

Representation Of Racism In The Film "Ip Man 4: The Finale"

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ABSTRACT

Differences marked by skin color, body shape, hair color, etc. are the basis for the term 'race'. Such differences should be understood as racial pluralism not superiority. This plurality ultimately leads to a tendency to make stereotypical judgements and treat others based on such considerations. This research aims to find the issue of racism depicted in a film entitled "IP Man 4: The Finale". The researchers are interested in studying further the representation of racism issues through the media film. This research uses the semiotic theory proposed by Roland Barthes xxx with a qualitative approach by making in-depth observations on each scene of the film. As a result, the researchers found that the racial practices depicted in the film "IP Man 4: The Finale" were racial separation efforts implemented at the time.

Keywords: *Film analysis, semiotic, racism, representation, Ip Man 4.*

1. Introduction

Humans who live on this earth are very diverse and each has its own characteristics. The differences that exist in humans certainly become their own characteristics between one another, such as physical characteristics, behavior, mindset, and others. All these differences and uniqueness are a gift from the creator of nature because in the midst of these differences, humans must be able to love one another. As a country, the United States of America, which has such diversity and uniqueness, has lived as one unit in one territory, one land, and under one government for approximately hundreds of years. In the beginning, there was only one indigenous tribe in the United States, the Indians, which had a small population. However, over time, people came to fill the void by bringing their various cultures. Young said (in Lestari, 2019) that diversity refers to different groups based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic class, language, lifestyle, and even sexual orientation. This diversity is called multiculturalism.

Etymologically, multiculturalism comes from the word 'multiculture' which means various cultures and 'ism' which means an understanding, ideology, or concept of thought. So etymologically, multiculturalism is an understanding of cultural diversity. According to Komalasari, Abdul Karim, & Saripudin (in Syahrman, A., & Mulyana, 2021) multiculturalism is an understanding of a way of life and outlook on life that shows the wisdom to be able to see diversity and differences as a fundamental reality in life. Due to diversity and lack of understanding of multiculturalism, social problems arise. Including the problem of racial discrimination that occurred in the United States.

The term 'race' first appeared because of differences in physical attributes such as skin color, hair color, body shape, and other body parts that can be seen by the eye. Oommen (in Al Hafizh, 2016) classifies human races into 3 major groups, namely the Mongoloid race or yellow race, the Negroid race or black race, and the Caucasoid race or white race. Based on the classification of race in anthropological studies, it does not place race in a hierarchical position or place one race superior to another. But in its development, race becomes a social construction when certain people believe that their race is superior to others, this belief then encourages certain racial groups to dominate and dominate other races that are considered inferior. This belief is referred to as racism (Al Hafizh, 2016).

History has recorded how complicated the journey is when it comes to racial practices. In the United States, racial issues have become the saddest domestic issue and a form of failure for the country known as the superpower. To this day, racialization practices still occur frequently in the United States. Walter Lippman first introduced the concept of stereotyping in 1920 as an attitude of generalizing one's personal attributes into certain groups (Kuncoro, 2023). Griffith & Hewstone (in Kuncoro, 2023) state that stereotypes are shortcuts of mental processes in understanding others or making judgments about other people or groups. As a result, one's personality cannot be separated from the group because of the stereotype. This has the potential to have a major impact on viewers' views and understanding of other races, as well as contributing to the reinforcement of racial bias and discrimination.

Viewers' attitudes towards people of color can be negatively influenced by popular media, especially movies. Racial stereotypes in this form of media can reinforce pre-existing racial anxieties and lead to the formation of biased attitudes towards people of different races (Yuen, 2016). In the early days of Hollywood, Asian characters, for example, were often shown as reclusive, menacing villains or humorous caricatures. This underrepresentation and misrepresentation of different racial and ethnic groups can lead to continued racial bias and discrimination. The media's tendency to propagate racial stereotypes can lead to popular support for harsher punishments for people of color (Yuen, 2016).

Almost all racism is committed by white people because they have the power to control anything, but the world is changing, and people are trying to improve their status in society. The more racist white people are, the more other white people are trying to maintain their self-esteem to give a good impression, although behind it all, it is just an affection and the author assumes that racism can have an impact on the perpetrators and victims. In the development of technology that occurs from time to time, the means of conveying messages to the audience can be done in various ways. Movies can be used as a means of conveying messages. Movies are a portrait of the society in which they are made. According to Marliana, film is also one of the effective mass communication media in disseminating information and is a form of work displayed in a story that is packaged with audio visual (in Awiyat, 2009). Movies from a sociological perspective can be seen in terms of their function. Instilling values or social norms, passing on cultural heritage from one generation to the next, is the function of the film in addition to entertainment alone. Movies can also be used as historical evidence. Films can also be seen from the perspective of social conflict, films are used in instilling dominant ideas owned by the ruling party with various objectives that follow, ranging from seemingly contradictory ideologies, propaganda, and other types of social settings (Hutomo, 2016). Movies have great reach, realism, emotional influence, and also popularity and are real. Movies are considered to be able to influence audiences, so movies become the media chosen by society or individuals to achieve certain interests or are used as a means to achieve national goals (McQuail, 1997).

In this study, the object to be studied is the film *IP Man 4* directed by Wilson Yip which was published in 2019 with a box office revenue of around 176 million USD. This movie is an action, biography, and drama genre with a rating of 7/10 (IMDB, n.d.). Starring some famous actors namely, Donnie Yen as the main character or IP Man; Scott Adkins as Barton Geddes; Danny Kwok-Kwan Chan as Bruce Lee; Vannes Wi as Hartman Wu; Jim Liu as Ming; Kent Cheng as Bob; Yue Wu as Wan Zong Hua; and several other actors. *IP Man 4: The finale* opens in 1964, after the death of the master's wife.

At this time, Ip Man (Donnie Yen) discovered that he had nasopharyngeal cancer due to smoking. Knowing that his son, Ip Ching (He Ye), was expelled from school for fighting with a bully, Ip Man decides to leave for San Francisco, United States. He hopes his son can continue his studies abroad. He then leaves Diep Chinh with his friend, Fat Bo (Kent Cheng), while traveling to San Francisco and promises to call him every day. Meanwhile, Ip Man's student Bruce Lee (Danny Chan Kwok-Kwan) is making the San Francisco martial arts community angry. Bruce Lee's decision to open a Wing Chun school, teach non-Chinese martial arts, and write martial arts books in English was considered out of bounds. His friend Leung Kan (Kanin Ngo) tells Ip Man that he needs a letter of recommendation from the China United Charity Association to allow Ip Ching to study abroad in America. However, Grandmaster Wan Zhong-Hua (Wu Yue), president of the association, refused to grant a letter of recommendation to Ip Ching. Apparently, Grand Master Wan felt uncomfortable with Bruce Lee's lack of challenge to his behavior and activities in San Francisco, while other grandmasters turned against Bruce Lee. (Apriza, n.d.) Ip Man, who is visiting the future Ip Chung School in San Francisco, runs into Yonah (Vanda Margraf), the son of Master Wan, the victim of racist bullying by classmate Becky. After helping Yonah, Ip Man drove the teenager home. However, Van Master accused Ip Man of using Yonah to get a letter of recommendation for Diep Chung. Meanwhile, Becky lies to her father

that she was bullied by Yonah. Her mother urged her father, Andrew Walters, an immigration and naturalization agent, to deport the Association of Masters and all those associated with the group. At the same time, Hartman (Vanness Wu ex-F4), a US Navy sergeant, tries to convince his racist superiors to adopt Chinese martial arts as part of his military training.

Researchers want to further study the movie *Ip Man 4* regarding the issue of racism, because the movie shows several scenes that are considered to contain racist elements. A number of scholarly studies have been conducted to investigate the types of racial and discursive strategies used in films. The issue of racism in this film is the purpose of researchers to look for signs and symptoms in it. In addition, racism is a form of discrimination against a race, including ethnocentrism, which is the subject of another research. Although racism is not a new issue in academic research, many disciplines study the issue in depth, including linguistics. These studies aim to better understand racism in film and how it can influence people's views about a race or ethnic group.

2. Method

This research employs a descriptive qualitative methodology, using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach to look at the symbolic representations used in the depiction of racism in a film, as well as the underlying messages aimed at the audience. The chosen film, "*Ip Man 4: The Finale*," directed by Wilson Yip, combines authentic stories of racism with fictional narrative elements, making it an interesting subject to investigate (FIORENITA, 2020). This research combines two different types of data: primary and secondary. Primary data includes selected scenes from the film that is the focus of the research, which serves as the main subject for analysis using Roland Barthes' semiotic framework. In conjunction, the research draws on secondary sources such as books, journals, articles, and previous research. Documentation records are the main research instruments used. The data collected through these means was then thoroughly analysed, which involved attentive observation of the film's scenes, settings and characters.

3. Result/s and Discussion

Using Roland Barthes' theory of semiotics, the researchers got some data, and the data was in the form of signs that showed racism issues in the movie "*IP MAN 4: The Final*". The first data have denotation and connotation mark, the first mark or denotation mark is in the form of a region of origin; This first mark can be seen at 14:47 and indicates that Kung fu should only be learned by Chinese and outsiders should not learn them. Wushu, the Chinese martial art form known as kung fu in the west, is an important part of Chinese culture. It reflects the character of Chinese people, and applies their theories and principles to combat (Wang, 2012). Which in the scene, when Ip Man comes to the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, he engages in a debate with the association's chairman, Wan Zhong-Hua, because Mr. Wan says Kung fu is only for the Chinese and not for other races.

Picture 1. Wan Zhong-Hua restrict Western (American) to learn Kung Fu



The second mark for the first data or connotation mark is in the form of Chinese people that thing their martial arts is better than the other. It can be seen in 14:47 that when Ip Man comes to the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, he engages in a debate with the association's chairman, Wan Zhong-Hua, because Mr. wan and other master of martial arts say kung fu is only for the Chinese and not for other races. This dialogue indicates that racism can also trigger victims of racism to do the same because of a sense of resentment or concern for the dignity of their race. Also,

Chinese people don't want get bite by person they teach, this is shown in the same scene where Mr. wan says "animal still animal, they don't know how to thanks." Nad there is another dialog by Mr. wan says "are you ever heard a story Mr. Dong Guo?" this story tells about a man that save a wolf that cornered by hunters, but the first thing after the man save the wolf, the wolf hunt the man and eat him alive. This dialog show that Chinese people Stereotyping Americans as ungrateful.

Picture 2. Sergeant Barton underestimating Kung Fu in front of an Asian person



This thing happened because of the difference in the area of origin between Chinese people and Americans, or precisely westerners, who cause differences in skin color between the two regions to make immigrants feel inferior, or in this film, Chinese people feel inferior, which actually makes the people there feel superior. Immigrants continue to be portrayed as an existential threat to the U.S., particularly illegal immigrants. Where they are also considered detrimental to the US economy because it burdens the country, become criminals who seize American jobs, and lower minimum wage standards considering the number of job seekers from the immigrant class is higher than the available jobs (Lange, 2019). This is what makes Americans skeptical of immigrants, namely Chinese citizens if based on this study.

The second data is a sign of denotation in the form of habit; this sign shows that the Chinese are weak even though they use their martial arts, and the Americans are strong with the martial arts they borrowed from Japan, namely karate. This second piece of data can be seen in the scene at 54:04, where a commander of troops in the military underestimates the martial arts usually used by Chinese people and says that karate is stronger and better than Chinese martial arts. This scene shows how behavior is used to show power and dominance over the Chinese ethnic group and perpetuate the myth that Chinese people are submissive and weak.

In the second scene in Figure 2, there is a scene with a marine corps military base in the background. The scene shows Sergeant Barton Geddes rejecting the use of kung fu martial arts as close-range self-defense for marines. Staff Sergeant Hartman Wu, who studied with Bruce Lee, was very interested in introducing Wing Chun martial arts into the US Marine Corps. He assumed that Wing Chun martial arts could be effective when used as a weapon for close combat in war. However, Sergeant Barton Geddes refused because he thought kung fu was just a joke.

In analyzing the second data in picture 2, the researcher analyzed the scene using Roland Barthes' semiotics. Researchers found connotative signs such as symbols, texts and indices that were associated with ideological and socio-cultural aspects. This sign shows a rejection of the kung fu martial arts commonly used by Chinese people. In this scene, Sergeant Barton Geddes, who is a

jingoistic weapons sergeant from the US Marine Corps, refuses the use of Wing Chun martial arts offered by staff sergeant Hartman Wu. This rejection was carried out because of the suspicion that kung fu martial arts were useless and weak. This presumption was born from the assumption that the martial arts possessed by Chinese people were weak martial arts, like the white people's opinion of Chinese people who viewed the Chinese race as an inferior race and below the white race. This second piece of data can be seen in the scene at minute 54:04, where a troop commander in the military belittles the martial arts commonly used by Chinese people and says that karate is stronger and better than Chinese martial arts. This scene shows how behavior is used to demonstrate power and dominance over ethnic Chinese and perpetuates the myth that Chinese people are docile and weak.

Third data is in the form of appearance marks, shown in 35:51. Visual cues reinforce the stereotype that Chinese people are inferior to Americans; for example, in the scene where Wan Zhong-Hua's daughter Yonah is mocked by the school's fellow cheerleader Becky, she says that Yonah is a monkey. This mockery relates to the stereotype of Chinese people, who are narrow-eyed and have a snub nose, so they are mocked as monkeys. For another reason, Yonah is not worthy of being the leader of the cheerleaders in her school because, based on Becky's view, she feels that she is the worthiest and deserving leader of the school cheerleaders and Yonah is being teased and bullied by Becky, who is upset with Yonah. This continues with the act of racism, which is also the trigger and answer to why Becky hates Yonah so much. By showing the bullying scene, the film can help raise awareness about the issues raised by the film and make the audience empathize with and understand what the victim of bullying feels when experiencing it (Wallace, 2019). Therefore, this scene is shown so that we, as the audience, empathize with what happened to Yonah and can also raise public awareness about the badness of racism.

Also, Becky always bullies Yonah for being an immigrant, which ultimately falls into an act of racism. This act can be referred to as racial bullying, which occurs when someone is belittled, instigated, ridiculed, intimidated, or humiliated because of factors such as their physical appearance or manner of speech, ethnic background, and religious or cultural practices (Victoria State Government Department of Education, 2023). This can have profound effects and take a longer time to reverse than impartial bullying (Wu, Q., & Jia, 2023). From this scene, it is clear that Yonah has always been subjected to racial bullying repeatedly by Becky and has experienced a very strong impact because it continues to happen in her life. In this scene, we can see a very strong feud between Becky and Yonah. This is related to the bullying as well as acts of racism that Becky always does to Yonah in the school environment. In this scene, there is harassment, namely racial harassment. According to MacPherson (in University of Leeds, n.d.), racial harassment is done to intimidate and harass an individual or a group because of their ethnic origin, skin color, race, religion, or nationality. This action is always carried out by Becky as a symbol of the dominance of strong white people over other races. Furthermore, in Becky's view, she considers herself a born and native person in the United States. Yonah himself is considered an immigrant and should be expelled to Asia. This is due to the racist understanding that the United States should not be inhabited or even rivaled by immigrants in the country. This is due to the culture that grew up in society at that time, which was affected by structural racism by white supremacists. This can be referred to as structural racism (Lander, 2021). This form of racism is also present in the social, economic, educational, and political systems of society (Lander, 2021). In accordance with what is in this scene, we can know that Becky has also been affected by the structural racism that grows in the world of education.

Lastly, Becky bullies Yonah as an act of intimidation while signaling to her friends that she can be superior, look strong, and be worthy in the eyes of others. In addition, Becky indirectly tells Yonah that she does not fit the American standard of beauty by mocking her monkey-like physique. According to Nell Irvin Painter (Donnella, 2019), in the post-World War II years, there was a lot of circulation about beauty standards, stating that Caucasians were the right standard of beauty. Even some theorists at that time, such as Christoph Meiners and Johann Blumenbach, said so. In addition, this beauty standard has also become a weapon for white supremacists to appear superior to other races. Besides that, racial harassment also occurs in this scene. Becky does this to make Yonah feel intimidated and weak in front of her.

The fourth data point is in the scene at 23:18, where Leung, Ip Man's friend, tries to help Ip Man find a letter of recommendation by meeting with his American friend, but Leung's request is rejected because Ip Man is Chinese or of another nationality. Ip Man's friends, who are considered dangerous because most of them are Chinese, Coming and living in America was a problem, so the Americans refused Leung's request for a letter of recommendation. The negative stereotype that exists about ethnic Chinese being good at business and being seen as stingy, calculating, cunning, and deceitful affects their lives. In this scene, Ip Man does not come to introduce himself or talk. Negative stereotypes towards Chinese immigrants living in America prevent ethnic Chinese from having the right and freedom to coexist with Americans.

Wight represents a white American character who gives negative stereotypes to Chinese immigrants, especially to Ip Man. It can be seen that Wight demeans Leung as a Chinese person. Wight does not show a friendly attitude especially to Ip Man, Wight shows a discriminatory attitude towards Chinese people by considering Chinese people as illegal immigrants, even a fugitive. The issue of immigrants has been an important part of the history of US politics. The American value of being the land of the free is embodied in the poem on the Statue of Liberty plaque, which depicts the US as a land of hope for the poor, the oppressed, and those who are deprived of their rights in their home countries and seek a better life in the US. Negative views and stereotypes of immigrants came to the surface during the 2016 US presidential campaign. Republican candidate Donald Trump delivered a series of anti-immigrant rhetoric and xenophobic hate speech against all immigrant groups. Among the immigrant groups Trump denounced most in his election campaign speeches were Mexican immigrants and Muslim immigrants. This can be seen in Trump's statement that illegal immigrants from Mexico are criminals, drug dealers, rapists and only bring problems to US national security (Santoso as cited in Usman, A., Moenir, H. D., & Nanda, 2022). In line with this, immigrants continue to be portrayed as an existential threat to the US, especially illegal immigrants. They are also perceived to be detrimental to the US economy by burdening the state, becoming criminals who take American jobs, and lowering minimum wage standards as the number of job seekers from the immigrant class is higher than the available jobs. They are also considered to threaten the well-being of the US society by describing them as part of a "humanitarian and security crisis". Where they also engage in drug smuggling, human trafficking, robbery, fraud and prostitution (U.S. Department of Justice Drug Enforcement Administration as cited in Usman, A., Moenir, H. D., & Nanda, 2022). It can be formulated that America discriminates against Illegal immigrants, especially IP Man as an immigrant from China. Mr. Wight gives a negative stereotype to ip man that he is a fugitive or criminal. Based on this because America considers immigrants to be criminals, drug dealers, rapists, and also as carriers of problems for the security of US citizens. They (the US) also consider immigrants to be detrimental to the US economy and as criminals who take American jobs.

In the fifth data point, at 03:30, we are shown when Ip Man's students show their emotions when Bruce (a black person) speaks English, which is a western language, and Ip Man's students (Asian) are not happy about it because they don't understand what Bruce said. The students of master Ip who were Asian, showed discrimination against Bruce, western and black. This part belongs to the connotation section, where when Bruce used English, Master Ip's students felt upset because they didn't know what Bruce was talking about, and because Master Ip's students were in their own territory (China) and understood kung fu, they felt superior in their own area. Because of that, the students of Master Ip began to mock a little bit with their verbal language, Chinese (Galtung, 1990). Not only did they, after they mocked Bruce, begin to show attitude to engage Bruce to fight (Galtung, 1990). Bruce felt this was a complete misunderstanding, and Bruce didn't want any trouble with them. But Master Ip's students think Bruce's getting more challenging, and that's where the duel happens until Master Ip came and stop them. This part shows that there are indications of a denotation of racism that is happening in Asia against the West. The Asians feel superior in their own territory, and vice versa.

4. Conclusion

This research is based on the semiotic theory of Roland Barthes used to see the signs contained in the movie IP Man 4: The Final, about discrimination. Roland Barthes' semiotic theory of thought emphasizes

Denotation and Connotation. From the movie text, it can be concluded: (1.) This thing happened because of the difference in the area of origin between Chinese people and Americans, or precisely westerners, who cause differences in skin color between the two regions to make immigrants feel inferior, or in this film, Chinese people feel inferior, which actually makes the people there feel superior. (2.) This scene shows how behavior is used to demonstrate power and dominance over ethnic Chinese and perpetuates the myth that Chinese people are docile and weak. (3.) Becky indirectly tells Yonah that she does not fit the American standard of beauty by mocking her monkey-like physique. (4.) Mr. Wight gives a negative stereotype to ip man that he is a fugitive or criminal. Based on this because America considers immigrants to be criminals, drug dealers, rapists, and also as carriers of problems for the security of US citizens. They (the US) also consider immigrants to be detrimental to the US economy and as criminals who take American jobs. This part shows that there are indications of a denotation of racism that is happening in Asia against the West. The Asians feel superior in their own territory, and vice versa.

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