

Racial Issues in Get Out

Lozovina, Dario

Master's thesis / Diplomski rad

2021

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **University of Zadar / Sveučilište u Zadru**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:162:094982>

Rights / Prava: [In copyright](#)/[Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2025-01-15**



Sveučilište u Zadru
Universitas Studiorum
Jadertina | 1396 | 2002 |

Repository / Repozitorij:

[University of Zadar Institutional Repository](#)



zir.nsk.hr

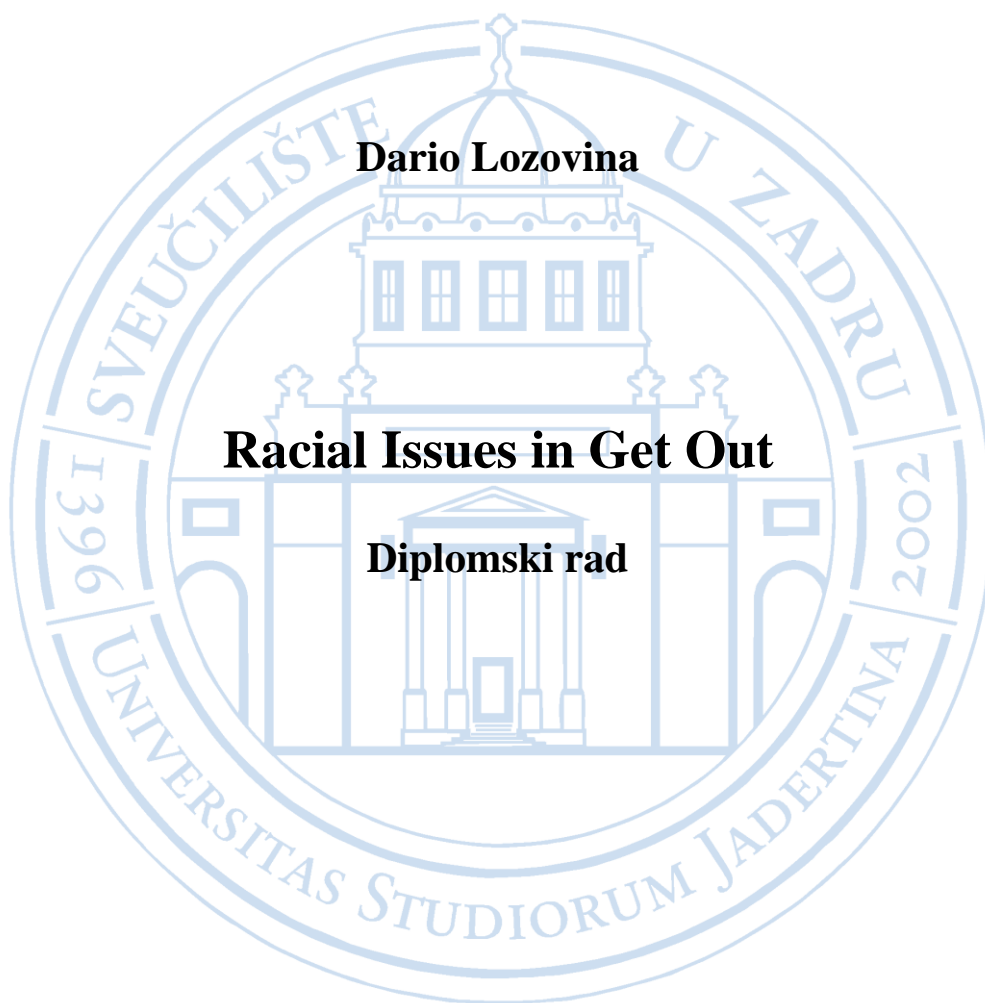


DIGITALNI AKADEMSKI ARHIVI I REPOZITORIJI

Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku

Diplomski dvopredmetni sveučilišni studij anglistike: nastavnički smjer



Zadar, 2021.

Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku

Diplomski dvopredmetni sveučilišni studij anglistike: nastavnički smjer

Racial Issues in Get Out

Diplomski rad

Student/ica:

Dario Lozovina

Mentor/ica:

izv. prof. dr. sc. Marko Lukić

Zadar, 2021.



Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

Ja, **Dario Lozovina**, ovime izjavljujem da je moj diplomski rad pod naslovom **Racial Issues in Get Out** rezultat mojega vlastitog rada, da se temelji na mojim istraživanjima te da se oslanja na izvore i radove navedene u bilješkama i popisu literature. Ni jedan dio mojega rada nije napisan na nedopušten način, odnosno nije prepisan iz necitiranih radova i ne krši bilo čija autorska prava.

Izjavljujem da ni jedan dio ovoga rada nije iskorišten u kojem drugom radu pri bilo kojoj drugoj visokoškolskoj, znanstvenoj, obrazovnoj ili inoj ustanovi.

Sadržaj mojega rada u potpunosti odgovara sadržaju obranjenoga i nakon obrane uređenoga rada.

Zadar, 26. svibnja 2021.

Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Racism	3
2. 1. Critical Race Theory	7
2. 2. CRT Themes	10
2. 3. Whiteness	12
2. 4. Microaggressions	14
3. <i>Get out</i> and <i>Invisible Man</i>	15
3. 1. An Overview	15
3. 2. The Elements of CRT	19
3. 3. The Opening Scene	21
3. 4. The Encounter with the Police	24
3. 5. The “Sunken Place”	28
3. 6. The Talents	32
3. 7. Microaggressions and Language	33
4. Conclusion	35
Works Cited	37
Summary	39
Sažetak	40

1. Introduction

When discussing inequalities in a society it is almost impossible not to mention racism as one of the most important issues that has forever changed and negatively influenced how the American people deal with difference of any type. In this context, racial background still continues to influence lives to this day. Racism has remained as one of the central problems for blacks and other people of colour, lately even more in focus with the media coverage devoted to such issues.

Although all people are guaranteed equal rights and equal treatment by law, in practice, this is often not the case, leaving room for prejudice and stereotypes to develop and negatively influence the perceptions of many. However, it is necessary to point out that the situation has definitely improved because clear and explicit forms of racism are no longer tolerated in the contemporary society. It is the more subtle forms of racism that became the focus in the new era of fighting it.

Studying racism in all its forms has been a task for many scholars who have been dealing with racial issues from different perspectives and various fields of study. This has resulted in the creation of several theories aiming to describe racism in order to neutralise its negative effects on society. Furthermore, several concepts have been introduced, whiteness and white supremacy being in the core of the analysis of racism in America.

Just like with any other complex social phenomenon, racism has also been an underlying theme for many literary works, or films, more recently. *Get Out* is a great example for this. It is a horror movie that when analysed more thoroughly provides insights into the problems that black people face in contemporary America and how they navigate through their lives in a white dominated society. The director, Jordan Peele, through the main character, Chris, a talented black photographer, distances from the classic horror film plot and gives it deeper meaning. Peele tackles racial issues both on the surface and those better hidden in the interactions between

the characters. *Invisible Man*, by Ralph Ellison, is another great example of works with racial problems in its focus. It offers insights into what racism was like in the more distant past and what were the main problems for people of colour back then. When compared side by side, these two works tell a similar life story about young black men facing racial issues, living in different times.

The theoretical background used for defining racism and describing its main characteristics in this paper mostly relies on Camara Phyllis Jones's *Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener's Tale* that proposes that due to the complexity of racism it has to be analysed on several levels and Albert Memmi's *Racism* that focuses on main aspects of racism. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic deals with the most prominent approach in the study of racism today and is used as a basis for an analysis of *Get Out* and *Invisible Man* in order to determine whether or not these two works have elements of Critical Race Theory (CRT) or if they were influenced by it to some degree. This analysis will make it possible to interpret whether or not these works belong inside the Critical Race Theory framework, and why.

The paper begins by explaining some basic concepts when it comes to race, racism and racial relations and summarizes the main ideas behind Critical Race Theory, whiteness and microaggressions. This is followed by an analysis of *Get Out and Invisible Man* in relation to CRT while at the same time aiming to determine how racism has evolved over time and if the main issues black people shared then and now have been resolved.

2. Racism

Racism is a term often used in various contexts by many people to refer to a complex social phenomenon where people are characterised and put into different social groups based only on their racial background, their appearance and the colour of their skin. As such it has been recognized as an important social issue and is discussed from many perspectives and by

different areas of study, being especially common in media narratives. Racism has been an ongoing problem for centuries for multicultural societies that remains open to this day. Very often, racism is in the very centre of media discourse and bears political and legal significance. Therefore, the necessity to study racism in all its forms is obvious.

However, the term racism itself is often used in a loose and an unprecise way making it necessary to clearly define what it stands for in order to study it thoroughly. This has been attempted by many scholars. Among them, a former college professor and a leading expert in the field of racial issues, George M. Fredrickson, attempts to define racism in the introduction of his book *Racism: A Short History* with a short and simple definition by stating that the term racism is used to describe any hostile or negative feelings of one ethnic group of people towards other groups of people, or to refer to any type of hostile behaviour resulting from such attitudes (1). This simple definition of racism shows that the existence of racism implies an existence of a difference between groups of people. This difference can be of any type and is problematic in many cases. When talking about racism, the difference that is emphasised is the difference in skin colour or racial background between the groups.

However, as it is usually the case, a complex social phenomenon such as racism cannot be completely explained with a short and simple definition as it fails to encompass all its aspects. This is something that was recognized by many scholars who in response developed more complex frameworks and theories for detecting racism and studying it, in an effort to minimize its negative effects for the society or the individual, as due to its complexity it is almost impossible to define it so briefly. Furthermore, these scholars agree that the issue with racism is that it has to be analysed on different levels as its existence influences people of colour in various areas of their lives.

Camara Phyllis Jones proposes such an approach to the study of racism in her book *Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener's Tale* arguing that racism cannot

be fully understood with a simple definition. Instead, racism is best understood when analysed on three different levels: institutionalized, personally mediated, and internalized (1212). According to Jones, institutionalized racism can be seen as differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of a society, primarily because of a difference in skin colour. It is embedded in the legal institutions of the society and the law itself. Personally mediated racism refers to differential assumptions about the abilities, motives, and intentions of others that are based primarily on their race. Internalized racism can be seen as acceptance by the members of the stigmatized races of negative messages about their own abilities and intrinsic worth (1213).

These three levels of racism proposed by Jones show how widespread racism is and what potential it has to influence lives in a negative way. Certain conclusions can be made about racism that become evident when it is analysed in this way. The main issue with institutionalised racism is that it is a part of the very institutions that were put in place to protect all people, regardless of their race. However, because of it, not all people are guaranteed equal rights or equal treatment in the eyes of the law. This, of course, is an issue that every contemporary society aims to resolve.

Personally mediated level of racism, as proposed by Jones, might manifest itself through a lack of respect for people of different skin colour in everyday life, negative assumptions about them which are based on prejudice, fear, suspicion, avoidance, and in more extreme cases even the dehumanization of a person of colour in order to justify negative opinions about them. Racism at the internalized level, as seen by Jones, is perhaps the most shocking level of racism that shows how deeply racism affects people and their way of thinking. It encompasses the idea that some people of colour develop over time, that racism towards them is justified to some degree, and the notion that some of them deserve subordination because of their lacking abilities. This can easily result in self-doubt and self-esteem issues. Due to the consequences of

internalized racism, people of colour may start believing that it is impossible for them to succeed and even start to consider racism as a normal way of life that they deserve.

At the same time, Albert Memmi in *Racism* proposed a different approach to the study of racism, that is again more complex than a simple definition. For Memmi, racism can be better understood as a structure, rather than an idea (17). This entails that racism is much more than a simple opinion that some people hold. Instead, racism is one of the ways that the society functions, a way of perceiving reality and the world around us, a way of organizing social relations. Due to its complexity and how much it has influenced the human history, it is almost impossible to think of a world without it. Racism determines social hierarchy and is the reason why some people are in power and have the ability to make decisions. Because racism is much more than an idea, it is almost impossible to neutralise it completely without creating a completely new set of values and social norms.

Memmi summarizes racism through its four different aspects. The first and the most important aspect of racism is an insistence on a difference (18), something that other authors have also recognized. As such, the importance of the difference between the groups of people has already been emphasized in this paper as the main reason for racism. This difference can be of any type, being racial, cultural, religious or educational. The criterion for this difference is less important than the existence of the difference itself.

The second aspect of racism is that there are always negative connotations connected to those that are perceived to be different (Memmi 18). At the same time, this implies that positive connotations are present for those that are setting the standard for the difference and do not deviate from it. These are usually believed to be the white people.

The third aspect of racism connects the negative perception with the entire group that is different, not just one individual. The final aspect of racism is that the negative perception of

those that are different becomes justification and legitimization for hostility and aggression towards others (Memmi 18).

These aspects of racism show how racism in a society is constructed through several steps and how only a small difference can result in a large racial issue between the groups over time. Furthermore, this difference becomes justification for further actions against those that are the victims of racism and heavily influences social relations. Due to the justification of actions being present, acts of aggression are seen as normal and even perceived to be a moral or an ethical duty and norm.

Although there is no clear agreement in how to define racism and despite the fact that some people would argue the overall existence of racism today, insisting that it is no longer as big of an issue as it used to be, because it is not as clearly displayed as before and because of the fact that all races are guaranteed equal rights by the law, racism still exists in modern societies. However, nowadays, the nature of racism is much different. It exists in a more subtle form than before. Racism continues to have various negative effects on people's lives and therefore needs to be studied in all its shapes in order to neutralise it as much as possible. This necessity has resulted in various more contemporary approaches or theories that tackle these more subtle forms of racism.

2. 1. Critical Race Theory

A most prominent approach in the analysis of modern-day racism is Critical Race Theory. It revolves around studying and identifying racism in all its forms and finding ways to neutralise its negative effects, while at the same time questioning the relations between race and power. Critical Race Theory (CRT) questions the foundations on which the modern society was built, and analyses how it functions today in terms of racial relations. CRT aims to uncover the less visible patterns of behaviour that perpetuate racism and shape the way people perceive the world around them.

Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic in their *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* aim to present the main ideas of this approach. They argue that the early stages of CRT can be traced back to the 1970s when scholars such as Alan Freeman, Derrick Bell and Richard Delgado realised the necessity for developing a framework that would combat the more subtle forms of racism becoming more and more of an issue within the society of the time (5). These scholars have also set the foundations for Critical Race Theory analysis and implementation that is still in use today.

The idea they presented symbolises the very essence of CRT. It acknowledges that racial inequalities have been greatly reduced in the past decades and that people of colour are no longer exposed to explicit racism. However, because of the ways in which the modern society was built, especially focusing here on the American society, with racism in its core, it is necessary to question the very foundations and practices that are used today, as there is still much room for improvement.

Over time, CRT has evolved into a framework that it is today, originally based on two different movements that do not seem connected at first. These are critical legal studies and radical feminism, both equally important. Both of these areas helped shape CRT to what it is today and each exercise great influence over the key ideas of CRT.

Delgado and Stefancic argue the importance of these two movements, stating that critical legal studies introduced the idea that every legal case has more possible outcomes, depending on the way authority is defined or how facts are interpreted (5). This challenges people to think outside the usual patterns of behaviour and to question them. On the other hand, feminism brought valuable insights into the relationship between power and how social roles are constructed (5). It helped to expose the invisible patterns of behaviour that facilitate patriarchy or other types of domination. As such, these movements emphasize the real-world effects of social relations.

Therefore, it is clear that, CRT is not only a theoretical approach without any practical purpose. Instead, it illustrates how legal theory and social relations result in practical consequences for individuals that shape their lives in all areas. This means that the social norms and patterns of domination that are in place in a society decide people's success and shape their future, greatly influencing their day to day lives. For people of colour this means that they do not have the same starting position as white people do.

Unlike many other academic disciplines that aim only to fully understand and define the area of their study, CRT is different because it contains an activist dimension (Delgado and Stefancic 8). This means that CRT does not only try to understand our social situation or analyse it, but at the same time, it tries to improve it and minimize the negative effects of racism it has discovered.

Critical Race Theory is today used by many different disciplines which has resulted in each of them adjusting CRT and its ideas to some degree to better suit their needs. However, Delgado and Stefancic argue that CRT can be summarized by two basic statements. Firstly, and most importantly, racism is ordinary. This is something that most people of colour will confirm. It is a norm, the way a society functions every day. Secondly, there is a system in place that favours white people over people of colour (8).

The first statement creates a situation in which it is hard to address racism and tackle it because its very existence in the society is not acknowledged. It is recognized only when there are obvious instances of racism, while subtle ones (that are much more frequent today) are ignored. The second statement deals with the issue that because racism advances the interests of white people, there is a majority of people in the society that does not have strong desires to change the current state of affairs as it would probably not benefit them in the future. The ideas behind these statements can be found in any literary work, or any other type of work, that is based on CRT or that was influenced by it and can be used as a basis for analysis.

When discussing the current situation with racism, it is necessary to point out that it is evident that things have drastically improved. Almost all large-scale racial injustices have been cured and there are practically no obvious instances of racism present in the contemporary society. Some scholars even argue that racism today is no longer a key issue for discrimination. They perceive that class has become more important than race. This can be true to some degree. However, race and class are connected and influence each other.

However, studies still continue to show that people continue to encounter difficulties in their lives because of their racial backgrounds. These can be seen when seeking loans, searching employment, or even facing imprisonment. Due to the all mentioned factors, the relationship between race and oppression continues to be one of the key topics of interest in CRT development.

2. 2. CRT Themes

Unlike some other academic approaches or frameworks for studying racism, or any other social phenomenon, that offer clear and precise steps that are necessary for a thorough analysis, or define strict guidelines, CRT is very different. Instead, CRT tackles racial issues through discussing different themes that are perceived to be beneficial in the neutralisation of racism and that have to be addressed and discussed over and over. This allows for more subtle racism to be evident over time as issues are analysed layer by layer. Although challenging as there are no strict rules that help decide whether or not something can be classified as belonging inside the CRT framework, this approach is used as the primary basis for analysis in this paper due to its dominance in narratives discussing racism these days.

Critical Race Theory authors base their work on four main themes which have divided opinions from the very beginning. Firstly, it is necessary to explain the existence of two groups that each see racism differently (Delgado and Stefancic 21). Idealists see racism as a way thinking, a set of attitudes, a discourse. For idealists, racism is a social construction. This means

that racism is present in the society only because people have created it. If this was not the case and if history was different, racism would never occur on its own. This idea, in itself, implies that things can be changed. Racism can be replaced with a new set of values through which people would learn not to discriminate others based on their skin colour and not to associate them with negative connotations.

At the same time, realists, argue that racism is much more than a set of learnt behaviour patterns. For them, racism is a way in which people divide power amongst themselves and something that decides social relations. Racism is in the very core of capitalism as the need to accumulate wealth has resulted in slavery. Although slavery is no longer present today, remnants of racism still remain.

The second signature theme of CRT is revisionist history (Delgado and Stefancic 26). This encompasses the analysis of historical records and an attempt to negotiate the same events, but from a different perspective, in this case, the perspective of the minority. Revisionist history aims to describe how the minorities have suffered and how historical events have influenced their lives in a negative way. More broadly, it aims to offer the perspective of the minorities at a certain time.

Delgado and Stefancic argue that the third signature theme of CRT scholars is a critique on liberalism as a framework for tackling racial issues in the American society (26). Many liberals believe in colour blindness, a theory that argues that the colour of the skin should not be taken into consideration not even to a slightest degree. They believe in equality and equal treatment of all persons, often insisting they do not even notice if somebody has a different skin colour. However, although this concept can sound appealing on paper, in real life, especially in a society with deep racial issues, it can lead to the absence of help for people in need due to their racial background, and as such has to be taken with great concern so as not to further worsen the position of people of colour in an effort to help them.

The final signature theme of Critical Race Theory, according to Delgado and Stefancic can be summarised in the concept of structural determinism (31). Structural determinism is a concept that in its core has the idea that the system that we currently have regarding structure and vocabulary is not sufficiently developed in order to properly address certain types of inequalities. It is lacking in terminology and complexity. Because we were all raised in a society with racism, it is impossible to understand it to the fullest without creating a new system that would accurately describe and name contemporary racial relations. Therefore, CRT has yielded several concepts or terms that aim to describe subtle versions of racism. The majority of them focus on the dominance of white people and emphasize that it is white people who continue to be racist today.

To sum up, these four main themes are the main tool that can be used to identify works that belong to the CRT framework and characterise it the most. Such works tackle racial issues focusing on either one or more of these themes, in an attempt to expose modern-day racism and to shed more light to racial issues. Therefore, any type of work that is based on these concepts can be seen as a part of the CRT literature that shares the same ideas.

2. 3. Whiteness

As Critical Race Theory continues to be developed, certain areas of interest become more frequently discussed by various scholars. Furthermore, the development of CRT has also enabled the creation of new frameworks for the study of racism in its more subtle form. Through these, certain key concepts and ideas continue to be evaluated.

One of the approaches that has its origins in CRT and has gained popularity in recent years is Critical Whiteness Studies. Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) is a growing field that encompasses different academic approaches to a complex cultural issue and aims to reveal the underlying reasons between structures such as white supremacy and white privilege. Barbara Applebaum, an expert in the field, in her book *Critical Whiteness Studies* states that relevant

research started as a historical analysis of the reasons why certain groups of European descent became associated with being white in America (2).

The most important objective in Critical Whiteness Studies is to make the concept of whiteness visible. This means that the idea behind studying whiteness is to expose and neutralise white dominated systems of power that are currently in place in many societies. These systems of power set norms which then shape the individuals in a society and construct “difference”, that is, the feeling of being different than the norm. The difference, as has been already discussed, is what leads to the creation of racism.

An important characteristic of whiteness is its invisibility (Applebaum 2). This means that those that are white do not even notice the social power they have, due to their skin colour. At the same time, those that do not have whiteness are clearly exposed to the negative effects of lacking it. For them, whiteness is very obvious and unavoidable.

When discussing whiteness in *White*, Richard Dyer recognizes the importance of further research in this area and argues that it is important to study whiteness, to “make visible what is rendered invisible when viewed as the normative state of existence. It is impossible, then, to gain an understanding of systemic racism without understanding how whiteness works.” (3). Furthermore, it is important to point out that the concept of whiteness is not only about race. Instead, the concept of whiteness symbolizes boundaries and being inside or outside of them. It is up to those that have whiteness to decide these boundaries. Clearly, people of colour do not have whiteness and this is why they are outside of the boundaries.

Similarly, to the concept of racism, there is no clear definition of whiteness. This is due to the fact that different scholars emphasize different aspects of whiteness. However, the majority of them agree that it is a socially constructed category that produces a system of privilege. One of the key concepts developed by CWS studies is white supremacy. White supremacy in this context does not have its usual meaning in which white social groups argue

their overall dominance over other racial groups. Instead, white supremacy refers to a modern-day version of racism where continual patterns of white dominance are present in the society, making everyday life more complicated to those belonging to other social groups and being outside social boundaries set by white people. Furthermore, these practices are practically invisible to white people who even argue their existence, much in the same way as they do not perceive whiteness. This is why the society is white dominated and being of any other race can lead to problems that are not there for white people, making their lives easier and often more successful.

2. 4. Microaggressions

It has already been discussed in this paper several times how racism has changed over the years and morphed into its current stage where it is not as obvious as before. Racial issues experts and scholars on this topic agree that racism has become invisible, subtle and indirect. It has continued to operate in people's minds, but at a subconscious level, where it continues the oppression of people of colour. A constant racial issue and an everyday struggle, present in modern-day societies, especially in America, is racial microaggressions. Microaggressions are continually used to re-confirm the current social relations.

Derald Wing Sue in *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation* states that the term racial microaggressions was first used by Chester Pierce in the 1970s referring to subtle and common insults directed to black Americans that are subconscious for those using them. Although used primarily for racial issues, the term can be expanded to any type of situation including a marginalized group (5).

Today, Sue defines racial microaggressions in *Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice* as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of colour. Perpetrators of

microaggressions are often unaware that they engage in such communications when they interact with racial/ethnic minorities.” (Sue et al. 271).

Therefore, although in most cases, microaggressions are subconscious and occur involuntarily, they still result in oppression of people of colour. They lead to them feeling subordinate or uncomfortable, often putting their race into focus and relating their personalities to their race. Microaggressions, might appear benevolent on the surface, but are a clear sign of the deep racial inequalities in the society. They illustrate the fact that racism is so deeply a part of the person, that it is able to shape how someone perceives reality altogether. One of the ideas of CRT is to analyse microaggressions in order to expose how racism appears in subtle forms, in places where people are not aware of it and are not expecting it. Just like the concept of whiteness is invisible to white people, so are microaggressions, and many would argue they use them. However, through CRT this problem is emphasized in an attempt to pay more attention to the ways in which narratives are constructed.

3. *Get out and Invisible Man*

3. 1. An Overview

Get Out is a blockbuster film by Jordan Peele that was released in 2017 as Peele’s directorial debut. Kevin Lawrence Henry in *A Review of Get Out: On White Terror and the Black Body* argues that the film itself can be classified under the horror genre. However, it is actually much more than a simple horror story. When analysed in greater detail, the film sends a much deeper message and it is possible to interpret it as a critique on the contemporary race relations in America. The film manages to convey everyday issues for people of colour, as well as tackle the more profound inequalities in the American society. These have recently been even more in focus than usual, due to the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement and similar ideologies seeking equal treatment of people of colour.

The plot revolves around the main protagonist, Chris Washington, a young black man who is a talented photographer and also in a recent relationship with Rose Armitage, a white girl from a seemingly affluent family. The couple embark on a trip to visit Rose's parents at their family house, away from the city. Rose's parents are Dean Armitage, a neurosurgeon and his wife Missy, a psychologist. Even before starting their trip, Chris fears potential problems once Rose's parents realize his skin colour is black, the fact they might possibly not be aware of. However, Rose repeatedly assures him that her parents are liberals who value equality and diversity and do not care about things such as skin colour as they do not hold any racist views (Henry 3).

The trip does not go as planned from the very beginning when the couple get into a car accident and hit a deer so the police have to be called on scene. A series of strange events continues at the Armitage house where Chris realizes that all the servants in the family are black and behave rather strangely. During their stay, Chris is hypnotized by Missy in an attempt to cure his smoking habit when she makes him enter the "sunken place" where he loses control over his body and mind. Furthermore, the Armitage family organize a gathering for their exclusively white friends, where Chris vaguely recognizes the only black guest who warns him to "get out", during a seizure triggered by Chris's flash photography.

Upset by these events Chris and his girlfriend Rose decide to take a walk in the woods where they agree to leave immediately. In the meantime, the Armitage family hold a silent auction where their white guests bid for Chris's black body. The story unfolds at the very end when Chris realizes that the entire Armitage family, including Rose, was planning to kidnap him, hypnotize him and perform a brain surgery in order to possess control over his body and mind and keep him permanently in the "sunken place". However, Chris manages to escape unhurt, killing the Armitage family in the process in an attempt to free himself (Henry 3).

On the other hand, *Invisible Man* is a famous novel written by Ralph Ellison and first published in 1952. It remains Ellison's only published work. Today, it is considered as one of the greatest literary works of the African-American literature and American literature in general, being relevant even in the modern era. Drew Milne in his review of the novel titled *Invisible Man* argues the importance of the novel as it paints a vivid picture of racism in the American society at that time, and the daily lives for people of colour and their search for identity and purpose, that is, defining the social role for a young black man.

The main character of Ellison's novel is a young black man who remains nameless throughout the book and is the narrator of the story about his life and how the events that happened to him have led him to the place he finds himself in now. The narrator claims to be an invisible man, hence the title, and explains the reasons behind it in the very opening chapter of the novel (Ellison 3). However, the narrator in *Invisible Man* argues that his invisibility is not of a physical type, meaning that his body is literally invisible to others. Instead, he is invisible as a person (Ellison 4). The reason behind this is in the way other people perceive the world and the society around them. Other people, mostly white people, simply refuse to see him. The narrator does not complain about his invisibility and has grown used to it. He argues that it might even have certain positive aspects. He has simply accepted his invisibility and learned to live with it.

To summarize the novel and the narrator's life to this point, the central details of his story start somewhere in the 1920s and 1930s. This happens in the American South that was extremely racially divided at the time. He struggles to leave the South and is awarded a scholarship for a Black college. Afterwards, he heads for New York hoping he would find better luck there and find a place where he would feel as a member of a community, a place that would offer him purpose in life.

However, the encounters he makes in New York are similar to his past bad experiences and are all a result of his skin colour. The people he meets disappoint him one after the other and all of them let him down. At one point he witnesses another black man being shot by the police for practically no reason which even further distances him from others and makes him feel invisible. The police also play a vital role in him going underground. This happened when he accidentally fell in an open manhole cover while running away from two white police officers. Instead of helping a man who has fallen inside the sewer to get out, the white police officers mock him and decide to close the manhole cover above him once they realise he is black. All these events have made him reach a decision of staying underground forever, living a true invisible life just like the invisible man he feels he is. However, by the end of the novel, the narrator feels he is ready to re-emerge back to the society and feels that he deserves to make himself visible. He states that the ending of his story is at the same time a new beginning for him and an opportunity to start to integrate into the society (Ellison 12).

When these two works are analysed as a whole, searching for the elements of Critical Race Theory, it is possible to reach certain conclusions. Firstly, it is clear that the plot of the film itself follows a classic horror story where somebody in power oppresses those that do not have it. This is a common theme in American horror films and *Get Out* does not deviate from the usual standards from this perspective. However, the situation here is different as the victim is black, and it is usually the other way around. This is also what is interesting about the novel as the perspective of black people is rarely a topic of concern of many films or literary works. It is as if they are invisible in a way, just like the novel suggests, making their story not important, while in fact, due to the oppression they face it should be often discussed. Both these works stand out as they aim to prioritize black people and try to explain how certain life situations make them feel and what the world looks like from their perspective. This is clearly in line with CRT as the very idea behind it is to make issues like these visible and to create

narratives that discuss them. The two works also follow the two main statements of CRT, that is, they portray racism as ordinary, a part of everyday life for every black person, while at the same time, the white man is seen as the one that oppresses blacks, often without even realising it.

3. 2. The Elements of CRT

When it comes to a more detailed analysis of these two works from the perspective of racial issues and the way they represent people of colour, several situations can be addressed individually, this paper focusing on how these fit into the CRT framework and why. It is rather obvious that the plot of the film depicts a racial problem from the not so distant past where a group of white people explicitly aims to take control over the lives of black characters, trading them and enslaving them for their private purposes. It is a clear representation of slavery that was once a part of the American society. The very image of the silent auction that is held for Chris takes the viewer back to a different time when this was common practice. The significance behind such acts and the racial inequalities it has created does not have to be addressed in more detail, as it should be clear to every individual how wrong it is. Furthermore, the consequences of it have already been discussed by many scholars to this day.

However, when looking beneath the surface, the film, in many instances, depicts other more subtle racial issues that black people face in a society dominated by whiteness. These issues bear relevance nowadays and should not be overlooked. The existence of such a situation has been mentioned several times, and is the focus in negotiating modern racism in its subtle form and the basis of CRT. Peele tackles these from the very beginning of the film through the opening scene and continues to do so throughout the entire duration of *Get Out*.

Invisible Man is very similar in this aspect. Although the plot has many clear representations of racial inequalities and in many instances the novel deals with violence and hardship that black people were exposed to at the time, it has another, deeper, dimension where

it puts the black character in focus not only to show the events that happened to him, but rather to examine how these events influence him as a person, how they make him feel and how difficult it is to live in such a white dominated society.

When analysing the film for the elements of the CRT framework it is possible to find many similarities between the two and to once again confirm that it follows the two basic statements that summarize CRT. Overall, *Get Out* portrays how racism in America is ordinary, a key issue proposed by CRT. The racial issues that the film tackles are everyday occurrences for people of colour, in this case black, in a society where the dominance of white people is not an issue. It represents real life of the majority, not isolated incidents. This is why the situations that Chris finds himself in throughout the first part of the film are never questioned. His race makes simple things complicated for him without him or the people around him even realising it. At the same time, white people are in a favourable position. They are the ones that Chris fears and that make him uncomfortable at first, later on, exposing their dominance to the fullest. The character of Chris can be seen as any black male that lives in America today as they all share the same issues to some degree. The narrator in *Invisible Man* is in a similar position. His entire life has been influenced by the fact that he is black. He feels that he is less worthy because of his skin colour and often does not question the role that the society put him in. He acknowledges that the white man is superior to him and that he as a person is less important.

Both *Get Out* and *Invisible Man* also follow many of the signature themes of CRT. The very idea behind Peele's and Ellison's desire to tackle racial issue and to expose them to everyone, makes them realists and idealists at the same time. The authors recognize how deeply racism has affected the society but at the same time hope to change it by making it visible. By doing so, the struggles of black people will be minimised. Furthermore, these works can be interpreted as a part of the revisionist history theme of Critical Race Theory. That is, they put

black people in the centre, telling the story from their perspective and portraying their thoughts and feelings.

Peele critiques liberalism by portraying the Armitage family as liberals who on the surface value equality, but in reality, only benefit from the current situation and do not desire any change. By doing so, he aims to expose that liberalism is not an adequate way of negotiating racism, because it only masks it and hides it behind liberal views, while all the central issues remain unsolved. By incorporating various microaggressions in the film, Peele aims to expose how racism is subtly all around us, despite people not being aware of it. The language aimed at the narrator is on the other hand much more straightforward as it is filled with racial slurs and insults, something that is hard to imagine these days and a proof of how racism has evolved over time.

Finally, it is evident that idea behind writing such works is actually a need for commentary on the current situation and an emphasis that it will take a lot of effort to completely change how the society functions. It is necessary to produce a new set of values and social norms that would ensure that social relations are based on equality, rather than subordination. This is the core of what CRT aims to expose and normalise and is definitely something that should be the goal.

3. 3. The Opening Scene

The opening scene of *Get Out* is a clear example of the influence of Critical Race Theory on the film and the director. It starts with a young black male character seen walking through a seemingly affluent white suburb at night while talking on his phone (*Get Out* 0:54-3:44). Later on, in the film, the viewer recognizes this character as Andre, who Chris is met with at the gathering organized by the Armitage family and is one of his former acquaintances from Brooklyn. Such an image is a familiar horror film trope. Elizabeth Patton in *Get Out and the legacy of sundown suburbs in post-racial America* argues that a scene depicting a character

walking alone in an unfamiliar dark space is very common in horror films (351). However, Peele gives it a twist because in this instance, the character is a young black male, who Peele uses to illustrate white supremacy and the fears of black people later on in the film.

The setting of the scene in the suburb is an interesting choice by the director. This is because over the years, suburbs became associated with whiteness, especially in television, films and the media. Suburbs were represented as idealized places reserved only for the white middle class, where no people of colour were wanted or sometimes even allowed. At the same time, blacks were usually represented completely the opposite, appearing in more urban areas, associated with crime and violence (Patton 351). Therefore, the image of Andre walking through a suburb at night, visibly uncomfortable, is in itself an unexpected change in the eyes of the viewer, despite the fact that suburbs today are no longer primarily reserved for white people, but are home to many interracial groups, which makes the entire situation even more ironic.

It is clear from the very beginning of the opening scene that Andre's body language shows that he does not feel comfortable at this location and is visibly scared. He wants to leave the suburb as soon as possible and he finds it confusing. Andre feels that he does not belong there. This is evident even from the dialogue he has over the phone when he states that he feels like a sore thumb there.

Immediately, he notices a white car starting to follow him which makes him even more nervous as he realises that he is actually in danger. He decides to change direction in order to get away. However, the man from the car soon catches him and chokes him to the point he loses consciousness. The scene ends with the man putting Andre's body in his car and leaving with the music playing without any complications.

The imagery behind this scene is quite complex and some aspects can be interpreted in various ways. However, it is clear that the image of a black man walking through a suburb at

night is very unusual for some reason, both for the character himself and for the viewer at the same time. There should be no reason for Andre to feel unsafe in the suburb, as he is not doing anything wrong. He has every right to be there and there should be no reason for him to fear for his life.

However, probably due to his prior engagements with white people and his exposure to a society filled with this modern-day version of racism in which he is on paper allowed to be in the suburb, but at the same time is not wanted there because of his skin colour, Andre is overwhelmed with the urge to leave. This social climate favouring white people and often criminalizing blacks is what causes him to question his choices and this is what Peele aims to illustrate in this scene. The scene is a clear representation of internalised racism. Andre, himself, feels that the suburb is not a place for him. It is reserved only for white people and a black man should not be walking around there, especially at night. Although this should not be an issue, due to the social climate, Andre is convinced this is true.

The choice of the car that is driven by the man abducting Andre is also very interesting in this situation and can even be interpreted in the context of race. It is an older Porsche, a classic sports car in white. As such, it is common to see wealthy white people driving it. The car definitely belongs in the suburbs and does not look out of place or sticks out like Andre, further deepening the stereotype. It is immediately suspicious to Andre who does not expect such a car to be following him. The very colour of the car is also significant, representing white as something that black people should fear from. In the end, Andre is taken to the boot of the white car suggesting that ultimately whiteness gives you the power to decide what to do with black people, using them in whatever way is necessary.

The fact that nobody put any real effort when looking for Andre after his disappearance, which is evident later on in the film, is yet another interpretation of the CRT theme arguing that racism is ordinary. Many black people live on the margins of the society where their lives

simply do not have the same value as those of white people and nobody does anything to resolve this issue.

When comparing Andre with the narrator in *Invisible Man* it is possible to find many similarities in the emotions they go through in various social situations. They both feel out of place and have a sense that they do not belong. They feel that nobody will actually care who they are and what their intentions are, they will only be judged on the basis of their skin colour. It is ironic that although the narrator feels invisible, he is actually very aware of how people perceive him. He is very aware of how visible his skin colour is. Although his intentions are for the most part positive and not threatening towards anyone, he is seen as a threat. Situations like these are exactly what CRT aims to uncover and are a clear sign of the racial divide that presents black people as the enemy without any factual reason.

3. 4. The Encounter with the Police

As mentioned before, in *Get Out*, while driving to Rose's parents' house, the couple get into a car accident, hitting a deer and damaging their car. The next scene shows Rose talking to a white police officer about the details of the accident. The police officer, at one point, asks Chris to provide his driver's license, which Chris immediately does. However, Rose warns him he is not obliged to do anything as he was not the one driving the car, repeating the same thing to the police officer and suggesting he is wrongfully targeting him. The police officer tries to explain himself, but fails to persuade the couple he is allowed to do that and decides to quickly leave (*Get Out* 8:30-13:12).

Peele uses this short exchange as a way to illustrate the struggles of black people when it comes to law enforcement and the impact it has on their daily lives. Issues like these are in the centre of media discourse these days. This is also an ongoing theme both within the CRT framework and within the American society and one of the main issues for not just black people,

but also for any other individual that is not white. Issues like these are also incorporated into *Invisible Man* several times, showing how little has been done to resolve them over time.

According to Rebecca Barnett in *On Get Out and the Problem of Racialized Aliveness*, it is clear that the police officer was working with an assumption that Chris was somehow guilty of something even though there was no evidence suggesting that was true (205). The police officer, by asking him to provide his driver's license, targeted him only on the basis of his skin colour and by doing so infringed his rights. This is clear from the way he tried to deescalate the situation and leave when Rose implicitly accused him of being prejudiced as he was unable to justify his actions. His actions would probably be very different if Chris was white. This is clearly an instance of institutionalised racism, something that many black people go through. The institutions that are here to protect everyone, often end up doing the opposite, just like with Chris.

The relationship between the police, law and the black community is a very complex one. It has deep effects on the life of the black individual as it has the power to change lives. Additionally, it affects the whole society and determines the social climate. In recent years, it came, even more, in focus with the rise of the Black Lives Matter movements and similar organizations, seeking for a better and a fairer approach from the police when it comes to black individuals. Certain terms became associated with it, racial profiling being one of the most notable ones.

Racial profiling refers to the use of race as a key factor in police decisions to stop and interrogate citizens. When discussing racial profiling in *Perceptions of Racial Profiling: Race, Class, And Personal Experience*, Ronald Weitzer and Steven A. Tuch argue that the term is usually associated with police-initiated traffic stops, although it can be used for various other contexts (Weitzer and Tuch 435). When a traffic stop is initiated on a racial basis, and the person being stopped is aware of it, the situation is more likely to escalate into a confrontation resulting

with imprisonment, injuries or sometimes even death by the police. This is rarely the case for anyone that has whiteness.

Another key issue that has to be taken into consideration here is the relationship between race and class. According to Weitzer and Tuch social class is a variable that is especially important in shaping individual's attitudes and experiences (437). Research on this topic suggests that there is increasing economic polarization between the black population into middle-class and disadvantaged segments. These two subgroups are seen differently in the eyes of the police and it can be argued that the middle-class blacks are shielded from many negative aspects that the disadvantaged segments face.

Therefore, in the particular scene at question here, the police officer was not only prejudiced to Chris because of his skin colour, but was also analysing his social status in order to determine whether he was suspicious or not and how to act towards him. It is interesting to analyse this situation and its possible outcomes if Rose did not decide to interfere, or even if she was not present there at all.

Chris immediately reacts to the officer's order and does not contradict him. However, because Rose possesses whiteness, she is not afraid to talk back to the police officer and demand fair treatment for Chris. This brief exchange paints a very clear picture of how the American society works when it comes to police and race. Those that have whiteness are tolerated with much more and do not fear the police. At the same time, people of colour are much more frequently targeted, even if they did nothing wrong. Again, clearly instances of institutionalised racism.

Black people, when dealing with the police, are guaranteed equal treatment only if a white person is there to step in and weigh the situation in their favour. This is a clear sign of the subtle racial issues still present in the American society and is the reason Peele chose to incorporate it into his film. After all, this is also clear to both Chris and Rose when later on

Chris thanks Rose for stepping in and protecting him and she acknowledges him by saying she will not allow anybody to mess with her man (*Get Out* 13:15-13:30).

The relationship with the police is also a key topic in *Invisible Man*, another very important characteristic of CRT that can be recognized. From the stories of the narrator in *Invisible Man* it is possible to conclude that things used to be even worse for black people despite them having equal rights, at least on paper, at one point. The encounters with the police that shape the narrator into a person he has later become are firstly an incident when a black man was shot and killed in front of him by the police and afterwards him falling into an open manhole cover and the officers closing it above him and mocking him at the same time. The latter one affected him so much that it was the final thing to make him stay underground and live his invisibility to the fullest.

Such experiences are shared between all black people to some degree and although the police were much more brutal for the narrator, than for Chris, it is possible to say that the black man remains invisible to some degree to this day in this context. Each person is unique and it is impossible to judge them thoroughly just by looking at someone. Institutionalised racism that can be identified in such situations has been reduced in this area, of course, but not completely neutralised and remains one of the central themes of CRT. However, for black people, and for people of colour in general, based on the colour of their skin, they are immediately “diagnosed” with being black or different than the norm and therefore, they are seen as less worthy and even a possible danger to white people around them. Everything they stand for is shadowed by their blackness in a white dominated world where they are constantly marginalized.

However, both Chris and the narrator in *Invisible Man* can also be seen as relative winners who managed to escape their blackness and to defeat the white man and whiteness and become visible again. This is because Chris manages to escape the Armitage family, just by the power of his own will and ingenuity and achieve freedom.

At the same time, the narrator emphasizes that despite all the bad things that happened to him and the position the society put him in, visible in the fact that he was forced to live underground and invisible, he finally feels that a time has come for him to re-emerge and join the society again. Therefore, this shows that his hope is still there, intact. The narrator believes that there will be a place for him in the society and that he will eventually become just as visible as a white man. This bears the metaphorical meaning for him that racism will one day cease to exist and all people, regardless of their skin colour, will be treated equally.

Furthermore, it is also possible to recognize yet another aspect of CRT. That is, both Chris and the narrator are aware of the injustice they are exposed to. They feel that the white man dominates their lives which should not be the case. They have managed to recognize racism in all its form and they are doing their best to fight back in order to ensure equality and secure a place for them in the society. This is why Chris is portrayed as having the will power to avoid being hypnotized while at the same time the narrator constantly argues for equality between the races throughout the novel.

3. 5. The “Sunken Place”

Another important element of the film, that is also present in the novel, and that needs to be addressed separately is an analysis of the “sunken place”. The “sunken place” is a crucial element, not just for the plot of the film, but it also serves as Peele’s commentary on the position of black people in the society, and as such can be interpreted in multiple ways. It serves to emphasize how deeply unjust the American society is, and is a clear representation of CRT at work.

Chris is first taken to the “sunken place” when he is hypnotized by Rose’s mother, Missy, in an attempt to cure his smoking habit, or at least, he is lead to believe that is the real reason behind it. Missy is a psychologist who specializes in hypnotization and performs her procedure on Chris without him wanting to participate (*Get Out* 31:00-36:45). She uses a

tablespoon as an instrument for the hypnosis, that she loudly bangs against a cup of tea in order to trigger Chris to fall under her control.

The “sunken place” is an empty black void, deprived of everything in which Chris is seen floating around in despair. At the “sunken place” Chris is unable to control his body or produce any sound, although he is seen trying to, he just falls deeper and deeper inside. He is helpless and cannot take any control over his life. At one point, he is presented with a television with a programme playing his life in front of him. He has no power to control it, just watch it as a bystander as his story unfolds.

The “sunken place” reappears in the film again, close to the ending (*Get Out* 1:10:00-1:10:47), once Chris realizes what is actually going on and what the Armitage family has planned to do with him. Natasha Holmes and Frances Lang in *One year later to Black and White perspectives on Get Out* argue that “the sunken place” can be seen as a psychological state of existence reserved for black characters who are aware what is happening to them and their minds are intact (5). However, just like in real life, they are stripped of their autonomy and freedom and cannot regain control.

The symbolics behind the “sunken place” can be interpreted in many ways but its relevance is undisputable. Therefore, different authors, when talking about it, focus on individual aspects creating their own narratives. However, certain things are very clear. The “sunken place” was used by Peele as a metaphor for the existence of black people in a white dominated society. The “sunken place” aims to describe and visualise what it feels like to be black. It is a representation of life under white supremacy, and can be understood as a part of the revisionist history theme of CRT as it aims to offer a new perspective on social relations.

First of all, it is necessary to point out that the “sunken place” was created by a white privileged woman of a higher social class. It is this kind of people that are in the core of racial issues in the modern-day society. They are the ones being unaware of their whiteness and at the

same time being responsible for an unjust treatment of black people. They see themselves as having the right to decide what is best for others and being the one chosen to decide the norms that others must follow. This group of people is, according to CRT scholars, guilty for all the racial problems still present. Therefore, the problems that black people face mostly originate from the position that the white people have put them in and continue to keep them there.

Furthermore, once the blacks have been put in this kind of a subordinate situation in a white dominated society, they lose all power and control over their lives and cannot change anything, although they have the desire to improve their standing. However, they are met with prejudice and their voices are simply not heard. This is why Chris is seen trying to yell but is unable to. All that is left for black people is to watch how their life takes them to places they did not want to be in, the same way that Chris watches himself on the television. As each moment of their lives passes by, they fall deeper and deeper under the dominance of white people.

Additionally, it is arguable to what extent do white people even desire a better social position for blacks, assuming they are aware of the social injustice. It cannot be disputed that the subordination of the black race and slavery has resulted in considerable wealth accumulation for white people and allowed them an enjoyable lifestyle based on someone else doing their work. Therefore, it is possible that for many white people the blacks belong to the sunken place and that the current way the society functions is actually desired as it is beneficial for them.

This notion is embodied in the slave auction scene where a group of white people have no issues with bidding on Chris's black body, just like their ancestors did. For them, the "sunken place" is an ideal place for black people. When they are in the "sunken place", white people are free to do with them what they want and for many people this is an easy way to use blacks for personal benefits.

An interesting view of the “sunken place” is presented by Michael Jarvis in *Jordan Peele’s Get Out* who sees it as a metaphor for the prison system in America (108). Imprisonment is a reoccurring issue when discussing race in the American society. The number of incarcerated black people in America is exceptionally high when compared to other races. At the same time, the prison system fails to rehabilitate them in order to be a functioning member of the society and many black people see criminal activities as the only option that is available to them once they get back out and try to lead a normal life. This is also in line with CRT as scholars argue that the legal system of America is set in a way that favours whites and disadvantages blacks.

Therefore, Peele’s “sunken place” can be directly compared to the prison system. This is where blacks are captured, just like Chris was, and taken against their will, to a place that slowly aims to gain control over every little aspect of their life. The prison system does not provide them with enough help or any other means to improve their life, hence the empty void around Chris in the “sunken place”. The prison system and the law in general are white dominated and created by white people to benefit themselves and at the same time marginalise and exploit blacks, just like the idea behind the “sunken place”.

It is interesting that Ellison uses the same metaphor to explain the same concepts. The narrator is forced to live underground as the white man has designated that it is the best place for him. He has to remain invisible and has no control over his life. In this way, although their “prison” is presented in a slightly different way, both Chris and the narrator share the same experiences and the same problems.

Therefore, despite the time that has passed between them, the real racial issues are still present and have not been resolved. Everything that is true about Chris’s position is also true for the narrator, and vice versa. Just like the CRT framework suggests, despite the fact that things look better on the surface, when analysed more thoroughly, all the racial issues are still

here and all black people might find themselves in the “sunken place” where they are “invisible” to others.

3. 6. The Talents

It is important to point another very important fact about the main characters of the film and the novel. While Chris is a talented photographer, the narrator is a gifted public speaker. Chris is seen as often holding his camera in an effort to capture a great shot, and is later on even praised for his work by a famous blind art collector.

The narrator starts his story with an event where he was supposed to hold an important speech about equality to a group of white men. The narrator prepared his speech and rehearsed it in his head several times before the event, feeling it was important for him to relay all the messages he has prepared, hoping the white men would understand and value his views on equality and the position of black men. However, instead of being praised for his talent and his speech, the white men used him just for their entertainment. They orchestrated a physical fight between the black boys and turned them all against each other. After that, they further humiliated them by making them collect money which turned out to be fake. All these events show that the white men had no respect for the boys, never treating them like human beings.

Chris’s and the narrator’s talents are always shadowed by their skin colour. People judge them primarily on the basis of their race, while their personalities are secondary. The traits of their personality are shadowed by their skin colour. This is a metaphor for their invisibility. Despite their talent, the white men are not interested in them as people, but are just looking for a way to use their black body for their personal interests and gains, that is either for entertainment with the narrator, or for the ability to see with Chris and the blind art collector.

The blind art collector bids to buy Chris like a slave just for his body and for his eyes and eventually succeeds to do so. He feels that the eyes will bring him more money as it is the eyes that are able to capture great artistic value which he desires, and not Chris himself. This

further drives the point of how unimportant his personality is to the white man and how invisible he is.

3. 7. Microaggressions and Language

One of the key elements that CRT emphasizes is the use of problematic microaggressions in everyday speech which subordinate black people and present them in a negative manner. In this way, language is used to further divide people on the basis of their race. Through analysis it is possible to find ideas and motives that are racist and are in the centre of the modern-day study of racism. Microaggressions are also where racism is most visible today. Both the film and the novel can be analysed from this perspective making it obvious that many dialogs are full of microaggressions.

When talking about *Get Out*, these are mostly present at the beginning scenes of the film, as at that point the viewer does still not have the perception of the cruelty and racial injustice that Chris will face. Afterwards, microaggressions turn into visible displays of aggression towards Chris. Language like this is also far more common in *Invisible Man* as it is much more explicit in terms of race.

Microaggressions start from the very beginning of the film when Rose assures Chris that her parents will like him, because her father voted for Obama. By doing so, Rose is simplifying the entire situation and reducing complex racial and political relations to a simple fact. She is also assuming that president Obama represents the entire black population, which is simply not true. The same thing happens again when immediately upon their arrival at the house, Rose's father utters these exact words to Chris, which is another clear case of microaggressions. Microaggressions towards Chris continue on throughout the film. For instance, during dinner, Rose's brother has too much to drink and continually steers the conversation to focus on Chris's black body and its physical abilities that are according to him far beyond those of white people. However, microaggressions reach their peak at the gathering

organized by the Armitage family when all the white people are very interested in Chris and many of them approach him with questions. This scene, perfectly illustrates how awkward such conversations can be to black people and makes the CRT theme clearly visible.

All these questions asked by white people are concerned with his race and are full of the usual prejudice and stereotypes associated with black people. The questions are visibly disturbing to Chris and make him feel uncomfortable. This is also acknowledged by Rose, who agrees with Chris that such actions are not normal, or at least she pretends to be thinking that way. This is why Chris engages Andre in a conversation, the only other black person invited to the gathering, hoping he will share his feelings. However, not even Andre is of any help due to him already being under control, probably in the “sunken place”.

The problem with microaggressions in the film, just like in everyday life, is that they perpetuate the feeling of difference. It has been stated many times throughout this paper that the theoretical approaches to racism all emphasize the existence of a difference as the main reason for racism. Therefore, microaggressions further emphasize that being white is normal and being black, or any other colour for that matter, is automatically not as desirable or is seen as being different than the norm. However, later on, it becomes clear that all involved in these scenes are guilty of much more than subtle racism in the form of microaggressions and that their perception or race is fundamentally wrong.

At the same time, when analysing how other people address the narrator and the language they use, it is possible to recognize that instead of microaggressions there are many occasions when explicit insults are directed to him, often for no reason and with many racial slurs and derogatory terms. Understandably, being addressed in this way, no person would ever feel comfortable in any situation. The language here serves a purpose and that is to remind the black man of his place and to emphasize that he is different because of his skin colour and to send a message that in a way the white man is always superior to him.

Understandably, this is an area where the most progress has been made, because language with explicit racial insults is no longer tolerated. However, as mentioned before, Chris and all black people still feel racism in everyday situations through microaggressions and this is what Peele aims to describe by incorporating so many in the film. This is in lines with the CRT framework as it emphasizes the use of microaggressions as one of the obvious ways in which racism continues to operate in the modern society and how language can be used to create oppression.

4. Conclusion

Racism has been an ongoing problem for many Americans and has resulted with a seemingly modern society with deep social inequalities and an inability to accept difference of any kind, especially a difference in race. The study of racism has emphasized the necessity to tackle racial issues at all levels, in order to minimise the negative effects it has on everyday lives of people of colour and the society as a whole. Critical Race Theory, as the most prominent approach in the study of racism today argues that the nature of racism has changed and that although it is more subtle and implicit nowadays, it is still very present and an issue that has to be resolved.

This paper examines how racial issues are presented in *Get Out* and *Invisible Man* and whether or not these works can be seen as belonging inside the Critical Race Theory framework, as proposed by Delgado and Stefancic. Through an analysis of the works as a whole and through focus on several individual scenes it can be concluded that there are many elements of CRT that can be found, both in the film, and in the novel, which place them inside the CRT framework.

Firstly, racism is portrayed as an ordinary occurrence for black people which is a central statement of CRT. Secondly, the white man is portrayed as the one that subordinates black people and perpetuates their oppression and has a favourable position in the society.

Furthermore, the elements of several main CRT themes can be found in these works, showing that they share views on racial issues that are in line with CRT.

Based on the analysis and the comparison of *Get Out* and *Invisible Man* that was carried out, it can be concluded that the overall position of black people has improved. However, they are still not perceived as equal members of the society, either by white people, or by themselves. Despite the fact that a lot of time has passed between when these two works were created, many racial issues presented in them are very similar and, unfortunately, remain unresolved to this day.

Works Cited

- Applebaum, Barbara. *Critical Whiteness Studies*. Syracuse University, 2016.
- Barnett, Rebecca. *On Get Out and the Problem of Racialized Aliveness*. Studies in Gender and Sexuality, 2019.
- Delgado, Richard, and Jean Stefancic. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*. New York University Press, 2001.
- Dyer, Richard. *White*. Routledge, New York, 1997.
- Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. Random House, 1952.
- Fredrickson, George M. *Racism: A Short History*. Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Get Out*. Directed by Jordan Peele, Blumhouse Productions, 2017.
- Henry, Kevin Lawrence. *A Review of Get Out: On White Terror and the Black Body*. Equity & Excellence in Education, 2017.
- Holmes, Natasha and Frances Lang. *One year later to Black and White perspectives on Get Out*. Int J Appl Psychoanal Studies, 2018.
- Jarvis, Michael. *Jordan Peele's Get Out*. Liverpool University Press, 2018.
- Jones, Camara Phyllis. *Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener's Tale*. American Journal of Public Health, 2000.
- Memmi, Albert. *Racism*. University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- Milne, Drew. *Invisible Man*. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2017.
- Patton, Elizabeth. *Get Out and the legacy of sundown suburbs in post-racial America*. New Review of Film and Television Studies, 2019.
- Sue, Derald Wing. *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2010.

Sue, Derald Wing, et al. *Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice*. American Psychologist, 2007.

Weitzer, Ronald and Steven A. Tuch. *Perceptions of Racial Profiling: Race, Class, And Personal Experience*. George Washington University, 2002.

Summary

Racial Issues in Get Out

This paper deals with the portrayal of racial issues in Jordan Peele's horror film *Get Out*. Racial issues have been an ongoing problem in the American society throughout history that continues to be in the centre of media discourse even today. The paper aims to summarize some basic concepts when it comes to race, racism and racial relations and to explain the main ideas behind Critical Race Theory, the most prominent approach in the study of racism, which claims that the nature of racism has changed over time. Because racism is still present, it needs to be continually discussed in order to neutralise the negative effects it has on the society and the individual. The paper analyses race and racial issues in *Get Out* and compares how these are represented in *Invisible Man*, a famous novel by Ralph Ellison, in an effort to determine whether or not these two works can be seen as belonging inside the Critical Race Theory framework, and why.

Key words: Race, Racism, Microaggression, Critical Race Theory, *Get Out*, *Invisible Man*.

Sažetak

Rasna problematika i Get Out

Ovaj rad se bavi rasnom problematikom prikazanom u horor filmu Jordana Peelea *Get Out*. Rasna pitanja su izražen problem američkog društva kroz povijest koji je i danas u središtu medijskog diskursa. Cilj rada je objasniti neke osnovne pojmove kada je riječ o rasi, rasizmu i rasnim odnosima te sažeti glavne ideje koje stoje iza Critical Race teorije, najistaknutijeg pristupa u proučavanju rasizma, koji tvrdi da se priroda rasizma s vremenom promijenila. Budući da je rasizam još uvijek prisutan, o njemu treba kontinuirano raspravljati kako bi se neutralizirali negativni učinci koje ima na društvo i pojedinca. Rad analizira rasu i rasna pitanja u filmu *Get Out* i uspoređuje ih s onima u *Invisible Man*, poznatom romanu Ralpa Ellisona, nastojeći utvrditi nalaze li se ova dva djela unutar okvira Critical Race teorije i zašto.

Ključne riječi: Rasa, Rasizam, Mikroagresija, Critical Race teorija, *Get Out*, *Invisible Man*.