

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Problem

Culture is a result of work, creation, creativity, ideas that become the identity of a region that develops in society from generation to generation. Culture is formed from various elements including film works in many countries. In this modern era, the film has been growing to be an interesting industry for the people who want to express their creative thought and skill. The majority of the filmmakers believe that film can be utilized as a medium to express their opinions and thoughts. Similar to drama, the movie speaks visually and verbally, in action and gesture, and verbally in dialogue particularly like in the movie *Killers of the Flower Moon* (2023), is an adaptation of David Grann's nonfiction category bestseller book, "Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI" (Grann, 2017). The film *Killers of the Flower Moon* (2023) directed by Martin Scorsese, one of Hollywood's most recognised and finest film directors, and one of the best directors of all time, has altered the cinematic landscape for decades. Martin Scorsese, that has the ability to fully immerse people in a tale while mixing innovation with classic cinema. Scorsese expertly realises his vision using experimental and traditional approaches, making pictures that captivate spectators and leave them wanting more despite their length. His distinct storytelling style and ability to create characters continue to inspire filmmakers and spectators alike, solidifying his body of work as a cinematic classic.

Based in the early 20th century, precisely in the 1920s, the film *Killers of the Flower Moon* (2023) depicts a gruesome chapter in American history called the Osage Reign of Terror. In it, members of the Osage Nation, which is a Native American tribe from Oklahoma, were systematically stalked and killed because of their new affluence from oil discovered beneath their tribal lands. The film, which boasts an all-star cast including Leonardo Di Caprio and Robert De Niro,

dramatizes the historical account of greed, betrayal, and institutional unfairness that defined this bleak period.

The Osage Nation, forcibly removed from their ancestral homeland in the Midwest to a reservation in Oklahoma, was confronted with a sudden economic windfall following the discovery of oil reserves beneath their land in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This wealth made them some of the wealthiest individuals on a per capita basis on the planet at the time. However, it also drew the attention of predatory and murderous foreigners who wanted to steal their wealth (Grann, 2017). The Reign of Terror, which stretched from the late 1910s through the 1930s, was characterized by a wave of killings and murders designed to kill Osage individuals and transfer their oil headrights to non-Native beneficiaries. This historical background is the foundation of Scorsese's filmmaking, offering a cinematic window through which to analyze the dynamics of power, identity, and cultural representation.

As a cultural artifact, *Killers of the Flower Moon* (2023) transcends the pure historical narrative; it is a tale that implicates the symbolic condition of Osage identity in colonial violence and erasure. The filmic representation of these occurrences elicits an examination of the processes through which Osage cultural identity is formed, maintained, or perhaps distorted through its visual and narrative motifs.

To analyze the symbolic meanings embedded in *Killers of the Flower Moon* (2023), this paper employs Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory as its analytical framework. Peirce, a 19th-century American philosopher, is widely regarded as one of the founding major figures of semiotics, the science of signs and their meanings (Peirce, 1931-1958). In contrast to Ferdinand de Saussure's dyadic model of semiotics, in which the relationship between the signifier and the signified is the priority, Charles Sanders Peirce's model is triadic, with an emphasis on the active cooperation of three components: the representamen (the form the sign takes), the object (to which the sign applies), and the interpretant (meaning or impact wrought in the thought processes of the interpreter) (Chandler, 2017).

Furthermore, the researcher would like to apply Peirce's theory to discover the latent meaning concealed in the visual, narrative, and explain Historical trauma that symbolically represented in the film.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

The issue being examined in this research is the absence of in-depth exploration of how *Killers of the Flower Moon* (2023) portrays Osage cultural identity through the use of semiotic elements. Although the film has been lauded for both its historical validity and aesthetic value, there is limited scholarly inquiry into its symbolic significance.

1.3 Limitations of the Problem

The author concentrates on the symbolic portrayal of Osage cultural identity in *Killers of the Flower Moon* (2023). Although the film is expansive enough to encompass general colonialism and structural violence, this examination will concentrate mainly on symbols with particular relevance to Osage culture. The analysis is confined to the textual and visual content of the film and expressly omits the consideration of audience reception and production contexts.

1.4 Formulation of the Problem

The current study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the principal symbols in *Killers of the Flower Moon*, and how do they work as icons, indices, or symbols?
2. In what ways do these symbols help represent Osage culture identity?
3. What larger themes, such as colonialism and resilience, are these symbols communicating?

1.5 Objectives of the Research

The general aims of this research are:

1. To identify and break down the visual, narrative, and sound symbols in Killers of the Flower Moon.
2. To analyze the meanings of these symbols in terms of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory.
3. To investigate how these symbols depict Osage cultural identity and the prevailing themes of colonialism and resistance.

1.6 Benefit of the Research

This study offers several benefits:

1. Contribution to Scholarship: This book is a semiotic study of a multi-award-winning film and therefore contributes to the field of film studies and cultural representation.
2. Cultural Insight: This section highlights the importance of symbols in portraying cultural identity and resilience in the film context, thus presenting a deeper understanding of Osage culture.
3. Practical Application: The findings can inform researchers and filmmakers on the correct application of semiotic material to represent indigenous cultures in an accurate and respectful way.

1.7 Systematic Organization of the Research

This research is organized as follows:

Chapter I: Introduction.

Presents the background, problem, objectives, and benefits of the study.

Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

Outlines Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, also reviews previous related studies literature on semiotics, and film analysis, of indigenous cultures.

Chapter III: Research Method.

Methodology of the analysis and collected data findings for the Research Purpose.

Chapter IV: Analysis and Discussion.

Analyzes the film's symbols of Osage cultural identity.

Chapter V: Conclusion.

Summarizes the findings and discusses the implications.

