which they take place. Hence, the setting can be classified into three categories: the setting of the place, the setting of the time, and the setting of social background (Abrams, 2012:284).

###### **2.1.1.1.3.1 Setting of Place**

Setting of place refers to geographical location of an event or when the event occurred (Holman, 1960:296).

###### **2.1.1.1.3.2 Setting of Time**

Setting of time refers to when the story occurs such as dusk, midnight, or morning (Barnet, 2008:152).

#### **2.1.1.1.3.3 Setting of Social Background**

Setting of social background refers to the connection between the character and the societal conditions, which may include religious, governmental, etc. (Holman, 1960:453).

#### **2.1.1.1.4 Conflict**

According to Abrams, conflict within narrative works refers to the significant battle between different characters that drives the storyline. Conflict is divided into two types which are internal conflict and external conflict (Abrams, 2012:40).

##### **2.1.1.1.4.1 Internal Conflict**

Conflict that originates from a character itself. These problems are triggered by the contradictions of thoughts inside the head of the characters (Abrams, 2012:40).

##### **2.1.1.1.4.2 External Conflict**

Conflict that occurs as a result of things outside the character which opposes the character's thinking and creates tension (Abrams, 2012:40).

#### **2.1.1.1.5 Plot**

According to Abrams, the plot is essentially a brief overview of events in a narrative sequentially (Abrams, 2012:37). Moreover, according to Di Yanni's composition, the plot is divided into five parts, which are exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution (Di Yanni, 2002: 50).

##### **2.1.1.1.5.1 Exposition**

Exposition exposes the beginning of the story in narrative works where the audience is able to grasp the context of the story and the characters and their background (Di Yanni, 2002:50).

#### **2.1.1.1.5.2 Rising Action**

Rising action is a part where suspense and tension are created, and the critical conflict is developed (Di Yanni, 2002:50).

#### **2.1.1.1.5.3 Climax**

The climax is the pivotal moment in the story that provides the audience with the peak of the conflict (Di Yanni, 2002:51).

#### **2.1.1.1.5.4 Falling Action**

Falling action provides the audience with the aftermath of the climax and displays the resolution of the significant disagreement (Di Yanni, 2002:51).

#### **2.1.1.1.5.5 Resolution**

Resolution brings the story to its ending by addressing confusion and resolving conflicts and unfinished business (Di Yanni, 2002:52).

### **2.1.1.2 Cinematographic Element**

Based on Brown's definition (2012:2), cinematographic elements are a way to cultivate nonverbal communication into a visual language that gives meaning and illuminates the subtext of the film's context. The cinematographic elements that are going to be discussed in this section is camera distance (shots).

#### **2.1.1.2.1 Camera Distance (Shots)**

According to Bordwell and Thompson (2004:252), camera distance is associated with the framing of a figure or image placed at a specific distance. It is a significant part of film because it actively defines the image for the audience.

#### **2.1.1.2.1.1 Extreme Close-up**

This type of camera distance captures the detail of just one part of the object's facial features, such as eyes, lips, etc. (Bordwell and Thompson, 2004:502). The purpose of this shot is to highlight the clarity of the object.

#### **2.1.1.2.1.2 Close-up**

The close-up technique shows only a small area of the object in-frame to display a distinct figure. This shot enhances the object's expression. Close-ups include headshots from the neck up (Bordwell and Thompson, 2004:504).

#### **2.1.1.2.1.3 Medium Shot**

The medium shot is a technique that places the human figures between the knees and the waist. This shot shows a clear picture of the objects' motions, facial expressions, and actions (Bordwell and Thompson, 2004:504).

#### **2.1.1.2.1.4 Medium Long Shot**

Bordwell and Thompson (2004:504) state that the medium-long shot captures the objects, or in this case, the human figure, from the knees up. This technique makes it possible for tall objects to fit in the frame.

#### **2.1.1.2.1.5 Long Shot**

According to Bordwell and Thompson (2004:502), a long shot features a more prominent figure or object in purpose to show the background setting of the object as the focus of the frame.

#### **2.1.1.2.1.6 Extreme Long Shot**

A figure far from the camera is captured by an extremely long shot. According to Bordwell and Thompson (2004:502), an extreme long shot is a composition in which the scale of the object presented in the frame is incredibly small.

### **2.1.2 Extrinsic Elements**

Extrinsic element is the influence of a literary work that cannot be found inside the literary work itself. It is used as the background of the story. According to Wellek and Warren (2017:65), extrinsic study may try to interpret literature in the light of its social context and its predecessors. The writer discusses the concepts of racism and how it applies to this research based on several sources.

#### **2.1.2.1 Legal Injustice**

Legal injustice can be understood as a systemic issue deeply entrenched in our society, where the minority groups face undue hardships and inequality in the eyes of the law. This form of injustice often manifests in a lack of appropriate legal solutions for the issues faced by these marginalized communities, leaving them in risky situations where their rights as citizens are inadequately protected. This notion of legal injustice is defined by Derrick Bell, a prominent legal scholar and civil rights activist, in his seminal book "Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism," published in 1992.

According to Bell, legal injustice is not a mere occurrence of isolated incidents, but rather an institutional failing of the legal system to ensure the protection of rights for all citizens, irrespective of their race, ethnicity, or social status. This failure is particularly detrimental to those from historically marginalized groups, who often find themselves at the receiving end of this systemic bias. Bell's definition, as cited in his 2018 works, presents legal injustice as "the failure of the legal system to ensure the full protection of rights for all citizens, particularly those from historically marginalized

groups" (Bell, 2018:2). This perspective on legal injustice highlights the persistent struggle for equality and fair treatment under the law, shedding light on the enduring impact of systemic racial bias within legal structures.

In his discourse, Bell presents a compelling argument, contending that the deeply ingrained historical legacy of racism and discrimination, which has been perpetuated by our legal structures and organizations, serves as the main source of legal injustice. This history, according to Bell, is not just a part of the problem — it lies at the very foundation, influencing our legal systems and shaping societal norms. He implies that the law, which should ideally function as a tool of justice, ensuring equality and safeguarding rights, has been manipulated and utilized more frequently as a method of oppression. Instead of fostering an environment of fairness, the law has been weaponized as an instrument of tyranny and exclusion. Far from promoting justice and equality, it has often been used as a means to enforce and perpetuate divisions. Bell's argument underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive review and reform of our legal systems, with an emphasis on addressing and dismantling these historical biases. His discourse is a call to action, urging us to recognize these systemic issues in order to rectify the injustices that are deeply rooted in our legal and societal structures. (Bell, 2018:35).

Furthermore, Bell (2018:37) contends that injustice in the judicial system is not merely the result of individual bias or prejudice but rather is a systemic problem that is deeply rooted in the very structure of the legal system itself. It is his contention that legal reform on its own is insufficient to address the underlying causes of legal injustice and that a more fundamental transformation of the legal system, as well as society as a whole, is required to accomplish genuine racial justice and equality. Bell's idea of legal injustice focuses, to a considerable extent, not only on the pervasive and systemic

nature of racial inequality within the legal system but also on the requirement for more comprehensive and revolutionary approaches to dealing with these issues. In other words, Bell's definition of legal injustice is primarily concerned with racial inequality.

Moreover, the writer will also provide the explanation of legal injustice by providing the information about laws in the United States regarding to a requirement of guardians or legal representatives to be present when questioning juveniles for it is going to be an important issue in *When They See Us*. According to what Sheldon H. Elsen and Arthur Rosett stated on their journal article titled *Protections for the Suspect under Miranda v Arizona*, the Miranda rights, which include the right to stay silent and the right to have an attorney present during questioning, were established in the United States by the Supreme Court of the United States in the *Miranda v. Arizona* decision. This applies to everyone, even children. State legislation, however, may have an impact on how these rights are interpreted and applied to minors (Elsen and Rosett, 1967:645).

Sheldon H. Elsen and Arthur Rosett also mentioned that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) places significant emphasis on the safeguarding of children's rights in judicial procedures on an international level. "No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment," according to Article 37 of the CRC. Additionally, every child who is deprived of their liberty has the right to immediate access to legal and other helpful assistance. Numerous legal systems recognize that juveniles are especially at risk during legal proceedings and take steps to safeguard them. To protect the juvenile's rights and interests, this might involve having a parent, legal guardian, or other representative present when the juvenile is being questioned. To find out exactly what needs to be done and what safeguards are in place for kids in a certain jurisdiction throughout the

interrogation process, it is imperative to refer to local regulations (Elsen and Rosett, 1967:648).

### **2.1.2.2 Institutional Racism**

Over the years, many theorists have been studying racism, for it is a complex social phenomenon that has been deeply ingrained in our society. However, this discussion will specifically concentrate on the concept of institutional racism, a distinct category within the broader spectrum of racism. Racism as a whole can be segmented into four categories: institutional racism, structural racism, interpersonal racism, and internalized racism. One of the key theorists who has dedicated considerable effort in studying institutional racism is Bonilla-Silva. According to his perspective, institutional racism is not a singular or isolated incident but an expansive and complex social phenomenon. It encompasses various social institutions and practices, all of which contribute to perpetuating racial disparities.

Bonilla-Silva argues that institutional racism, at its heart, is centered around the ways in which social institutions — such as educational structures, corporate entities, and the criminal justice system — inadvertently encourage and perpetuate racially biased outcomes through their routine operations. Its manifestation is characterized by policies, practices, and attitudes that systematically privilege members of the dominant group while disadvantaging those from marginalized communities. This results in a structural inequality that further solidifies racial hierarchies and exacerbates social divides (Bonilla-Silva, 2018:33). This understanding of institutional racism reveals the insidious ways in which racism is embedded in our societal structures, often operating invisibly yet decisively to influence the trajectory of individuals' lives based on their race.



As Bonilla-Silva points out, institutional racism is a particularly insidious form of racial bias, primarily because it is often subtle, unobvious, and embedded within structures and systems that are ostensibly race-neutral. Despite the subtlety of its manifestation, the consequences of institutional racism are far-reaching, profound, and can significantly limit opportunities and perpetuate hardship for entire communities of color. as it has the potential to limit possibilities and perpetuate adversity for entire communities of color. Institutional racism in education, for example, can present as unequal access to resources and money for schools in predominately minority neighborhoods, resulting in lower-quality education and fewer chances for minority students. Similarly, the criminal justice system is another domain where institutional racism is particularly pervasive. It is manifested through practices such as racial profiling and discriminatory sentencing. These practices result in a disproportionate rate of incarceration and prosecution for people of color, furthering the racial divide and perpetuating stereotypes. (Bonilla-Silva, 2018: 37). Therefore, while institutional racism might not be as overt as direct racial discrimination, its impacts are deeply entrenched and perpetuate a cycle of disadvantage that is difficult to break. It calls for a thorough interrogation of our societal structures and a collective commitment to dismantling these biases.

Moreover, according to Bonilla-Silva, institutional racism is a widespread and stealthy phenomenon that continues to significantly influence the lived experiences of people of color in modern societies. It refers to the systematic and often concealed ways in which societal institutions foster and perpetuate racial inequality and the dominance of white individuals. This form of racism is entrenched in the very fabric of our society, subtly influencing policies, practices, and attitudes in a manner that reinforces racial disparities. Bonilla Silva believes that it is possible to dismantle this deeply ingrained

form of racism through a comprehensive approach that includes effecting policy changes, challenging discriminatory practices, and transforming attitudes that implicitly favor one group over another. It demands a collective commitment to promoting equity and fairness, and a willingness to critically examine and reform the structures that perpetuate racial disparities. While the task is undoubtedly complex, Bonilla Silva's work offers a blueprint for moving towards a more equitable society. It highlights the importance of recognizing the pervasive nature of institutional racism, understanding its mechanisms, and actively working towards dismantling these deeply rooted biases (Bonilla-Silva, 2018:38).