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EXPOSING RACIAL STEREOTYPES IN KATE MESSNER'S BREAKOUT

David Pradana
Program Studi Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Pamulang
Email: davidpradana604@gmail.com

ABSTRAK

Penelitian yang berjudul Exposing Racial Stereotypes in Kate Messner's Breakout ini membahas tentang stereotip rasial yang terjadi antara dua ras yang berbeda, yaitu ras yang memiliki kulit putih dan ras yang memiliki kulit hitam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana stereotip rasial terjadi dalam novel terpilih dan bagaimana stereotip tersebut mempengaruhi pola kehidupan karakter utama yang terdapat pada novel. Objek dari penelitian ini adalah novel yang berjudul Breakout karya dari Kate Messner. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif yang menyajikan analisis dengan teks narasi dalam tulisan. Teori yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini menggunakan teori dari Stuart Hall (1997) Studi ini membahas stereotip rasial dan bagaimana tokoh utama menghadapi stereotip rasial tersebut. Stereotip rasial muncul dari perbedaan sosial, budaya, dan psikologis dalam lingkungan. Dalam buku ini, stereotip rasial yang ditemukan adalah bahwa orang kulit hitam dianggap tidak beradab, berbahaya, tidak patuh, tidak setara, dan pada dasarnya malas atau tidak mau bekerja. Tokoh utama menghadapi stereotip rasial dengan mempertahankan pendapat bahwa orang kulit hitam tidak selalu diremehkan, menjadi jurnalis untuk menulis tentang apa yang terjadi di lingkungan dengan stereotip rasial, dan membuktikan bahwa orang kulit hitam tidak selalu jahat dengan menjadi orang yang sukses.

Kata kunci: stereotip rasial, representasi, kelompok kulit putih, kelompok kulit hitam, novel.

ABSTRACT

The study, entitled Exposing Racial Stereotypes in Kate Messner's Breakout, discusses racial stereotypes that occur between two different races, namely the white race and the black race. This study aims to examine how racial stereotypes occur in the selected novel and how these stereotypes affect the life patterns of the main characters in the novel. The object of this study is the novel entitled Breakout by Kate Messner. This study uses a qualitative method that presents analysis with narrative text in writing. The theory used in this study uses the theory of Stuart Hall (1997). Racial stereotypes emerge from difference social, culture and psychological in environment. In this study, racial stereotypes found that black people as uncivilized, dangerous, disobedient group, unequal, and black people as inherently lazy or unwilling to work. Furthermore, the main characters deal with racial stereotypes by maintaining opinion that black people are not always underestimated, becoming a journalist to writing about what happened in the environment with racial stereotypes, and prove that black people are not always bad by becoming successful people.

Keywords: racial stereotypes, representation, white groups, black groups, novel.

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INTRODUCTION

Racialism is an act of emphasis on a certain group that spreads the doctrine that there are differences between races, tribes, skin colors or where a society comes from, that a certain group is more powerful and has the right to regulate other groups. According to Feagin (2020), the skin color of humans in society is still the reason racism occurs. This kind of perspective gives rise to the belief that there is cause and effect between skin color differences in one race which is superior to other races. Since a long time ago, the issue of racism was a case that should be resolved. The statement arose that racism is dangerous for society, especially for those who are looked down upon by other racial groups. Furthermore, racism creates social inequality by limiting access to opportunities, resources, and fair treatment for marginalized racial groups. Therefore, understanding and challenging racist beliefs is crucial to promoting social justice, equality, and harmonious relationships among diverse communities.

In various countries that are not committed to eradicating racist conflicts, this creates injustice that is clearly visible in the eyes of the public, officers that behave badly towards different races and are not seriously investigated do not receive retribution for what have done. According to Vijay (2019), racism that occurs between whites and Blacks caused by the supremacy of the local government over white people, giving rise to insults and offensive behavior towards Black people. Even received retribution, just only received light punishment, but victims of bad behavior by officers do not receive protection from the writerities from threats and intimidation. When people socialize with other people the most look at is external appearance, of course skin color and facial shape are the things that are most likely to be used as a reason for racism, especially if the society lives in an area where there is still a strong culture of racism. It should be emphasized that genetics is a natural thing that it is impossible for someone to choose, so it is a very unfortunate thing to receive bad treatment from other people because of skin color.

Stereotypes from dominant group in society will have more power over other groups. Referring to Bordalo et al (2016) Stereotypes are views about beliefs that occur because of differences between groups, depending on the beliefs and characteristics of a group. Different groups have different impacts on stereotypes, the way humans view other groups includes characteristics according to the culture and customs carried out by that group. Stereotypes and society are interrelated, as stereotypes govern social order. Through stereotypes, society categorizes individuals or groups into categories that are considered fixed, thus facilitating the process of social judgment. Stereotypes not only shape society's perspective on certain groups but also serve to perpetuate existing power relations and social hierarchies.

A person's prejudices cannot be controlled, such as good prejudices or bad prejudices, but bad prejudices can be minimized by providing education about the impact of having bad prejudices on other individual or groups. Stated by Blumer (1958), prejudice is a basic feeling that every human individual has. This is like one of the human characteristics whose existence cannot be denied, which starts from one person's prejudice and becomes prejudice within a group. Therefore, if this conflict is not based on self-awareness, racism will always exist on this earth. Only harm results from having bad prejudice which causes intimidated groups to receive bad treatment, violence, and even unfair laws. According to Wetherell (1996), racial stereotypes conflict is a social issue. Until now, it still exists and is clearly visible in the community. Racism will be a source of crime that will cause a country to experience various other problems, not only that, psychological and economic problems will also be affected by the conflict.

Stereotypes are believed to be perspectives directed at a group within society. Stereotypes tend to be negative, leading to prejudice and discrimination against marginalized groups. According to Hall (1997) black people do not get respect for race and diversity. Black people often

lack respect and equal treatment in society due to their racial and ethnic differences. This stereotypes demonstrates that racial diversity not appreciated as part of a social life that should uphold equality and respect for all human beings. In certain environments, Black people still face negative stereotypes based on their skin color. These perceptions can lead to them being treated unfairly, belittled, or perceived differently from other racial groups. Black people were represented through reductive and rigid stereotypes, such as depictions of brutality, laziness, and the inability to govern themselves. These stereotypes then served to justify the practice of slavery, territorial conquest, and social and political control over African society. Thus, racial stereotypes against Black people not only shaped social perceptions but also reinforced a racial hierarchy that placed Europeans in a dominant position.

The difficulty of finding work and trust is a frightening threat because the future that should be everyone's right has been limited by those who feel that certain ethnic and racial groups are superior and respected. Stated by Myers (2005), the treatment of racism has an impact on limiting resources based on race or ethnicity. Earning money is something that is necessary for every head of the family or the backbone of the family just to buy the basic necessities of clothing, food and shelter. However, if every region has racial stereotypes, it will only get rejection and disappointment. Things like this should be avoided, because factors like this can actually give rise to crimes that will emerge.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was a more in-depth observation of literary works in order to understand the entire content of literary works from different perspectives. The writer used a qualitative approach to collect information and identify events that occurred in the literary work entitled Breakout by Kate Messner in order to get a better explanation of the work. Clear and understandable explanations were necessary so that the message implied in the work could be conveyed effectively. According to Patton (2005), qualitative research involved in-depth observation of cases that occurred in the field and produced clear and meaningful research. To gain a significant understanding of this literary work, qualitative methods were utilized in this study.

Data Source

The data source of this study was a novel entitled Breakout by Kate Messner. The novel was inspired by a true event that occurred in New York in 2015. The novel was published in June 2018 by Bloomsbury Children’s Book in the United States. The data source that the writer used to analyze in this study were obtained from conversations, phrases, and sentences in the novel that contained racial stereotypes.

Data Collection

There were several steps taken by the writer to collect the data, which served as the basis for conducting the analysis. The first step was reading a novel written by Kate Messner entitled Breakout. Next, the writer read it again to determine the issues contained in the book. After carefully examining the novel, the writer identified racism as the central issue discussed. Based on these theories, the writer developed a systematic theoretical framework and organized to support the analysis. Finally, the conclusion was made based on collected data and strengthened with relevant theories related to the discussion of racial stereotypes.

Data Analysis

The data used for analysis were derived from the data that had been collected. The writer read the novel to identify the issues that happened in the novel. After read the novel, the writer found that racism was one of the main issues discussed. By used Hall's (1997) theory, the writer analyzed to identify the issues presented in the novel Breakout by Kate Messner, particularly those related to racial stereotypes. This study used narrative elements to facilitate the analytical process by applying relevant supporting theories. With these theories, the writer examined the issues depicted in the novel and the ways in which the protagonist responded to racial stereotypes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Racial Stereotypes Depicted in Breakout

Following Hall's (1997) account of stereotyping as a practice that fixes difference and positions certain groups as the "Other," the analysis identifies five stereotypes of Black people in Breakout: as uncivilized, dangerous, disobedient, unequal, and inherently lazy. Each is discussed below with its key textual evidence.

Black people are first portrayed as uncivilized. Hall (1997, p. 243) describes a binary opposition in which whiteness signifies refinement and civilization while Blackness signifies savagery. In the novel, this opposition appears as routine surveillance. Elidee reports that a white shopkeeper made her leave her backpack behind the counter "so the white lady in charge could make sure I wasn't stealing" (Messner, 2018, p. 354). Elsewhere, a teacher disciplines her tone as disrespectful, although Elidee was only defending her view (Messner, 2018, p. 189). In both cases Elidee is treated as someone who needs control, which matches Hall's (1997, p. 243) claim that Black people are positioned as requiring regulation by the dominant group.

The stereotype of Black people as dangerous is clearest in two incidents. Nora's mother refuses to let her visit Elidee's home because she "didn't know Elidee's family" (Messner, 2018, p. 293), a refusal that Nora herself links to race, as "the only thing different with Elidee is that she is black" (Messner, 2018, p. 306). More seriously, out-of-town searchers assume that any running Black man must be the escaped inmate, even though Mr. Washington is a local corrections officer (Messner, 2018, p. 304). Hall (1997, p. 226) notes that stereotypes are tied to anxiety and fear about difference. Here the fear shapes concrete behavior, namely the police's readiness to use force against a man who has committed no offense. Elidee names this pattern when she lists the incidents that make her feel unwelcome (Messner, 2018, p. 460).

Black people are also stereotyped as a disobedient group. The town expresses support for law enforcement through blue ribbons and a thank-you sign, but Elidee declines to take part because she does not know the local police and has seen police violence in her old neighborhood (Messner, 2018, pp. 194–195). Her classmates read this as defiance, and she is warned to adjust her tone (Messner, 2018, p. 195). Hall (1997, p. 251) argues that Black youth are stereotyped as uncontrollable, so an individual choice is generalized into a trait of the whole group. The novel thus shows how a dominant group's unwritten rules turn non-participation into deviance.

Unequal treatment appears in both severe and seemingly benign forms. Sean cites Tamir Rice, a twelve-year-old shot by police because he held a toy gun, as an example of police bias, and notes that the outcome would have differed for a white child (Messner, 2018, p. 304). In a lighter register, Walker and Cole's remarks that "black people are always fast" and "so they can outrun the cops" (Messner, 2018, p. 187) turn an apparent compliment into criminalization. This corresponds to Hall's (1997, p. 231) observation that sporting excellence is a field where Black achievement is celebrated yet remains ambivalent, because praise still reduces people to a

physical type. Walker's defense ("Paul Washington's one of our best friends") further illustrates how denial of prejudice coexists with stereotyping.

Finally, Black people are portrayed as inherently lazy or unwilling to work. Nora's surprise that Elidee volunteers ("you didn't work on the sign in class," Messner, 2018, p. 217) shows an assumption that Elidee is unwilling to contribute. This reflects Hall's (1997, p. 244) point that Black people are often represented as naturally lazy. The stereotype is reinforced when Mrs. Jablonski dismisses Elidee and her mother from the volunteer work (Messner, 2018, p. 219). Nora later calls Elidee "a jerk," a judgment she applies in the same breath to Walker and Cole (Messner, 2018, p. 219), which signals the beginning of her critical awareness.

Taken together, these five stereotypes show a consistent pattern. Elidee's ordinary behavior is read through the lens of her brother's imprisonment and her race, so she is treated as a member of a suspect category rather than as an individual. This supports Hall's (1997, p. 258) argument that stereotyping maintains a "symbolic frontier" between the normal and the deviant.

Characters' Reactions to Racial Stereotyping

The three main characters respond to racial stereotyping in distinct ways. Elidee responds through refusal, private writing, friendship, and achievement; Nora through civil disobedience, persuasion, and defense of Elidee; and Lizzie through documentation and data-based inquiry.

Elidee's response moves from resistance and withdrawal to engagement. She first resists symbolic participation in what she sees as a one-sided display of loyalty (Messner, 2018, p. 195). She then turns to poetry as a safe outlet. "I Wear the Mask" presents her humility as a "disguise" and her environment as a place she "despises" (Messner, 2018, p. 153), while "Home" expresses her sense of exclusion (Messner, 2018, p. 154). Her stance shifts over time. She comes to accept friendship while noting that white friends must be taught "how not to be racist" (Messner, 2018, p. 314), comforts Nora's brother Owen following her mother's teaching (Messner, 2018, p. 334), and joins Nora and Lizzie's team to win the race (Messner, 2018, p. 390). The last strategy echoes Hall's (1997, p. 253) description of talented Black individuals who counter the stereotype through achievement. However, it also places the burden of changing perceptions on the stereotyped person, which the novel implicitly questions.

Nora, by contrast, offers dissent from within the dominant group. As a police officer's daughter, she uses her position to challenge stereotypes. She disobeys her mother and visits Elidee, explicitly calling this "civil disobedience" (Messner, 2018, p. 311), and rebukes Walker and Cole ("You can't just say that… that all black people are a certain way," Messner, 2018, p. 187). Her persuasion is partly effective, since her mother eventually praises Elidee as "kind" and "articulate" (Messner, 2018, p. 342). Yet this praise itself carries a trace of surprise, which shows how deeply the stereotype persists even as it softens. Nora's early silence with Elidee (Messner, 2018, p. 135) also shows that good intentions do not remove awkwardness.

Lizzie addresses stereotyping through observation and evidence. She notices that no one else leaves a backpack behind the counter (Messner, 2018, p. 351), records interviews (Messner, 2018, p. 67), and charts the racial composition of inmates and corrections officers (Messner, 2018, pp. 56, 89). Sean confirms the data and attributes them to bias in the criminal justice system (Messner, 2018, p. 89), and Lizzie concludes that the pattern is "pretty messed up" (Messner, 2018, p. 93). Her approach links individual incidents to structural inequality, which extends the novel's critique beyond interpersonal prejudice.

Overall, the characters' reactions reveal that stereotypes are challenged at three levels: personal resilience (Elidee), interpersonal dissent (Nora), and structural inquiry (Lizzie). The novel

suggests that none of these is sufficient alone, which parallels Hall's (1997) view that stereotypes persist because they are embedded in power relations rather than individual attitudes.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the findings, this study concludes that the racial stereotypes experienced by Black people in the novel Breakout include being uncivilized, dangerous, disobedient, unequal, and inherently lazy or unwilling to work. Black people are considered uncivilized due to their lack of knowledge. Black people are also considered dangerous because of the high number of crimes in the neighborhood caused by Black people, which makes all Black people dangerous. Then, Black people are considered disobedient because they do not comply with the rules that apply in the neighborhood. Next, Black people experience unequal treatment from those around them because the majority of the neighborhood is white, and white people have more power than Black people. White people believe that Black people are unwilling to work, which results in Black people being treated differently from white people. Thus, this study confirms that racial stereotypes remain a problem that influences social interactions and power structures in the story.

The main characters in this novel confront racial stereotypes through various means of resistance and adaptation. These include rejecting negative stereotypes and adopting a neutral stance, to resisting all forms of insults and proving ability to excel. Elidee strives to demonstrate her abilities and self-worth, rejecting the negative judgments directed at her. Nora strives to become journalists to see and report on everything happening in the city and to prove racial stereotypes completely false. Equally important, the moral support of other characters is one of the reasons they maintain their self-esteem, strengthen their integrity, and fight against the unfair treatment they experience.

Based on this study, the writer recommends that future researchers analyze the issues of racial discrimination within the novel to gain a deeper understanding of racial issues. This understanding is expected to broaden insights into literary works that focus on racial discrimination.

The reader can also use this study for educating the people in environment, which analyzes racial stereotypes. Given that this study demonstrates how the main character confronts racial stereotypes, more in-depth education is needed on how the main characters respond to psychological developments. An understanding of social identity theory, psychology, and character development analysis can be used in research to gain a deeper understanding of how racial stereotypes behavior can influence the perspectives, behaviors, emotions, and psychology. Furthermore, reader can expand understanding of the analysis by comparing the novel Breakout with other literary works that also contain similar themes. Comparative studies of the representation of racial stereotypes, as well as differences in character responses in various young adult novels, can provide a broader understanding of the issue of racism in literature.

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