Leksema
JURNAL BAHASA DAN SASTRA

Racial Problems in Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the problems of racism in the novel *On Beauty*. The analysis focuses on both individual and systemic racism represented in the novel as well as the critical position of the author. It employed Stuart Hall theory under qualitative method of analysis. The textual analysis was made to the narratives and dialogues in the novel which constitute racism in their meanings. It was concerned with how racism happens in the storyline. Meanwhile, the contextual analysis was carried out by using related references to supports the findings and the researchers' arguments. The result showed that black women still accepted negative stereotypes and became the objects of white people's oppressions. They were mistreated despite the application of the law on equal protection for women and minorities. In 2000s, systemic racism continued and made it even harder for black people to get the same treatment as the whites. They suffered from the policies, particularly educational policies which had led to the increase of the poverty rate of black people.

Key words: individual racism, systemic racism, black, white

INTRODUCTION

On Beauty is a novel about a pair of feuding families, the Belseys and the Kipps. The Belsey family consists of university professor Howard, a white man, his African-American wife Kiki, Jerome, Zora, and Levi. The Belseys stays at a fictional college called Wellington. Meanwhile Howard Belsey's enemy is Monty Kipps, a Trinidadian living in Britain with his wife Carlene and his children Victoria and Michael. This novel is set mainly in New England and partly in London.

A college town with most white people has caused conflicts to many characters in the novel, especially Kiki. The problems of race is generally characterized by color, ethnicity, language, culture, and religion based on a hierarchy of superiority or inferiority along human lines. This hierarchy can be constructed and characterized in various ways based on local or colonial history. The elite reproduces the practice of racism in ethnic or racial groups against groups that are considered 'inferior' below the human line (Grosfoguel, 2016). On the other hand, race is different from racism. The race is generally understood as a social construct. After all, the race has extraordinary significance in social reality (Clair & Denis 2015). There are two forms of racism, namely individual racism and systemic or institutional racism. The former constitutes a bias and stereotype that generalize individuals or groups based on race, whereas the latter refers to all forms of the interactions of policies, programs, and practices from different institutions that lead to inequalities of positions and acceptance of rights for communities of color. These inequalities occur based on the context of racialized historical and cultural conditions that intentionally or unintentionally give benefits to white people and, in contrary, bring harms to people of color. The question underlying this research is what individual racism is experienced by Kiki as a

black woman and systemic racism is experienced by Carl Thomas as an uneducated black man.

There are some previous researches related to this research, such as a researchwritten by Pengerti (2019) entitled *Racial Passing in American Racism on Sinclair Lewis'* Kingsblood Royal. This research discusses racial passing that happens in the United States 1940s in *Kingsblood Royal*, a novel written by Sinclair Lewis. The main problem of *Kingsblood Royal* is about the life of Neil Kingsblood, a White-American who tries to find his family origin. This research uses Hall's representation theory with its discursive approach and qualitative research as the method of analysis. The result of this research is shown to the reader how racial passing works in U.S. 1940s because of the pressure of society, not as a choice or own decision, especially for biracial people (Pengerti 2019). The gap of this research is the object of the study which is the novel and contribution for this current research is to get a better understanding about the theory and racism problem in America at that time.

The second previous research is conducted by Azizah (2018) with the title *The Representation of Women Dominating Woman in Ayobami Adebayo's* Stay with Me. It analyzes a childless woman's condition that is being oppressed, objectified and subordinated by other women in her surroundings in the novel *Stay with Me* written by Ayobami Adebayo. This research also uses Stuart Hall's representation theory with its discursive approach and qualitative research as the method of analysis. This research gives information about the representation theory with its discursive approach by Michel Foucault. The result of this research is that a childless woman is treated badly and even considered as 'not woman' by other women in her society (Azizah 2018). The gaps of this research are the topic and the object of study.

UNDERLYING THEORY

Stuart Hall's Representation Theory

Representation means using language to say something meaningful about or represent the world meaningfully to other people. Furthermore, representation is an essential part of how meanings are produced and exchanged among members of a culture, which involves using language, signs, and an image representing something. The concept of representation has made a new and vital place in cultural studies by linking meaning and language with culture.

According to Hall (2020), representation is a production of the meaning of concepts in our minds through language. The relationship between the concept and language allows us to refer to the 'real world of objects, people or events, or indeed into the imaginary world of fictional entities, people, and events. So, there are two systems of representation, mental representation, and language representation.

Mental representation is all kinds of objects, people, and events correlated with a set of mental concepts or representations that we carry in our heads. Without them, we would not be able to interpret the world as meaningful at all. Thus, the meaning depends on a system of concepts and images formed in our minds that can stand for or 'represent' the world, enabling us to refer to various things inside and outside our heads. On the other hand, a conceptual system is a random collection of concepts and organized ideas, arranged and classified into complex relationships. That's what our conceptual design is. However, it doesn't break the fundamental point. Additionally, the meaning depends on the relationship between things in the world–people, objects, and events, real or fictional–and the conceptual system itself, which can operate as mental representations. Each of us may understand and interpret the world uniquely and individually. But, we can communicate because we share the

same conceptual map broadly and thus understand or interpret the world in almost the same way. It means 'belong to the same culture' because we interpret the world similarly to construct our shared social world.

The second system of representation is language representation. Not only shared conceptual maps, but we must also be able to represent or exchange meanings and concepts through language. Language is, therefore, the dual system of representation involved in the overall process of constructing meaning. People use a common language to connect concepts and ideas with written words, spoken sounds, or visual images (Hall 2020). The general term used for words, sounds, or pictures that carry meaning is *signs*. Signs represent the concept between them which we have around in our heads, and together they make up the meaning systems of our culture.

Meanwhile, three approaches explain how meaning is represented through language work, namely reflective, intentional, and constructionist approach. Reflective means that language has a function as a mirror. It reflects the true meaning as it already exists in the world. Meanwhile, intentional means that language only expresses what the author or speaker intended personally to say. Yet, language is a social system that can never be utterly private play. Constructionist or discursive itself is a part of this approach.

Discursive Approach

Foucault in Hall (2020) describes three main ideas in a discursive approach, namely the concept of discourse, the issue of power and knowledge, and the question of the subject. Foucault explains that representation uses language to construct meaning and uses discourse as the system of representation that aims to analyze the meaning by using knowledge. Usually, the linguistic concept uses the term 'discourse,' but Foucault gives a different meaning about discourse. The definition of discourse is much broader than language and includes many other elements. Foucault has always been much more specific historically; looking at forms of power or knowledge is always rooted in a particular context and history. Discourse constructs a topic. It appears within a range of text. Discourse concerns the production of knowledge and meaning. He argues that every historical period has different knowledge, objects, subjects, and expertise practices from period to period (Hall 2020).

Literary text produces discourses in dialogues of the characters, personal statements, conflicts, setting, and description of characters. The text is a part of the discourse, a particular idea or topic about problems in society. Discourse or text has a strong relationship within a historical moment as the context. The lesson itself has relation to other addresses in a particular period, contextual condition; social, economic, political, and cultural state (Hall 2020).

Life Conditions of The Belsey Family

The Belsey family consist of Howard, Kiki, Jerome, Zora, and Levi. Howard is a white liberal college professor of art history, whereas Kiki is Howard's wife—an African-American who works as a hospital administrator. Meanwhile, Jerome, Zora, and Levi are their children. Jerome is an upperclassman at Brown University, Zora is a freshman at Wellington College, and Levi as a high school student. The Belsey family is based at a fictional college called Wellington. The story starts with Smith's description of the lacking of harmony in Belsey family, particularly between Kiki and Howard.

Interracial marriages among blacks and whites differ from other interracial marriages. Even though African-Americans have been a part of the United States for several generations, they still feel alienated compared to another race. While interracial marriages between black women and white men seem

fine, in reality, white men place black women unequal in their marriages. White men put themselves in a higher position than black women. So that, black women feel alienated in their marital relationships (Kaba 2012).

On the other hand, interracial marriages between black women and white men are different because they face more problems, both internal conflict between partners and concerns that occur in society related to the history of racism in the United States. Internal conflict is related to how black women and white men can accept each other from cultural, race, and color differences. They can reduce the friction of the spouse if they have an extensive understanding. Meanwhile, external conflict is related to the level of acceptance of interracial relationships within racial groups in which blacks find it challenging to get approval from whites even though it is not as bad as it used to be.

African-Americans experience a long history of racism in the United States. They experience limitations in political, social, economic terms concerning slavery and racial segregation. Until now, it still has an impact on their lives as black people. In this case, racial awareness is needed, both blacks and whites. Racial awareness can occur when blacks and whites can understand the similarities and differences between them and realize it can be accepted by themselves, their partners, their family racial group, and their partner's racial group. The lack of racial awareness between Kiki and Howard makes their interracial marriage feel like a gap between black and white. Likewise, interracial couples often get negative feedback from family, friends, and strangers (Anderson 2014).

Furthermore, black women have become victims of negative stereotyping in American society. The stereotype is called the angry black woman. This stereotype depicts black women as aggressive, illogical, and bad-tempered. 'Anger' makes black women become second-class citizens and forces them to make peace and accept the stereotype inherent in them. This stigma is considered unfair by black women with all of the prejudice, oversimplified opinions, and uncritical judgments because black women's passion and commitment are often read as irrationality, anxiety, and hostility. It is intended to silence black women and put them back in their place with various forms of restriction without recourse to oppose status inequality.

Meanwhile, the living condition of The Belsey family does not only face problems regarding the interracial marriage between black and white. But, this also affects their children, namely Jerome, Zora, and Levi, as biracial children. Multiracial families are more likely to face complex problems related to racism from family members, relatives, or people's surroundings. According to the *American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, marriages between blacks and whites increased 400 percent in the last 30 years. In contrast, with the increasing number of interracial marriages in the United States, multiracial families also face many problems between family members and rising potential for rejection by extended family and community members, leading to social isolation and distress multiracial families ('Multiracial Children' 2016).

RESEARCH METHOD   Qualitative research is a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data and seeks to interpret meaning from the data. It focuses on descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words. By using qualitative method, this research aimed at defining and elaborating the discourse on racism.

The data in this research were taken from the book *On Beauty* by Zadie Smith. Close reading technique was employed to develop a deep understanding of the meaning of the text when collecting the data. It is an essential step in getting information from the novel. Subsequently, textual analysis applied to the narrations and dialogues of the characters which have relations to racism. It was concerned with how racism happens in the story. Meanwhile, the contextual analysis involved relevant statements quoted from various references, such as books, journals, articles, literary work reviews, essays, mass media, internet sources to support the hypothesis from the primary data.

The selected data containing racism discourse were then divided into two categories, i.e.: racism experienced by Kiki as a black woman from the Belsey family and racism experienced by Carl Thomas as a black man. After the data classification was completed, the racism issues and knowledge both from the text and context are matched one another to find the actual condition of the environment that has influenced the author in making the novel.

Lastly, the representation theory from Stuart Hall along with the discursive approach of Michel Foucault were applied to analyze the data. It was purposed to find out the relation between racism discourse within the text and the contextual background on how racism was constructed which represented the critical position of the author.

DISCUSSION
The Representation of Racism in *On Beauty*

The term race is used to describe a person or society concerning the determination of ethnicity or national identity. Then, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, European scientists and philosophers developed the term race as a biological meaning (plants, animals, and humans) as taxonomic sub-classification within a species. Therefore, race is understood as a natural categorization in the system of the human species. Colonial used race to legalize domination, exploitation, and oppression of non-white people or groups in the slavery system era. Meanwhile, there are two distinct phases in defining racism. From the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, the first phase defined racism as overt individual-level attitudes that focused on racism and racial inequality. Then the second phase of the mid-twenties century to the present defines racism as an explicit attitude, and an implicit bias built, maintained, and enforced both at the micro and macro levels. Racism in the second phase spreads the concept more broadly in individual-level attitudes and the institutional, historical, unconscious, and systemic forms of racism that interact with other social forces to legalize and perpetuate racial inequality (Clair & Denis 2015).

Race and racism are a unity that is interrelated with each other. Furthermore, the terms race and racism are further divided into racist ideologies and racist structures. According to Merriam-Webster, ideology means a manner or the content of thinking characteristic of an individual, group, or culture ('Definition of Ideology' 2021). So, racist ideologies are further divided into several concepts consisting of prejudices, stereotypes, and identities. These three concepts are interrelated with the racist structure and form a system composed of individual and institutional acts. Racist ideologies and racist structures rationally reproduce each other. An example of the relationship between racist structures and racist ideologies is the existence of white supremacist ideologies and the history of racial oppression that resulted in the emergence of 'white institutional spaces' (Golash-Boza 2016).

In the 2000s, from 2001 to 2009, the United States was led by George Walker Bush as the 43rd president. During his campaign, Bush said that he condemned slavery, praised slaves' struggle to end slavery, and supported them to complete the black slavery system and all forms of discrimination against minorities. However, in early 2003, Bush submitted a brief report to the Supreme Court to repeal affirmative action. The definition of affirmative action itself is an attempt to increase employment or education opportunities for members of minority groups and for women who experience discrimination. Bush's speech is not in line with the speech he delivered supporting the abolition of the slave system in America. Bush acknowledged that slavery still existed during his reign. However, it also undermines any efforts to abolish the slavery system and all forms of discrimination against minorities. Indeed, in the 2000s, slavery and racial discrimination were not as severe as during the 18th and 19th centuries. However, these things still happen in the minority, both in everyday life and in the institutional/governmental system.

Individual racism

There is a lot of disparity and injustice that blacks face from whites. According to Pew Research Center, approximately 1 in 10 black people are unfairly treated based on race and ethnicity. Based on the 71% majority black people, 11% say this happens to them regularly, while 60% say they experience it frequently or from time to time. On the other hand, the majority of black people experience individual racism more often than institutional racism. Additionally, black men and women are equally likely to report having experienced individual racism. However, it does not rule out that black women are more likely to experience individual racism than institutional racism (Pew Research Center 2016)

The individual racism experienced by Kiki is more directed towards negative stereotypes that describe African American women who are strong, loud, disrespectful, antagonistic, aggressive, argumentative, straightforward, and talkative. The stereotype attached to black is a social mechanism to legalize inequality between whites and blacks. Some of the stereotypes attached to black women are the strong black woman and the angry black woman. Both stereotypes may have positive aims, but they are more often used for exclusion, oppression, and inequality. Black women are vital in a positive sense means they have to be strong to demand social justice for their racial group and overcome the racism that never stops from time to time.

On the other hand, the stereotype of strong black women makes them unhappy, sick, and more tired than other racial groups. This title is because they must be independent, hard workers and struggle in fighting for social justice for their racial groups. The stereotype that has been attached to black women in American society makes black women show their anger. Which, this anger is used to exacerbate negative stereotypes directed at black women. Anger is another characteristic of black femininity that is present in three terms, namely: the evil black woman, the black bitch, and the golden matriarch. These three terms play a role in oppressing, silencing, and making themselves seem unprofessional in all aspects (Mulata 2020).

Black women still receive two burdens that always go hand in hand: women and black. These burdens are closely related to race and gender. Malcom, Hall & Brown (1976), they introduced the concept of a double bind or dual oppression where black women are more often the object of discrimination, oppression, negative stereotypes, and all kinds of different and unique life experiences compared to white women. Race and gender are

intertwined in making discrimination, oppression, negative stereotypes, and life experiences unique but still a burden for black women, for instance, how they dress, behave, talk, and hairstyle.

Black women related to race and gender are experiencing negative stereotypes and being silenced and marginalized from society. According toLewis and Neville (2015), 259 black women were sampled related to race and gender in their research. As a result, almost all black women experience silence and marginalization in work, school, society, etc. Their opinions as black women are never heard and are always silenced to become marginalized in society. Black women who are silenced and marginalized also relate to the angry black woman stereotype. This stereotype is useful for silencing the opinions of black women so that they do not want to speak because they are afraid to experience the stereotype.

> *And I don't know why I'm surprised. You don't even notice it—you never notice. You think it's normal. Everywhere we go, I'm alone in this . . . this sea of white. I barely know any black folk anymore, Howie. My whole life is white.* I don't see any black folk unless they be cleaning under my feet in the fucking cafe in your *fucking* college. Or pushing a fucking hospital bed through a corridor. I *stalked* my whole life on you. And I have no idea more why I did that. (Smith 2005)

Spates et al. (2020) has conducted in-depth interviews with black women between ages 18 to 69 year-old. The result shows that 73% or 16 black women who took part in the interview stated that they still experience the stress of being black women in the United States due to racism and tension from time to time. In contrast, since taking office in 2001, George Walker Bush has issued signing statements on more than 750 new laws and stated that the Executive Branch must interpret statutes in a manner consistent with the constitutional clause guaranteeing 'equal protection' on women and minorities ("George W. Bush on Civil Rights" 2006). This statement is entirely inconsistent with the explanation above. Black women are still mistreated and become a minority group that is inferior to white racial groups. Of course, Bush did it just to build his excellent image among the black minority.

Systemic racism
The United States is characterized by a democracy that emphasizes prosperity, freedom, and opportunity. However, most of it was reserved only for whites. The different treatment affects the well-being of people of color who suffer oppression and exclusion from white people. This oppression and exclusion lead to racial and ethnic inequalities resulting in systemic racism. Systemic racism is racism that occurs in the court system, offices, schools, and police departments. The existence of a democracy that prioritizes prosperity, freedom, and opportunity only for white people determines practices and policies in these institutions that continue to create and maintain white supremacy. In the 2000s, systemic racism continued and disproportionately made it harder for people of color to get the same education, job, health care, housing, and justice system as white people.

Education is an opportunity to gain knowledge, skills, and experience so that young people can get a decent life and job. However, it does not happen in the United States. Many blacks as minorities do not get the same education as whites. Many factors lead to disparities in education, ranging from lower parental education levels, lower wealth, lower health, and the justice system that distinguishes between blacks and whites. Black parents are less educated than white parents. They tend not to expect their children to have the same

education as white children. Less parent-child communication about the school, and they don't care about their children's education. According to *Child Trends* (2018), at the age of 2, there is an apparent difference between black and white children. Black children have minor mastery of writing, reading, coloring, and vocabulary knowledge.

Meanwhile, 91% of white children aged 3 to 5 years who are not enrolled in kindergarten master these skills more because their parents teach them regularly (*Child Trends* 2018). When blacks enter traditional schools, they are three times more likely to receive suspensions and be expelled from school than whites. Not only that, but they are also more often arrested and referred to law enforcement. They were referring to the Supreme Court's landmark case on the separation of the Brown vs Board of Education in 1954, at which time the United States white population was 90%. Indeed, today, most primary and secondary school children are Black, Latin, Asian, or American Indian. Although demographic patterns differ, it does not change the old way of segregation that separates education between blacks and whites. Nearly 75% of black students attend majority-minority schools and 38% attend schools with white students only 10% of the total students. Even, 60% of their classmates live in poverty (Tatum 2019).

Systemic racism during the Bush administration is getting worse. Ranging from inequality in law enforcement between blacks and whites, the difficulty of gaining access to proper health facilities, and the lack of funding in educational institutions that made eight years of the Bush administration increase misery for blacks. On the other hand, the Department of Justice (DOJ) consistently stated that systemic racism no longer impacts black people in the United States during the Bush administration. Thus, the DOJ disclaims its responsibility to enforce protections against racial discrimination (Apollon 2008).

Systemic racism in higher education disproportionately separates blacks from getting quality education so that they cannot also get decent jobs, and in the end, blacks live in poverty. It is a causal relationship that is related to one another. Based on a *2013 American Values Survey* conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute, 75% of white people have an entirely white social network, with no minority presence. As a result, most white people socially don't understand what it is like for people of color as a minority (Cox, Navarro-Rivera & Jones 2016). Additionally, the Michigan Community Scholars Program (MCSP), which uniquely brings together service-learning, diversity, and dialogue in powerful ways from multiple racial perspectives, finds that connections across racial groups lead to racism on campus. Anti-black posters create a hostile environment for black students. They also feel they cannot focus on their duties as a student because of racism and hatred towards black racial groups (Tatum 2019).

On the other hand, the Bush administration has a compassionate conservative political philosophy that promised to increase the black population on American college campuses and fight for equal opportunity for all. Based on his speech on July 8, 2003, Bush said that much more was needed to increase the number of minorities on American campuses, he was also committed to racial justice by ensuring that American public schools offered quality education to every child of all backgrounds. America's long experience with abandoned segregation and racial discrimination Bush is still struggling to overcome. It requires special efforts to deliver on the promise of equal opportunity for all (Taylor 2003).

Bush, in one of his speech, promised to increase the black population on American college campuses and fight for equal opportunity for all. But, he admits that the United States society has not fully treated all races equally in the justice system. Racial minorities, especially blacks, are still the target of racial prejudice. On the other hand, at the beginning of his campaign, which coincided with the *NAACP 91st Annual Convention*, he emphasized that discrimination is still a reality, even though it takes different forms. Bush marked it with the Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations. Instead of being separate but equal, there is separation and forgotten. Bush acknowledged that there is a gap in the quality of education based on socioeconomic level and race. But, in his speech, he does not discuss the systemic causes of the disparity in the quality of education. Instead, he argues that it is the gap in the quality of education that produces discrimination. Bush instead offered his vision of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) as a significant education reform movement that aims to improve education standards and create decent quality education for every child.

The NCLB is positioned to identify teachers and schools that need improvement in curriculum standardization, and appropriate assessment requires districts to sort and report test data in terms of race and socioeconomic status. Racial differences and socioeconomic status make these policies ineffective, even forming low expectations—all forming 'soft bigotry'. The statement in his speech is very confusing. He wants to fight for equal opportunity for all. Instead, he makes a new phrase, namely Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations (Rubel & McCloskey 2019).

Moreover, Bush uses compassionate conservative to describe his approach to politics and policy decisions. Conservatives generally believe that it is essential to preserve traditional morality, which is reflected in cultural norms in everyday life. Politically, conservatives do not regulate or clearly define minority rights. Conservatives also prioritize individual freedom and property rights. At the higher education level, the government's record about the support that will increase educational opportunities for African-Americans remains and continues to be dismal. Pell Grant awards for low-income students do not increase during the Bush administration. The Pell Grant award no longer covers half of the educational costs students need to pursue higher education at a state-operated college or university. In 2004, Bush instead cut the Pell Grant scholarships. So, students receive less than before. They are coupled with a policy whereby parents cannot deduct state and local taxes from their income for their children's education costs. Meanwhile, about 45% of black students depend on the scholarship (JBHE, 2017). As a result, the burden on parents increases, and making the opportunity for black students to study in college is getting smaller.

> The job was three days a week. That was what he was expected to do, but he came in every day of the week. Sometimes Elisha looked at him a little worriedly – there just wasn't enough work for him to fill five days. *That is, he could photocopy the backlog of album covers for the next six months, but this had begun to seem pointless work, work they are giving him because they didn't think him capable of anything more.* (Smith 2005)

Carl's refusal as a black to join Claire Malcolm's poetry class coincided with Bush's. On Martin Luther King Day in 2003, he gave his government support for plaintiffs who opposed affirmative action at Michigan University. It contradicts with the speech he delivered at the NAACP Annual Convention in

2006. He said that during his reign, he pledged to increase funding for historically black universities by 30 percent for a decent education was the gateway to a life of opportunity. It is a basic civil right. And he looks forward to working with the NAACP to promote educational excellence across the United States(President Bush Addresses NAACP Annual Convention 2006).

The president's new budget proposal in 2007 would freeze funding for black colleges and universities. Bush also proposed abolishing a tutoring program for minority and low-income students who wished to attend law school, namely the Thurgood Marshall Legal Educational Opportunity Program. Not only that, but Bush also removed many adult education programs at community colleges that many African Americans used for job-related training (JBHE, 2017). Additionally, George W Bush, as a conservative who joined the Republican Party or GOP (Grand Old Party) during his tenure, only attended the *NAACP Annual Convention* twice. The first during the campaign period in the first period of his candidacy as president in 2000 and the second during the campaign period in the second period as president in 2006. The structured speech pattern that he only does during his two-term presidential campaign is based on various political considerations. Indeed, in his speech at the *NAACP Annual Convention in 2006*, Bush said that he consider it a tragedy that the party of Abraham Lincoln lets go of its historical ties with the African American communitythat his party for too long wrote off the African American vote, and many African Americans wrote off the Republican Party (President Bush Addresses *NAACP Annual Convention*, 2006).

Actually, in 2000, Bush won less than 10% of the black vote. On the other hand, the election was increasingly cruel to black people by eliminating as many as 57,000 names, most of which were black people. It seems that there is a systematic effort to weaken the voice of black people (Taylor 2003). However, during his second campaign in 2006, in his address to the *NAACP Annual Convention*, Bush admitted that his party had wiped out many black votes in previous elections. In his second term as President, Bush does not want to waste the opportunity to get black voices in the election. It is due to the possibility of losing one or both houses of Congress in the midterm elections, which certainly affects the votes, which are likely to decrease. So, Bush fights for the votes he can get, including the voices of black people.

Systemic racism that occurs in higher education further narrows the possibility of black people improving their economic life. Smith wrote in his novel.

> "... I don't *want* to know *any* of this shit. I'm just trying to get stage higher with my life." Carl laughed bitterly. But that's a *joke* around here, man... (Smith 2005, 418)

In a low level of education, the poverty rate will undoubtedly increase. According to *US Census Bureau Quick Facts: United States* in 2019 the black population was 13.4%, and the poverty rate is 1.8 times higher than other racial groups. Additionally, Smith describes Carl as an uneducated black man from Roxbury, Boston. Most minority groups, including blacks, live in Roxbury, where most of them live in poverty. Darnell Williams as chairman of the Eastern Massachusetts Urban League stated that black people living in Boston, especially Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, and East Boston, are lagging in education and economic and social progress (Irons 2011). During the Bush years, indeed, black people have suffered because of the policies made by

Bush, especially policies related to education that have led to an increase in black poverty rates.

The Experience of Being Biracial Children

Interracial marriage between Howard and Kiki impacts their children, Jerome, Zora, and Levi. The experience of being biracial children in America is certainly not easy. They get many changes in all aspects of their lives related to their identity as biracial children. Interracial marriage between black people and white people continues to increase from time to time. According to Pew Research Center, marriages of blacks to other races increased from 5% in 1980 to 18% in 2015. Meanwhile, marriages of whites to other races more than doubled, from 4% to 11%.

The increase in the number of interracial marriages also impacts the increase in the population of biracial children. In 1970, only one in a hundred babies was born multiracial; today, it has risen to one in ten (Ho, Kteily & Chen 2017). Of course, this goes against the old view of race that is prevalent with single-race marriages. Even though there are laws that have legalized interracial marriage and the attitude of society that has begun to open up with interracial marriages, children resulting from interracial marriages still face challenges in their daily lives. The racial identity of biracial children is not only influenced by the phenotype of both parents. Still, it is also influenced by the culture of the particular racial community in their environment.

I know you want me to tell you it's a nightmare, but I can't–*I love living here; it's a different universe*. (Smith 2005, 3)

Certain racial groups may categorize multiracial/biracial people in different ways. Previous research in America focused on how white people perceive biracial people. The result of the study is that most white people tend to categorize biracial people as part of the category of a racial minority (Black). According to Ho, Kteily & Chen (2017), in their latest study, they wanted to determine if black people tend to do the same. The study found that overall, both races viewed black-and-white biracial people as slightly 'more black than white'.

Black people and white people think that biracial people tend to be more black than white, they have different views. White people who classify biracial as black are more likely to have an anti-egalitarian idea, while black people who organize biracial as black are more egalitarian. The classification of biracial people as black has to do with a racist legal inheritance called the one-drop rule, which classifies black and white biracial as black even though only a small number of black lineage. The one-drop rule was considered legal in America for centuries. Even though the law is no longer valid today, many people still believe biracial as black people. White people's tendency to classify biracial people as black is associated with higher anti-egalitarianism— the belief that certain social groups are superior to others. Anti-egalitarian white people tend to feel threatened when biracial blacks gain a better social status. Additionally, people with traditional hierarchies usually hold firmly to the principle of anti-egalitarianism to maintain status boundaries between social groups based on race.

Meanwhile, the study of the black minority about biracial people is ignored. Most of the studies focused only on the white point of view. In their latest research, Ho, Kteily & Chen (2017) focus on black people's point of view towards biracial people. The study aims to assess the egalitarian tendencies of the researchers in question, 200 US-born white participants and 200 US-born

black participants. The researcher asked five questions about a child with one black parent and one white parent. On a scale from 1 (relatively white) to 7 (relatively black), white participants gave an average rating of 4.25, while black participants gave an average rating of 4.42. Statistically, this rating differs significantly from the neutral midpoint of the scale. It shows that blacks tend to view biracial people as a minority group and favor the principle of equality between social groups. Black people feel they have the same fate as biracial people because they still accept all forms of discrimination in their everyday life.

Black people who are more open and more egalitarian with biracial people make them equal in social groups. Hip-hop and street culture are two interrelated things. Hip-hop was the most influential cultural movement in the United States at the end of the 20th century and is rooted in the 1970s street culture of the poor working-class African-American and Latino. It is a kind of direct response to the socio-economic problems that emerged from that history. Through musical expression, the marginalized black community uses hip-hop as a medium to change their discontent from the injustices they face into productive protests even though the lyrics are sometimes vulgar and overt.

Black people managed to foster strong solidarity in the black community. They emphasized the importance of black identity and black culture for political struggle. One of the media to fight for their political rights is hip-hop as one of the cultural movements to face these challenges. In addition, many young black people use hip-hop song lyrics to build and give positive affirmation even though they are black and marginalized in America (Black 2014; Odenthal 2019).

Indeed, biracial children cannot fully identify themselves with only one identity. They have a complex nature in the dual identity attached to them. The complex nature of their identity is related to identity development and self-esteem. These two things play an essential role in the life course. Identity development and self-esteem in biracial individuals are considered lower than in black racial groups. Parents are supposed to play a crucial role in developing biracial children developing both of these things. However, interracial couples also have pressures around them that cause biracial children to feel alienated. Not only that, but biracial children also feel the absence of role models in their lives, leading to family disputes because of the lack of positive affirmations from parents (Weaver 2020).

Furthermore, racial socialization conveyed by parents is also crucial to provide information about racial and ethnic perspectives for biracial children. It helps biracial children in dealing with racial stratification in the United States. But, racial socialization can be complex for interracial couples because parents have different backgrounds from their biracial children (Stone & Dolbin-MacNab, 2017).

Identity confusion causes no healthy identity to be formed. Healthy identity formation aims to increase identity development and self-esteem in biracial children. Erikson (1950) argues that children's identity in biracial children has complex stages. One of these stages is identity synthesis and identity confusion. Identity synthesis is a state of the self that is stable over time. On the other hand, identity confusion changes and can contribute to a false sense of self that leads to bad behavior. Therefore, racial differences between family in this case, black, white, and biracial, can cause parent-child

conflicts and racial status, making it difficult for them to establish kinship relationships in society (Erikson 1950; Weaver 2020).

The Critical Position of the Author

Critical position is an idea conveyed by the author containing opinions, goals, or expectations regarding a matter transmitted through his/her literary work. The way to find out the critical position of the author is to connect the biography of the author and the discourse of racism in the novel *On Beauty*. By combining these two things, the critical position of the author can be seen whether the author criticizes racism or agrees with racism through the characters she describes in the novel.

Zadie Smith was born October 25, 1975, in Brent, London, England, Sadie Smith. Then, at the age of 14, Sadie decided her new name was Zadie Smith. Her parents' marriage ended in divorce when she was a teenager. On the other hand, at that time, she was also interested in becoming a dancer and wanted to have a career in musical theatre. However, after growing up, Zadie prefers to be a writer because she feels writing is her passion. He decided to study English literature at King's College, Cambridge, and she graduated with second-class honors. Zadie Smith married Irish writer and poet, Nick Laird who was also born in 1975. Zadie met Nick at Cambridge University. After dating for a while, Zadie and Nick decided to marry in 2004 at King's College Chapel, Cambridge, and have Katherine Laird and Harvey Laird.

Zadie Smith is a speaker at an event organized by the Contemporary Thought Speaker Series, which discussed race, identity, and literary works. Zadie Smith as a woman and black writer, says that it is not easy to be a woman and a black writer. It is her experience because she is a minority in the English literary scene, which white men dominate. Moreover, she uses writing as her art form to express herself and reflect on her racial identity. The way to be able to express herself and reflect her racial identity through writing is freedom.

> To black, British women, part of me wants to say get out of Britain. It's painful for black, British women who wonder when their time will come. From a black, British person's perspective, it feels exciting (in the United States). (Kim 2017)

Zadie feels more comfortable writing when she is in the United States, and this is because she finds more space to become a writer. She is free to highlight issues or events related to race and identity issues to express herself and reflect on her black identity compared to when she was in England, where her space as a writer tends to be limited. However, racism is still a problem that occurs in the United States. Zadie Smith strongly emphasizes that novelists have the right and the obligation to be accessible regardless of their identity. But, she admits racial identity is sometimes necessary "to demand rights."

> He turned to me and said: 'I used to be myself, and I'm now white guy, white guy.' I said: 'Finally, you understand.' But the lesson of that is that identity is a huge pain in the arse. The strange thing to me is the assumption [of white people] that their identity is the right to freedom. (Armitstead 2019)

She cites her husband's disappointment poet and novelist Nick Laird – at finding himself categorized. Furthermore, Zadie feels that society is too compartmentalized on a person's racial identity. People assume that if whites have to be with whites, so are blacks that have to be with blacks. So that, there

is a gap between races and inhibits each individual from getting freedom in their life.

> A lot of the fierce policing people are doing online is about that — about feeling like "I am a black woman and so, at this moment in history, at this moment in America, I have this moral authority, and I'm going to use it." I don't blame them; I see entirely that. But I am not part of that. *I am a black woman, but I'm not someone who feels any authority from that position or any position.I don't believe in the control of personal identity. I only believe in action, good and bad.* I see people battling each other, knocking each other's privileges down, but I don't think much can be gained in the end. *I'm much more interested in the questions of structural inequality than "my identity is more blameless than yours."* I don't think you can get very far on that ticket. (Ansari 2016)

Zadie uses her writing as an art form to express herself and reflect her racial identity freely, she does not use identity as a political tool to highlight her black identity to gain power and become superior in society. She is much more interested in the issues of structural inequality that occur in society. Actually, Zadie Smith neither criticizes nor legitimizes the existence of racism in the society. Although she is interested in the issue of structural inequality, she tends to be neutral towards the issue of racism in her novel *On Beauty*. This is because the two main characters namely Kiki and Carl do not give resistance to the issue of racism.

CONCLUSION

Zadie Smith is a British author who represents racism in the United States through his novel entitled *On Beauty*. The terms race and racism cannot be separated because they are related to each other. During colonialism and the widespread slavery system, race is used to legalize domination, exploitation, and oppression of non-white people or groups. On the other hand, Racism in the mid-twenties century to the present defines as not only an explicit attitude, but also an implicit bias that is built, maintained, and enforced both at the micro and macro levels. The concept of racism is more broadly. Not only in individual-level attitudes, but also in the historical, unconscious, and systemic forms of racism that interact with other social forces to legalize and perpetuate racial inequality. Individual racism and systemic racism are experienced by the two characters in the novel *On Beauty*, namely Kiki as African-American woman and Carl Thomas as an uneducated young black man from Roxbury.

Kiki accepts the double burden of being a black woman who still accepts negative stereotypes and becomes the object of white oppression. Contrastively, in 2001, George W. Bush issued signing statements on more than 750 new laws and issued a statement that the Executive Branch must interpret laws in a manner consistent with the constitutional clause guaranteeing 'equal protection' on women and minorities. In fact, it does not work. Black women are still treated unfairly and become a minority.

In addition, Jerome, Zora, and Levi as biracial children categorize themselves as blacks because they feel more accepted in the black racial group. On the other hand, biracial children can't fully identify themselves with only one identity, because they have a complex nature in the dual identity attached to them. Therefore, they define black in an inappropriate way. So that, there is an identity confusion that makes biracials unable to form a healthy identity.

Meanwhile, Carl Thomas as an uneducated young black man from Roxbury could not take the poetry class held by Claire Malcolm because of the general conservative trend sweeping that doesn't accept black, poor, and uneducated people being part of Wellington University, even though he is very talented. During his reign, Bush emphasized that discrimination is still a reality. Indeed, systemic racism during his administration is getting worse. The compassionate conservative that Bush uses as a political approach and policy decisions does not properly regulate minority rights.

Actually, Zadie Smith neither criticizes nor legitimizes the existence of racism in the society. Although she is interested in the issue of structural inequality, she tends to be neutral towards the issue of racism in her novel *On Beauty.* This is because the two main characters namely Kiki and Carl do not give resistance to the issue of racism.

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