

Analysis of Social Conflict and Social Change in *The Nickel Boys* Novel

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wahyuagustin93@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

*This study aimed to determine the form and impact of social conflict on social change in the novel. This research was included in literary criticism, which used the sociology of literature approach by applying Ralf Dahrendorf's conflict theory. The data in this study were taken from the novel *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead, which was published in 2019 by Doubleday, US. Research data were analyzed by identifying, classifying, interpreting, and making conclusions. This research resulted in two findings. First, the social conflict in the novel was represented through several acts of discrimination that occurred at Nickel Academy. This social conflict occurred as a result of differences in interests and goals between groups in the social structure there, namely the Nickel Academy staff group, which had the above social structure (superordinate group) and the Nickel Academy student group, which had the lower social structure (subordinate group). Second, the social conflict that occurred in the novel had an impact on social change which was related to the social structure that existed in the Nickel Academy. This change was represented by the removal of the social structure that was there by the US government. Moreover, the researcher suggested future researchers to use another approach, such as structuralism, psychology, or others. In addition, they can also use other conflict theories, such as the conflict theory of Karl Marx, Lewis A. Coser, or George Simmel.*

Keywords: *Social Conflict, Social Change, Nickel Academy, Ralf Dahrendorf*

INTRODUCTION

Social conflict is a phenomenon that usually occurs in people's lives. Basically, social conflict is a conflict that occurs in a collection of individuals, such as groups, organizations, communities, and people, who tend to cause damage, loss, or injury in achieving their goals (Oberschall, 1978). Meanwhile, according to Dahrendorf cited in (Guclu, 2014), the term "conflict" can be interpreted as "the inequality of power and authority which inevitably

accompanies social organizations". According to him, this inequality of power and authority can lead to social conflict in society. As a result, this has an impact on people's lives, such as social change. Social change is the process in which there is a change in the structure and function of a social system in society Rogers and Shoemaker (Siregar & Zulkarnain, 2022). It has an impact on changes in values, social attitudes, and patterns of behavior between groups in society (Soemardjan & Soemardi, 1974).

Furthermore, social conflict and social change can not only be seen directly in people's lives but can also be seen in the form of literary works. One of them is in the novel entitled *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead. The novel describes the social conflicts that occur in black and white US communities and their impact on social change. In this novel, there is a social structure in a society where the white group (superordinate group) is considered to be the ruler among the black group (subordinate group). Thus, the difference in power makes the superordinate group often discriminate against the subordinate group. As a result, it led to conflict between the two groups of people, where white people tried to maintain their status while black people tried to create social change.

This study analyzed Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys* as a research object. This novel was very interesting to analyze because it represented the life of black minority groups among white majority groups. As a result of this difference in power, it created social conflict that had an impact on social change. So, it was important to study because the topic was very relevant to social phenomena that often occurred in society. Furthermore, according to the explanation above, this study aimed to analyze social conflicts and social changes that occurred in Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys*. Thus, two research questions were proposed: 1) What were the social conflicts represented in Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys*? 2) What were the impacts of social conflict on social change in Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys*?

As a scientific study, this study had scope and limitations. In this research, the researcher examined the novel entitled *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead using concepts in Ralf Dahrendorf's conflict theory. This research focused on examining social conflict and social change in the novel *The Nickel Boys*, especially those that occur at Nickel Academy. Furthermore, even though discrimination was the main social conflict in the novel, the characters in the novel were divided into two groups, namely the superordinate group and the subordinate group. Furthermore, this study was expected to help other researchers theoretically and practically regarding how to conduct literary criticism, especially in studying literary works using Ralf Dahrendorf's conflict theory. The researcher also hoped that this study could be useful and provided insight to readers about the study of social conflict and social change in the novel *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead.

In this study, the researcher used several previous studies which had the same research object, namely Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys*. Some of these studies used a psychological approach. In the studies conducted by Zahra and Rabbani (2022); and Bashir, Aurangzeb, and Bibi (2022), they both studied *The Nickel Boys* by identifying the effects of racism on black Americans. The results of both studies showed that acts of racism had an impact on the lives of male and female protagonists, and traumatized them. While the research conducted by Hopkins (2020) examined different things from the two studies above, but still used the same approach, namely psychology. In his research, Hopkins examined the character of Elwood in *The Nickel Boys* to compare it with the journey of the

hero Joseph Campbell. The results of the study showed that Elwood's story represented the journey of Joseph Campbell or monomyth. Then, several other studies used a sociological approach, as in the research conducted by Putra (2020); Kpohoue, Azon, and Ahouangansi (2020); and Strickland (2021) that both analyzed racist discrimination by institutions against black people in the US. The results of both studies showed that racial discrimination occurred in *The Nickel Boys*, especially those carried out by institutions. In the end, it affected the actions of black people who experienced acts of racial discrimination.

In addition, there were also previous studies that used the same theory as this research, namely Ralf Dahrendorf's conflict theory. For example, in research conducted by Alkana (2022), Dewi (2020), Putri (2018), and Cahyati and Subandiyah (2022). The four studies both used Ralf Dahrendorf's conflict theory as a theoretical framework but used different research objects. The four studies examined the causes, categories, and types of social conflict, as well as the concepts of Ralf Dahrendorf's conflict theory. The results of the study showed that there were two factors that caused social conflict, namely the background of the conflict and the efforts of each group in each novel to become a conflict group, while the categories of conflict were exogenous conflict and endogenous conflict. There were four types of conflicts that occurred, which occurred between groups. Furthermore, there were four conflict theory concepts found in these studies, namely conflict and consensus, power and authority, groups involved in the conflict, and conflict and social change.

Based on the previous studies mentioned above, the researcher realized that there were aspects that have never been studied in *The Nickel Boys'* novel, especially in the study of the sociology of literature. One of these aspects was the conflict and social change contained in the novel. In accordance with this topic and previous studies, this study used Ralf Dahrendorf's conflict theory to examine the conflict and social change in the story. In theory, Dahrendorf paid attention to social facts and broader social structures (Dahrendorf, 1959). According to him, relations in the social structure are determined by power and authority. He argued that power comes from within the individual, while authority comes from a position or role in the social structure (Dahrendorf, 1959). Furthermore, authority is also closely related to the relationship between the group possessing power (superordinate) and the group being controlled (subordinate). It makes the superordinate group the power or authority to control, control, give orders or prohibit the subordinate group (Dahrendorf, 1959). In the end, there will always be conflict and social change because of this difference in authority, where the superordinate group tries to maintain the status quo, while the subordinate group tries to create change (Dahrendorf, 1959).

Furthermore, Dahrendorf divided his conflict theory into four concepts. First, the two faces of society (conflict and consensus). Dahrendorf (1959) argues that society cannot exist without these two in which there can be no conflict unless there is a prior consensus. Conflict examines the use of coercion and violence in society caused by interests and the use of power, while consensus examines the value of integration in society. Second, power and authority. According to Dahrendorf (1959), power is related to the one's personality, while authority is related to the position of the individual in the social structure of society. Third, groups involved in the conflict. It divided into two, namely quasi-groups that do not have a clear structure and interesting groups that have a clear structure (Dahrendorf, 1959). Lastly, social conflict and social change. According to Dahrendorf (1959), there are

two factors that influence social change in society, namely exogenous factors that come from outside the community structure and endogenous factors that come from within the community itself.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was a literary criticism, which was used as an analytical framework. The researcher used the sociology of literature approach by applying the conflict theory designed by Dahrendorf (1959) as the theoretical framework. By applying this theory, researchers could examine the social conflicts and social changes that occurred in Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys*.

Then, the source of data in this study was obtained from a novel entitled *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead. This novel was first published in 2019 by the publisher Doubleday, United States. Sources of data in this study were presented in the form of quotations, which included words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and dialogues. The data were obtained from the novel *The Nickel Boys*, which dealt with social conflict and social change.

In this study, the researcher went through several steps to collect data. It began with reading and understanding the novel as a whole to understand the storyline. Then, the researcher reread the novel to find out the overall storyline and find data related to social conflict and social change in the novel. Next, the researcher made notes and highlight the data found; and collected all the data that has been found.

Furthermore, the researcher took several steps in analyzing the data in this study. After getting the data collection, the researcher identified and classified the data based on the concept of social conflict and social change. Furthermore, the data analyzed using the conflict theory designed by Dahrendorf (1959). After carrying out these steps, the researcher drew research conclusions.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Social Conflict Represented in Colson Whitehead's The Nickel Boys

In discussing social conflict, the researcher found several findings that were in accordance with the three concepts of Dahrendorf's conflict theory, namely two faces of society (conflict and consensus), power and authority, and the groups involved in the conflict. Basically, the social conflict represented in the novel occurred due to differences regarding interests and goals between groups in a social structure. In the novel, there was a social structure that was enforced at Nickel Academy, namely the group of Nickel Academy staff who had the social structure above (superordinate group) and the group of Nickel Academy students who had the social structure below (subordinate group). The two groups competed with each other to achieve their own goals, such as gaining power and authority over the other.

Two faces of society (conflict and consensus)

Conflict

In this section, it was shown that there was a social conflict that occurred between the characters in the novel *The Nickel Boys*. The conflict was described by the use of coercion and violence in society caused by interests and the use of power (Dahrendorf,

1959). Furthermore, it was found that there were several forms of social conflict that occurred in the novel. It happened between groups of Nickel Academy staff against groups of Nickel Academy students, and also among groups of students themselves, namely groups of white and black students. The social conflict between the two groups was illustrated by the act of discrimination committed by the superordinate group against the subordinate group. It was like an act of intimidation carried out by a group of white students, including Lonnie and Black Mike (superordinate group) against a group of black students, including Corey and Elwood (subordinate group), as in the following quote:

Datum 1

"The younger boy being bullied, Corey, was not someone he'd met before. The bullies he'd encountered at his breakfast table: Lonnie with his bulldog face, and his manic partner Black Mike. Elwood went into the first-floor bathroom to urinate, and the taller boys had Corey up against the cracked tile wall ..."

"Elwood said, 'Hey,' and took a step forward. Black Mike spun around, slugged him in the jaw and knocked him back against the sink."

"Another boy, a chuck, opened the bathroom door and yelled, 'Oh, shit.' Phil, one of the white housemen, was making the rounds. He had a drowsy way about him and usually pretended not to see what was right in front of his face." (Whitehead, 2019, p. 37)

From the quote above, it could be seen that Corey and Elwood belonged to a group of people who were weak and powerless (subordinate group). Thus, they were easily intimidated by Lonnie and Black Mike who considered themselves superordinate group. It showed the social conflict in the novel. It was due to acts of violence committed by power-holding groups, namely Lonnie and Black Mike, to maintain their power, as stated by Dahrendorf (1959). Thus, while they thought of themselves as part of the dominant group, Lonnie and Black Mike treated Corey and Elwood lightly.

Furthermore, as a result of this conflict, it led to another social conflict that occurred between the Nickel staff group and the student group. It was because Spencer and Earl, Nickel Academy staff, knew the social conflict between these students. As a result of this incident, Spencer, as Nickel's superintendent, gave the students punishment. Unfortunately, Spencer's punishment crossed the threshold. He even physically abused them by beating them. It was what happened in the following quote:

Datum 2

"Spencer and Earl took Black Mike in first. Spencer said, 'Thought you'd be done after last time.'"

"Earl said, 'Piss himself again.'"

"The roar began: an even gale. Elwood's chair vibrated with energy. He couldn't figure out what it was—some sort of machine—but it was loud enough to cover Black Mike's screams and the smack of the strap on his body ... He counted up to twenty-eight before the beating stopped and they dragged Black Mike out to one of the cars." (Whitehead, 2019, p.40)

The quote above showed that Spencer and Earl, as a group of Nickel Academy staff, committed acts of physical violence in the form of beatings. They performed the act on a group of Nickel students, including Lonnie, Black Mike, Elwood, and Corey. Even though the students were involved in rioting, Spencer should be able to choose the right punishment for them. It was because physical violence could not only physically injure students, but could also traumatize them. Based on the explanation above, it showed the existence of the social conflict that occurred at Nickel Academy. It was because the subordinate group (students) experienced acts of violence due to the use of power by the superordinate group

(Nickel Academy staff) (Dahrendorf, 1959). Thus, it could be concluded that the act of persecution of students by Nickel's staff was included in social conflict.

The social conflict that occurred at Nickel Academy was not only perpetrated by Spencer and Earl against the students but also by other staff. It was done by the former director of Nickel Academy and one of the psychologists who worked there. The incident occurred as in the quote below:

Datum 3

"He possessed a fervent belief in the miracle of a human specimen in top shape and often watched the boys shower to monitor the progress of their physical education."

"The director? Elwood asked when Turner told him that last part."

"Where do you think Dr. Campbell got that trick from?" Turner said. Nickel was gone, but Dr. Campbell, the school psychologist, was known to loiter at the white boys' showers to pick his dates. 'All these dirty old men got a club together.'" (Whitehead, 2019, p.62)

Based on the quotation above, it could be seen that there was social conflict in the form of sexual harassment. It was experienced by Nickel Academy students. The harassment was perpetrated by Trevor Nickel, former director of the Nickel Academy, and Dr. Campbell, school psychologist. Under the pretext of monitoring the progress of the students' physical education, Trevor Nickel often saw students taking a shower. Unlike Nickel, Dr. Campbell wandered through the student bathrooms picking his dates. Nickel and Dr. Campbell showed that they sexually abused students for their own interests, that was, to satisfy their lust. Based on this, it showed that there was social conflict in Nickel Academy. Even though there was no physical violence, the act was included in sexual violence. It was in accordance with Dahrendorf's statement (1959), where social conflict was described by the use of violence in society caused by the interests and use of power of subordinate groups.

Not only the things above, but there were other social conflicts within Nickel Academy. This conflict was the biggest social conflict that happened there, namely murder. It occurred between the Nickel student group and the Nickel staff group. It happened at a time when Nickel's students, Elwood and Turner, wanted to escape from there. It is as in the following quote:

Datum 4

Turner zagged and put his head down as if he could duck buckshot. Can't catch me, I'm the Gingerbread Man. He looked back again as Harper pulled the trigger. Elwood's arms went wide, hands out, as if testing the solidity of the walls of a long corridor, one he had traveled through for a long time and which possessed no visible terminus. He stumbled forward two steps and fell into the grass." (Whitehead, 2019, p. 127-128)

The quote showed that there was social conflict in the form of murder committed by Nickel's staff, namely Harper and Hennepin. They did that to Elwood and Turner, who tried to escape Nickel Academy. At that time, Elwood and Turner wanted to run away from there because Turner had heard that Elwood would be killed by Spencer. So, he asked Elwood to run away from there. However, their plan was discovered by Nickel's staff, so the staff looked for them to stop them. Unfortunately, only Turner managed to escape at that time, while Elwood was killed by Nickel's staff shot.

Based on this, it showed the existence of social conflict there. It was shown by the acts of violence in the form of murders committed by Nickel's staff towards students. In

accordance with Dahrendorf's statement (1959), social conflict was related to acts of violence committed by the superordinate group (Nickel Academy staff) against the subordinate group (Nickel Academy students). Therefore, it could be concluded that the act of violence in the form of murder was part of a social conflict.

Consensus

Consensus was closely related to social conflict. It was following the statement of Dahrendorf (1959), which stated that there would be no conflict unless there was prior consensus. So, it could be said that consensus was needed to prevent conflict. Furthermore, in the novel, there was a consensus before the occurrence of social conflicts, such as an agreement between the school board. They made the agreement to avoid social conflict, as in the following quote:

Datum 5

"All those guys on the school board, they have us do chores." (Whitehead, 2019, p.56)

The quote showed that there was a consensus among all members of the school board. They agreed that Nickel students had to do assignments or work while at Nickel Academy. It included work done inside Nickel, such as work in Nickel farms, printers, and brick factories; or outside Nickel, such as peonage. Here, it could be said that the consensus was made to avoid social conflicts in the future, as Dahrendorf (1959) said. So, with this consensus, it could avoid social conflicts with students regarding the workload they had to do. Thus, it could be concluded that the agreement between the school boards was included in the consensus.

Power and authority

Power

In this section, it was shown that there was power practiced by the characters in the novel. This power related to the individual's role in social relations that allowed them to do something of their own free will despite opposition from others (Dahrendorf, 1959). Furthermore, in this novel, it was found that there was a type of power practiced by the staff of Nickel Academy. Unfortunately, this power was widely used to discriminate against students, where most of the victims were black students. It happened to Spencer, a superintendent of Nickel Academy, who controlled the actions of Griff, a black student, as in the following quote:

Datum 6

"Turner sat up in surprise when he heard Spencer tell Griff to take a dive." (Whitehead, 2019, p.63)

"Finally the superintendent told Griff that his black ass had to take a dive in the third round or else they'd take him out back."

"Yes, sir, Mr. Spencer," Griff said." (Whitehead, 2019, p.63)

The quote above showed Spencer, as a superintendent of Nickel Academy, had power over students. Thus, this allowed him to order Griff to lose the final boxing match with a white student representative. Because of the power he had, he threatened that Griff must follow his orders or else he would be killed. Thus, this made Griff say that he would obey his orders. In fact, Griff actually went against his orders and wanted to win the match.

As Dahrendorf (1959) said, the power of an individual allowed them to do something of their own free will despite opposition from others. Thus, it could be concluded that Spencer's actions against Griff are included in power.

Authority

In this section, it was shown that there was authority practiced by the characters in the novel *The Nickel Boys*. This authority related to individual roles that allowed an order to be obeyed by a certain group of people (Dahrendorf, 1959). Furthermore, it was found that several types of authority were practiced by the characters in the novel. The four types of authority were authority from the government, authority from the institution, authority from the staff of Nickel Academy, and authority from the police. Here, this authority was described in various forms of action, such as ordering and making decisions. In addition, there were also several authorities that made discriminatory rules against students.

Authority from the government

In the novel, the government's role greatly influenced the overall life of the people in the US, including in the Nickel Academy. It was because the government had full authority in the government system and was able to create various rules and laws for the continuity of people's lives. In this case, Dahrendorf (1959) stated that authority could be referred to as legitimate power, which was closely related to the relationship between groups possessing power (superordinate) and groups controlled (subordinate). It made the superordinate group the authority to control, give orders, or prohibit the subordinate group. Here, the US government (superordinate group) had authority over Nickel Academy (subordinate group). Thus, the government had authority over all matters related to Nickel Academy, including the social conflicts that occur within it. It was what happened in the following quote:

Datum 7

"Every few decades a newspaper report about embezzlement or physical abuse at the school initiated an investigation by the state The administration instituted a stricter accounting of school supplies, which had a tendency to disappear, as well as the profits from the various student businesses, which also liked to disappear." (Whitehead, 2019, p.107)

The quote above showed that the US government had the authority to inspect Nickel Academy. It started with reports regarding social conflicts that occurred at Nickel Academy, such as embezzlement and physical violence. As a result of the report, the government began to carry out inspections of the academy. During the inspection, the government found various irregularities, as well as policies and facilities that needed updating. So, they imposed new policies on the academy, such as a ban on physical violence and stricter accounting. It was in accordance with the statement of Dahrendorf (1959), where the owner of authority had the authority to control and make orders to society. Thus, it could be said that the US government's action against Nickel Academy was included in the authority.

Authority from the institution

In the novel *The Nickel Boys*, most of the story was set in a reform school called Nickel Academy. Thus, the institution played a major role in the overall storyline. Here,

Nickel Academy had various authorities as an official institution in the US. One of them was the authority on giving punishment to Nickel Academy students. It was because the superordinate group (Nickel Academy) had the authority to control, give orders or prohibit the subordinate group (students) (Dahrendorf, 1959). It was as in the following quote:

Datum 8

"The demerit scale varied from dormitory to dormitory. Smoking, fighting, perpetuating a state of dishevelment—the penalty depended on where they'd sent you and the whims of the local housemen. Blaspheming cost a hundred demerits in Cleveland—Blakeley was the God-fearing sort—but only fifty in Roosevelt. Jacking off was a flat two hundred demerits in Lincoln, but if you were caught jacking someone else off, it was only a hundred." (Whitehead, 2019, p.51-52)

The quote above showed that Nickel Academy had different punishment rules than usual. These rules did not apply equally to all students. It was because it was based on their boarding house origin, whether they came from white student dormitories or black student dormitories. Usually, students from black dormitories (Cleveland) got more severe punishments than students from white dormitories (Roosevelt). In accordance with Dahrendorf's statement (1959) that the superordinate group, such as Nickel Academy had the authority to control, give orders or prohibit subordinate groups, such as students. In short, authority put Nickel staff in complete control over students. Thus, it showed the existence of the authority in the quote, where Nickel Academy (superordinate group) had the legal authority to make rules for students (subordinate group).

Authority from the staff of Nickel Academy

Furthermore, there was another form of authority that was practiced in Nickel Academy, namely from the staff of Nickel Academy. One of them was like the authority practiced by the superintendent of Nickel Academy. As a superintendent (superordinate group), Spencer had the legal authority to manage Nickel Academy students (subordinate group), as suggested by Dahrendorf (1959). One form of authority that he had was the authority to punish Nickel Academy students, especially those who made mistakes. It was as in the following quote:

Datum 9

"They came at one a.m. but woke few, because it was hard to sleep when you knew they were coming, even if they weren't coming for you They knew where their beds were—the bunks were only two feet apart, and after occasions when they grabbed the wrong ones, now they made sure beforehand. They took Lonnie and Big Mike, they took Corey, and they got Elwood, too."

"The night visitors were Spencer and a houseman named Earl, who was big and quick, which helped when a boy broke down in one of the back rooms and had to be put back on course so they could proceed Spencer driving Lonnie and Black Mike and Earl taking Elwood and Corey, who had been weeping all night." (Whitehead, 2019, p.39)

"The White House, in its previous use, had been a work shed. They parked behind it and Spencer and his man took them in through the back. The beating entrance, the boys called it." (Whitehead, 2019, p.40)

The quote showed that Spencer had authority over the punishment given to students who made mistakes. As a result of the previous riot, Lonnie, Black Mike, Elwood, and Corey were punished. As superintendent of Nickel Academy, Spencer had the legal

authority to punish students. So, on the night after the riot, Spencer and Earl, a Nickel staff member, looked for the students involved in the riot to punish them. Unfortunately, Spencer punished the students wrongly, he should not have given them corporal punishment. It was because it not only physically injured students, but could also traumatize them. Based on that, it could be said that it showed there were parties who had authority in the novel. It was because Spencer, as the superordinate group, could freely organize and control the students who acted as the subordinate group, as stated by Dahrendorf (1959).

Authority from the police

In the novel *The Nickel Boys*, it was told that there was a social conflict that occurred at Nickel Academy, including the killing of students. As a result of these actions, it triggered new social conflicts in society. The act of killing the students created a social conflict regarding the truth behind the incident. Thus, it encouraged the attitude of the authorities, such as the police, to investigate this matter. It was what happened in the following quote:

Datum 10

"The press conference was at eleven a.m. According to the paper, the sheriff of Eleanor was going to give an update on the investigation of the grave sites and an archaeology professor from the University of South Florida would speak on the forensic examinations of the dead boys. And some of the White House boys were going to be there to testify." (Whitehead, 2019, p.133)

The quote showed that the police had authority over social conflicts that occurred at Nickel Academy. There, they had the authority to investigate the truth behind the death of the students who were in Nickel's secret grave or known as Boot Hill. In addition, the authority possessed by the police also allowed them to give orders to subordinate groups. It was like when they asked University of South Florida archeology professors and students to cooperate in the investigation. Because these students had died dozens of years ago, so only the bones remained. So, the police needed the help of these professors and students to carry out a more detailed forensic examination.

Based on this, it could be seen that the police were included in the superordinate group, while archeology professors and students were included in the subordinate group. Thus, the police had the authority to give orders to the professors and students. It was in accordance with the statement given by Dahrendorf (1959), which stated that the superordinate group had the legal authority to control, give orders or prohibitions to the subordinate group. In the end, it could be concluded that the authority of the police allowed them to carry out investigations and give orders to professors and students to investigate social conflicts in the form of murders that occurred at Nickel Academy.

Groups involved in the conflict

Quasi-groups

In the novel, there was a quasi-group that appeared during the course of the story. According to Dahrendorf (1959), quasi-groups were groups of people who did not have a clear structure and goals, but they had the same way of behaving. Here, the group was represented as a group of students involved in social conflict. It was shown in the following quote:

Datum 11

"The younger boy being bullied, Corey, was not someone he'd met before. The bullies he'd encountered at his breakfast table: Lonnie with his bulldog face, and his manic partner Black Mike." (Whitehead, 2019, p.37)

From the quote above, it could be seen that Lonnie and Black Mike were in the same group, namely the group that intimidated Corey. Thus, they were included in the quasi-group. It was because they were a group consisting of several people but did not have a clear structure, goals, and program (Dahrendorf, 1959). In addition, they usually also had a hidden purpose. Like the quote above, they did the bullying intending to intimidate Corey and show that they were the ruling group there. Thus, it could be concluded that Lonnie and Black Mike were included in the quasi-group.

Interest Groups

In *The Nickel Boys*, interest groups were shown by the existence of organized groups. According to Malinowski (in Dahrendorf, 1959), an interest group was a group of people who had clear programs, goals, and structures. These groups include, a group of former Nickel Academy students who reunited after the emergence of an investigation into Nickel Academy's grave or commonly known as Boot Hill.

Datum 12

"In recent years, some of the former students organized support groups, reuniting over the internet and meeting in diners and McDonald's. Around someone's kitchen table after an hour's drive. Together they performed their own phantom archaeology, digging through decades and restoring to human eyes the shards and artifacts of those days. Each man with his own pieces." (Whitehead, 2019, prologue)

The quote indicated that former Nickel Academy students formed an organized group, which was named the White House Boys. It belonged to interest groups because it was an organized group, which usually had a certain structure and purpose. In the novel, the group aimed to show the world the truth about what happened to them while at Nickel Academy. Apart from that, they also demanded that the government conduct an investigation and apologize to all students.

Furthermore, there were also other forms of interest groups in the novel, such as the US government. It was shown in the following quote:

Datum 13

"Every few decades a newspaper report about embezzlement or physical abuse at the school initiated an investigation by the state." (Whitehead, 2019, p.107)

As the quote above showed, the US government, including state inspectors, had the legitimate power to regulate society and its existing institutions. One of them was by inspecting the Nickel Academy. In this case, the US government was included in the official system of government that had a clear structure and program. In addition, as stated by Dahrendorf (1959), interest groups had specific goals. In the novel, it was shown that the US government had a specific objective when it came to inspecting Nickel Academy. The aim was to examine reports of abuse and physical violence that took place there. Therefore, it could be stated that the US government was included in the interest groups.

The Impact of Social Conflict on Social Change Represented in Colson Whitehead's The Nickel Boys

In this discussion, it related to the last concept in Ralf Dahrendorf's conflict theory, namely social conflict and social change. Dahrendorf (1959) stated that social change focused on structural changes that could come from within (endogenous) or outside the structure of society (exogenous). In this novel, only changes in social structure in society were found due to endogenous factors. These changes were due to social conflicts that occurred at Nickel Academy. It was made by the US government, which was included in the organized groups (interest groups) in the novel. Here, both the US government and the Nickel Academy were in the same social structure, namely the social structure that existed in society. Thus, it could be said that social change originated from within the social structure itself. It was in accordance with the statement of Dahrendorf (1959), which stated that endogenous factors were social changes originated from within the group itself, namely organized groups (interest groups) or between representatives of the masses who were not organized (quasi-groups). The following was an example of such changes:

Datum 14

"Every few decades a newspaper report about embezzlement or physical abuse at the school initiated an investigation by the state. In their wake came prohibitions against 'spanking,' and the use of dark cells and sweatboxes. The administration instituted a stricter accounting of school supplies, which had a tendency to disappear, as well as the profits from the various student businesses, which also liked to disappear. The parole of students to local families and businesses was terminated and the medical staff increased. They fired the longtime dentist and found one who didn't charge by the extraction." (Whitehead, 2019, p.107-108)

The quote showed a change in the social structure at Nickel Academy. As a result of sudden inspections by the US government, it was revealed that Nickel Academy staff physically abused students and embezzled funds related to tooth extractions. So, the government made new policies, including replacing old dentists with new ones, which did not need to pay for tooth extraction. In short, it showed a change in the social structure at Nickel Academy, where the government replaced the staff who acted as dentists there. Based on the description, it showed that social conflict had an impact on changes in social structure (Dahrendorf, 1959).

Furthermore, even though the US government has attempted to replace the existing social structure at Nickel Academy, other social conflicts continued to occur there. Several years after the inspection, Nickel's staff continued to physically abuse students who violated the law. In fact, there were some students who died as a result of the incident. Therefore, this triggered a reaction from the US government to officially close the Nickel Academy. It was as in the following quote:

Datum 15

"The state of Florida closed the school three years ago and now it was all coming out, as if everyone, all the boys, had to wait for it to be dead before they told the tale." (Whitehead, 2019, p.133)

The quote showed a change in social structure in society, especially at Nickel Academy. As a result of the repeated social conflicts there, the government finally closed the academy. It was done so that similar social conflicts would not occur again. Furthermore, due to the closure of the Nickel Academy, it could be said that there has been

a change in the social structure there. It was because the closure had an impact on the loss of the social structure that exists at Nickel Academy. Thus, in the end there was no social structure where Nickel Academy staffs occupied the upper social structure and Nickel Academy students occupied the lower social structure again. It showed that Nickel Academy, including its staff, which had a higher social structure must still be subject to the social structure that was above it, namely the US government.

Based on the explanation above, it could be seen that the change in social structure occurred due to social conflict, as stated by Dahrendorf (1959). The social conflict that occurred at Nickel Academy made the US government made changes to the social structure that existed there. It was done by the US government closing the academy to eliminate the existing social structure, namely the upper social structure (Nickel staff) and the lower social structure (Nickel students). In short, this change included social change due to endogenous factors because it originated from the US government, which was included in the social structure of society itself.

CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION

Based on the research findings, the researcher divided the findings into two parts, namely social conflict and social change as a result of social conflict. In the first finding, it was found that there were several social conflicts in the form of discrimination represented in Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys*, especially at Nickel Academy. This social conflict occurred due to differences in interests and goals between groups in the social structure there, namely the Nickel Academy staff group which had the above social structure (superordinate group), and the Nickel Academy student group which had the lower social structure (subordinate group).

Furthermore, in the second finding, it was found that there was an impact of social conflict on social change that occurred in *The Nickel Boys* novel. It was related to the social structure there. In this case, it was found that there were endogenous factors to change in social structure, which was carried out by the US government. Furthermore, the social conflict that occurred there led to the closure of the academy by the US government. Therefore, it could be said that the social conflict that occurred at Nickel Academy had an impact on social change, namely the removal of the existing social structure at Nickel Academy.

The researcher suggested further researchers analyzing Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys* using other approaches, such as structuralism, psychology, or others. Furthermore, for future researchers who were interested in the topic of social conflict research, especially social change, the researcher recommended using the same theory, namely Ralf Dahrendorf's conflict theory. In addition, future researchers could also examine the topic of conflict using other theories, such as Karl Marx's conflict theory, Lewis A. Coser's conflict theory, or George Simmel's conflict theory.

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