



**THE REPRESENTATION OF WHITENESS IDEOLOGY IN  
RICK RIORDAN'S *THE HEROES OF OLYMPUS***

**THESIS**

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**UNIVERSITY OF JEMBER**

**2023**



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A thesis presented to the English Department,  
Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Jember as one of the requirements to obtain  
the Award of Sarjana Sastra Degree in English Study

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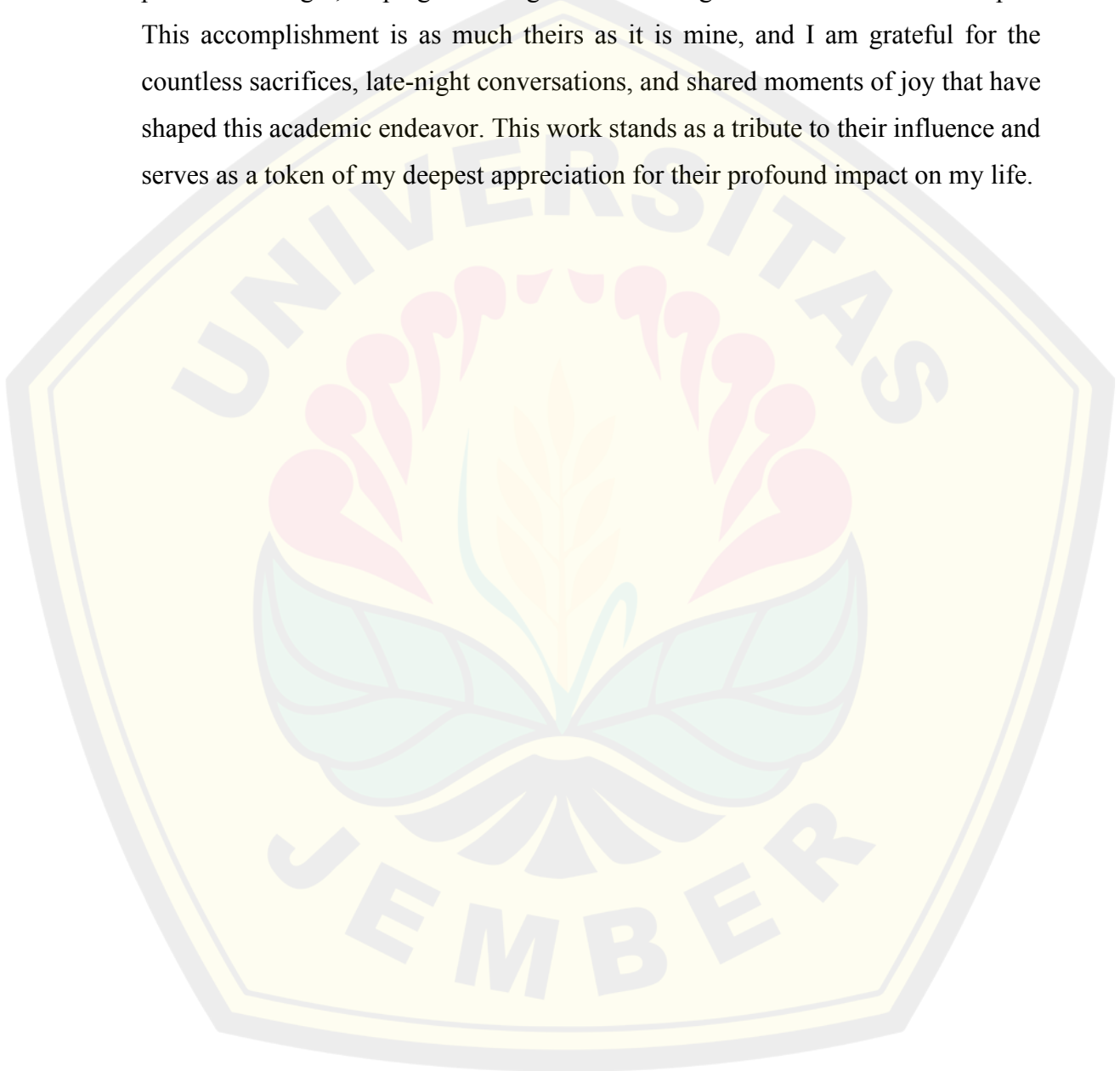
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**DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Tohir Nursito Utomo and Sri Muryani whose unwavering support, encouragement, and belief in my abilities have been the driving forces behind my academic journey. Their love and patience have been my pillars of strength, helping me navigate the challenges and celebrate the triumphs. This accomplishment is as much theirs as it is mine, and I am grateful for the countless sacrifices, late-night conversations, and shared moments of joy that have shaped this academic endeavor. This work stands as a tribute to their influence and serves as a token of my deepest appreciation for their profound impact on my life.



**MOTTO**

“Everything you lose is a step you take.”

(Taylor Swift)



**DECLARATION**

I hereby state that this thesis entitled **The Representation of Whiteness in Rick Riordan's *The Heroes of Olympus*** is an original piece of writing. I declare that the analysis and the research describe in this thesis have never submitted for any other degrees and publication.

I certify to the best of my knowledge that all sources used in any help received in preparation of this thesis has been acknowledged.

Jember, 29 January 2024

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**SUMMARY**

**“The Representation of Whiteness in Rick Riordan’s *The Heroes of Olympus*”:**

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This research delves into an exploration of racial dynamics within the popular young adult book series *The Heroes of Olympus* by Rick Riordan through the lens of Stuart Hall's theory of representation. Stuart Hall's theory of representation serves as the theoretical framework, providing a conceptual basis for deciphering how meaning is produced and disseminated within the narrative. The study aims to unpack the various layers of representation in the text, considering not only explicit portrayals of whiteness but also the subtle nuances and implicit messages that contribute to the construction of racial identities within the novels.

To accomplish this analysis, the researcher adopts a qualitative research methodology. There are two categories of data. The primary data are taken directly from Rick Riordan’s *The Heroes of Olympus* novel series which consists of *The Lost Hero*, *The Son of Neptune*, *The Mark of Athena*, *The House of Hades*, and *The Blood of Olympus*. The secondary data are taken from documents with related topic regarding the topic of discussion.

The problem formulation involves two key questions that serve as the focal points of the research discussion. The first question explores the representation of whiteness in the novel series, while the second question delves into the author's critical position concerning whiteness. It is found that the whiteness within the novels is created and maintained into four structures: whiteness as terror and supremacy, whiteness as a kind of absence, whiteness as values, norms and cultural capital and whiteness as contingent hierarchies. The author of the novel series, Rick Riordan, may inadvertently reinforces dynamics of whiteness ideology in his handling of diversity, wherein white perspectives is given priority. The reluctance

to address and rectify issues of representation signals inconsistencies in Riordan's commitment to fostering inclusivity.



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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a brief description of the study which consists of background of the study, research questions and research purposes.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

As an imaginative work expressed in words which represents the social reality of human life, literature has always been tied up with representation (Wellek & Warren, 1949). According to Hall (1997), representation is the process of the production of meaning. In the process of the production of meaning, language operates as the representational system (Hall, 1997). Drama, poetry, and prose are all said to represent how society works around them (Klarer, 1998). In literature, a wide range of things can be portrayed, including ideas and people. The representation of each of these is what comprises the meaning of the text. As a work of culture which mirrors the society, literary representation becomes significant because it exerts a powerful influence to the reader's perception of the subject matter that is being represented.

For decades, the absence of diversity in literary works has long been a sensitive subject. Until the 1960s, the majority of children's literature contained no characters other than white. The few items that did contain multicultural characters were often inaccurate and insensitive (Hughes-Hassell & Cox, 2010). Critiques toward this issue had been pointed out several times. One of the earliest critiques on the underrepresented non-white characters issue is an article written by Larrick in 1965 entitled *The All-White World of Children's Books* which was published in The New York Times Saturday Review of Literature. In her article, Larrick argues that characters, authors, and the audiences for whom the books are created are all predominantly white in children's fiction (Larrick, 1965). She also points out the

harmful effects this phenomenon has on society as a whole when the only images children see are white ones. Larrick's study combined with the growing awareness of diversity issues spawned by the civil rights movement led to the beginning of the multicultural publishing movement in youth literature.

Nearly two decades following Larrick's study, Bishop (1992) undertook another in-depth analysis of young adult literature to ascertain the extent to which the portrayal of African Americans in children and young adult literature had changed. Despite an increase in the number of novels featuring African American characters, Bishop noted that many of the representations of the African American characters remained negative and stereotyped (Bishop, 1992). Today, although attention to multicultural literature continues, the issues identified by Larrick and Bishop remain prominent. According to the Cooperative Children's Books Center (CCBC) which has been tracking for over a decade, the number of multicultural titles published each year has slightly increased. However, there are many novels featuring people of color characters as mere tokenism to give the impression of being inclusive. The people of color characters are put into situations to become racial tokens that perpetuate white supremacy ideals that further the narrative that we live in a post-racial world (Ruby, 2020).

People of color characters are frequently used as tokens, perpetuating stereotypes within the white imagination regarding how people of color should behave, aligning with white expectations (Ruby, 2020). Racial stereotyping often occurs in the portrayal of people of color characters, positioning white characters as the norm and neutral standard (Aenarud, 1999). The negative racial stereotypes which embody the characterization of people of color reinforce their subordination (Castañeda, 2018). This portrayal contributes to the perception of people of color as inferior and lacking positions of power compared to the Whites (Zou & Cheryan, 2017). They are often depicted as having no ability to resolve their own problems, with the narrative suggesting that the only person who is powerful enough to pull them out of their miseries is a white man. These racist portrayals perpetuate and uphold ideas of whiteness as superior.

In this research, the object of the study is *The Heroes of Olympus*, a novel series written by Rick Riordan. *The Heroes of Olympus* is the sequel of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series. It consists of five books which first book, *The Lost Hero*, was published in 2010. The novels follow the story of two different groups of demigods, Greek and Roman, who stand together to fight the Mother Earth Gaea. Before the second titan war, those two different groups of demigods were separated because of the Demigod Civil War between Roman and Greek demigods. However, Juno (the Roman counterpart of Hera) came up with a plan to make Camp Half-Blood and Camp Jupiter work together. She put together a team of the best demigods from the two camps to prevent the rising of the ancient evil goddess Gaea.

Within the series, the author managed to introduce multitude of characters with varying race to his readers. Four of the seven protagonists in *The Heroes of Olympus* are non-white characters. The four protagonists are Hazel Levesque who is African-American, Leo Valdez who is Hispanic, Frank Zhang who is Chinese-Canadian, and Piper McLean who is Cherokee descent. While the rest; Percy Jackson, Annabeth Chase, and Jason Grace are portrayed as white.

The main problem of the inclusion of non-white characters within the novels is the way they are being portrayed. There are major stereotypes of the character's race and culture. The colored demigods are depicted as unintelligent beings who are not as good as the white demigods. They are portrayed as someone who is incapable to solve their problem hence the white demigods help and rescue them. The inclusion of non-white characters in Rick Riordan's *the Heroes of Olympus* marked the negative representative of the minority that they are part of. It brings out the assumption that the novels perpetuate whiteness as the norms and that all other races are deviations from the norms. The people of color characters within the novels are functioned to affirm the validity and power of whiteness. Hence, I am interested in breaking down the ideas of whiteness which embody the narrative of the novels by applying the theory of representation by Stuart Hall and the theory of whiteness by Steve Garner. Hall's theory of representation and Garner's theory of whiteness are employed to understand the ways in which people of color characters

are represented in the novels, and how these representations perpetuate whiteness and inequality.

## 1.2 Research Topic

This research will examine the representation of whiteness in the novel series *the Heroes of Olympus*, which features people of color characters by applying the theory of representation by Stuart Hall and the theory of whiteness by Steve Garner.

## 1.3 Research Questions

Based on the basic assumption, the people of color characters are represented as the submissive characters compared to the white characters who is being represented as the most yet powerful beings. This representation leads to the assumption that the people of color characters are used as a tool to maintain white supremacy. There are two questions of the problem formulation which become the major discussion of the research.

- a. How is the representation of whiteness in the series?
- b. What is the critical position of the author related to whiteness?

## 1.4 Goals of the Study

The goals of this study is to prove the basic assumption mentioned before. It is assumed that the inclusion of people of color within the series leads to the belief that white people are superior to those of other races and thus maintaining the ideology of white supremacy. Hence, it is deemed significant to reveal that the idea of celebrating diversity in *The Heroes of Olympus* novel series is not purely intended as the substantial theme but more into accessory which contribute to the construction of whiteness.



## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The second chapter provides the literature review which consists of two subchapter. The first subchapter discussed about the previous studies while the second subchapter discussed about the theoretical framework which is used for this research. In order to accomplish the goals of the research, I draw on Stuart Hall's theory of representation and Steve Garner's theory of whiteness.

### 2.1 Previous Research

The major functions of a literature review, according to Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight (1996), are to discuss relevant research on the same or related issue and to provide a conceptual as well as theoretical context which is in accordance with the topic. Moreover, literature review is needed to be attached in this research in order to avoid any kind of plagiarism. In this research, there are three previous research relating to the issue to be explored. The previous research give contribution to support my research.

The first previous research is Rodiah's thesis (2019) which analyzed the representation of Count Dracula as 'the other' in the novel by Bram Stoker. The novel follows the story of an Eastern European vampire named Count Dracula who wants to move from Transylvania to London in attempt to find some new blood. Utilizing the theory of representation by Stuart Hall, Rodiah's research focused on the discourse of 'the other' as depicted in Count Dracula's life and connected it with the contextual background in Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The research finding showed that Eastern European is considered as 'the other' by Western European. The social status and the different cultures between that two countries create the perspective of the society which make the frontier between Eastern and Western European, in which the Eastern European was labelled as the inferior one compared to the Western European.

The second previous research is Zulfikar's thesis (2019), which analyzed the issue of whiteness in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. The novel follows the story of an unnamed African American narrator as he grapples with racial discrimination and invisibility in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century America. Rendered invisible by societal prejudice, the protagonist embarks on a journey which takes him through various encounters with racism, social injustice, and internal struggles with identity. The researcher used the theory of representation by James Young alongside with the theory of whiteness by Steve Garner. Through the finding and discussion, the researcher pointed out that the presence of white characters defines the narrator's identity and the white-dominated society he lives in. White is treated as the superior being to those who are not white; everything related to whiteness, which holds the value of white, is seen as the right thing. From the study, it can be seen that whiteness is the most specific manifestation of racism.

The last research is Ward's thesis (2017) which discussed about how each characters from Rick Riordan's entire series which consists of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, *the Heroes of Olympus* series, *the Kane Chronicles* series, and *Magnus Chase and the God of Asgard* series are being represented. The researcher came to conclusion that the author of the books, Rick Riordan, has been able to introduce characters with diverse race, gender and sexualities despite being criticized because of minor representation of people of color in the first series, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*. The researcher stated that the inclusion of characters with diverse race, gender and sexualities is part of the celebration of diversity.

All pieces of previous research give great contribution to this research. Rodiah's thesis (2019) serves as a guidance on how to utilize the theory of representation by Stuart Hall. It also offers some points which are noteworthy related to cultural representation. Using the same supporting theory as this research, Zulfikar's thesis (2019) provides a reference on how to use the theory of whiteness by Steve Garner. Having the same research object as this study, Ward's thesis (2017) offers data which widen my understanding of each characterization of people of color characters in Rick Riordan's *The Heroes of Olympus*.

Regardless of the similarities between this study and all pieces of the previous research mentioned above, there are also significant gaps which make this study differs from the previous research. Both Rodiah's (2019) and Zulfikar's thesis (2019) have different research object with this study. As for Ward's thesis (2017), even though it has the same research object, it does not have the same purpose as this research. Ward (2017) came out with a conclusion that the author of the book, Rick Riordan, has been successfully celebrating diversity by including more characters of different races, gender identities, and sexual orientation. Hence, it can be concluded that the research object and the focus within this study has not yet been explored.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

Theoretical framework is the foundational review of existing theories and the explanation on how the theories may apply to the research study (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2010). In this subchapter, the theory of representation by Stuart Hall and the theory of whiteness by Steve Garner will be applied.

### **2.2.1 Stuart Hall's Theory of Representation.**

According to Hall (1997), representation is the process through which people within a culture create meaning through the use of language, which is widely defined as any system that employs signs or any signifying system. The crucial underlying premise of the definition is that things do not have in themselves any fixed, final, or true meaning. The representation works through some elements to represent our thoughts, ideas, concepts, or feelings. The writer as a member of the culture shared her thought through the text in the novel. The language that is used in the novel become a medium to represent something. To further understanding about how the meaning can be constructed, Hall divided the approaches which are used in the representation.

According to Hall (1997), there are three kind of approaches to explaining how representation of meaning through language works—reflective, intentional, and constructionist. In the reflective approach, meaning lies in the real-world object and language acts as a mirror which reflects true meaning, the same as it exists in the world (Hall, 1997). The reflective approach proposed a direct and transparent relationship of imitation or reflection between words (signs) and things (Hall, 1997).

Quite opposites with the reflective approach, the intentional approach argues that it is the speaker or the author who imposes their own particular meaning through language. The meaning of the words depends on how the speaker or the author intends them to be. However, because language only expresses the intended meaning of the speaker or the author, the intentional approach is flawed as a comprehensive theory of representation through language. It is because we cannot be the single or the sole source of meanings in language as that would entail us to express ourselves in entirely private languages. But the essence of language is communication and that, in turn, depends on shared linguistic conventions or shared codes (Hall, 1997).

The third approaches is the constructionist approach. Constructionist approach argues that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language have the sole capacity to fix meaning in language (Hall, 1997). According to the constructionist approach, meaning is actively constructed by individuals using representational systems, such as concepts and signs. Within the constructionist approach, it is crucial not to conflate the material world, where things and people exist, with the symbolic practices and processes through which representation, meaning, and language operate. While this approach do not deny the existence of the material world, it emphasizes that it is not the material world itself that conveys meaning. Instead, meaning is derived from the language system or any other symbolic system employed to represent concepts (Hall, 1997).

In order to provide a more in-depth analysis, the constructionist approach is deemed most suitable for this research. This approach enables me to examine the meaning conveyed in sentences and dialogues within the novels, while also

considering their connection to the critical position of the author. Thus, it becomes more efficient to outline the concept of whiteness within the novels.

There are two models in the constructionist approach which are semiotic approach and discursive approach. Hall (1997) explains that the major differences between semiotic approach and discursive approach is that semiotic approach focus on the *how* of representation, while discursive approach focus on the effects and consequences of representation. The semiotic approach is greatly influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic concept. Its basic principle is that since all objects convey meaning, and all cultural practices depend on meaning, they must make use of signs; and in so far as they do, they must work like language works. In the semiotic approach, not only words and images but objects themselves can construct a meaning and carry a message (Hall, 1997).

Like the semiotic approach, the discursive approach explores how language and representation produce meaning. However, unlike the semiotic approach, the discursive approach analyzes how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces. The discursive approach is associated with Michel Foucault's concept of discourse. This approach attempts to overcome the traditional distinction between what one says (language) and what one does (practice) (Hall, 1997). In this research, I use the discursive approach to analyse the representation of whiteness within the novels.

Foucault's discursive approach involves a meticulous examination of the ways in which language functions within specific social, cultural, and historical contexts. Discourses are not merely linguistic expressions but encompass broader systems of power, knowledge, and social control. Foucault challenges traditional notions of language as a neutral tool for communication, asserting that discourse plays a crucial role in constructing and maintaining power relations within society. By scrutinizing the discursive formations that permeate various institutions, Foucault unveils the intricate mechanisms through which knowledge is produced, regulated, and wielded as a form of power (Hall, 1997).

Central to Foucault's discursive approach is the inseparable connection between power and knowledge. Discourses, according to Foucault (1977), are not only means of communication but also instruments through which power operates. He explores how certain forms of knowledge become authoritative and are used to legitimize and perpetuate existing power structures. Foucault (1977) contends that power circulates rather than radiates in a singular direction. This perspective implies that power is not monopolized by a single center but is pervasive, operating at various levels of social existence. Furthermore, power is not solely repressive; it is also productive, generating pleasure, knowledge, and discourse. This understanding challenges the simplistic view of power as a force that merely says 'no' and underscores its multifaceted and productive nature. Foucault's analysis of discourses exposes the ways in which knowledge production is entangled with power dynamics, highlighting the subtle and pervasive nature of social control within various domains of human existence.

Foucault's discursive approach also addresses the question of the subject, or the individual within the power-knowledge dynamic. He challenges traditional notions of the subject as an autonomous and unified entity. Instead, Foucault (1980) suggests that it is discourse, not the subject, that produces knowledge. The discursive approach explores how individuals are shaped and positioned by the prevailing discourses in society, influencing their identities, beliefs, and behaviors. This perspective emphasizes the fluid and contingent nature of subjectivity, highlighting the ways in which discourses contribute to the formation of subject positions within broader power structures (Foucault, 1980).

### **2.2.2 Steve Garner's Theory of Whiteness**

According to Garner (2007), 'whiteness' as a theoretical framework refers to the idea that whiteness is not just a neutral or default racial category, but rather a constructed social identity that has been historically shaped by power dynamics, social structures, and cultural norms. Whiteness is used to both name and critique

the hegemonic beliefs and practices that designate white people as 'normal' and racially 'unmarked' (Garner, 2007). Although whiteness functions as a historical and social construction, the dominant culture's inability or reluctance to see it as such is the source of its hidden authority; whiteness is an unrecognized and unacknowledged racial category that secured its power by refusing to identify itself. This unacknowledged whiteness has created a literary language that can powerfully evoke and enforce hidden signs of racial superiority, cultural hegemony and dismissive othering (Giroux, 1997). In *Whiteness: An Introduction*, Garner (2007) categorized Whiteness on which it is created and maintained into four structures: whiteness as terror and supremacy, whiteness as a kind of absence, whiteness as values, norms and cultural capital and whiteness as contingent hierarchies.

#### 1) Whiteness as Terror and Supremacy

According to Garner (2007), whiteness as terror and supremacy is a system of power that maintains white dominance through the use of violence, coercion, and intimidation. He argues that whiteness is not simply a racial identity, but also a form of social and political control. Garner contends that whiteness is used to terrorize people of color by reminding them of their subordinate status. This can be done through overt acts of violence, such as lynchings and police brutality, or through more subtle forms of intimidation, such as microaggressions and racial profiling (Garner, 2007). Garner (2007) also argues that whiteness is used to maintain white supremacy by creating and enforcing racial hierarchies. He points out that white people are disproportionately represented in positions of power and privilege, while people of color are disproportionately represented in positions of poverty and powerlessness. Whiteness as terror and supremacy is a form of structural racism that is deeply embedded in American society. He contends that this system of power is not going to be dismantled simply through individual acts of good will. Instead, he argues that it will require a concerted effort to challenge the systems and institutions that perpetuate white dominance (Garner, 2007).

## 2) Whiteness as a Kind of Absence

According to Garner (2007), whiteness as a kind of absence is the idea that whiteness is not a distinct identity or culture, but rather the absence of cultural markers, history, and identity. Garner (2007) argues that whiteness is not a positive identity in itself, but rather the absence of color. Whiteness is defined by what it is not. In other words, whiteness is what it means not to be black, Asian, Latino, Indigenous, or any other race that is not white. The existence of people of color functions as an affirmation of the validity and power of whiteness. The unmarked nature of whiteness can grant a privilege for the whites in which they are being treated as individual rather than as a raced member of a collective (Garner, 2007).

Whiteness has been theorised as both invisible to white people and very visible to others. While this appears contradictory, it can also be understood as logical, but the key to this is recognition that white is not a location like any other but the linchpin of racialised identities which grants privilege to white people. It is a position from which judgements are made. It means that whiteness is the standard against which all other races are measured. Whiteness is invisible to white people because they are the norm. On the other hand, whiteness is very visible to people of color because they are seen as deviations from the norm.

## 3) Whiteness as Values, Norms and Cultural Capital

Whiteness as values, norms and cultural capital refers to the ways in which white people and white culture are privileged and seen as the norm in society. Whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and also ideal (McIntosh, 2007). Whiteness as values and norms shows that white people's ethical being is actually premised on the idea that they have the ability to assert authority, preach, teach, tell right from wrong, judge and make peace. It means that whiteness as values and norms are not based on any universal principles of justice or equality, but rather on the white people's sense of superiority (Garner, 2007).

Cultural capital is a term which was first coined by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu which refer as an acquired set of values, beliefs, norms, attitudes,



experiences and so forth that people acquire through their being part of a particular social class (Bourdieu, 1984). Whiteness as cultural capital refers to the ways in which white people benefit from the social and cultural norms and values that are associated with whiteness (Garner, 2007).

#### 4) Whiteness as Contingent Hierarchies

Garner (2007) defines whiteness as contingent hierarchies as the ways in which whiteness is constructed and maintained through a system of overlapping and intersecting hierarchies of power and privilege. This system includes hierarchies based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and other factors. Garner (2007) argues that whiteness is not a fixed or monolithic identity. Rather, it is a fluid and dynamic system that changes over time and across contexts. For example, migrants from the various Catholic, Southern, Eastern and Central European countries were not immediately accepted socially and culturally as white. Yet not being white, and being black, are two very different things: the Catholic Irish were always salvageable for whiteness in a way that black, Mexican, Asian, and Native Americans were not (Garner, 2003).

## CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter consists of three sub-chapter. The first sub-chapter discusses about the type of research which I used. The second sub-chapter talks about data collection. The last sub-chapter focuses on data processing and data analysis.

### 3.1 Type of Research

This research utilized qualitative research as the type of the research with the data mainly collected from the narrative within *The Heroes of Olympus* series. Creswell (2014) identifies qualitative research as an approach in which the process of research involves emerging questions and the data typically associated with words or images. In qualitative research, the researcher engages in a process of understanding, explaining, and making sense of the meanings embedded in the data (Creswell, 2014).

### 3.2 Data Collection

Creswell (2014) refers data as any information which has been collected and is used as references in a research study. Therefore, data collection refers to the process of acquiring the data that will be analyzed in this study. Data collection involves a comprehensive review of the entire *the Heroes of Olympus* series, including all books in the collection.

The data collection in this research is divided into two categories which are primary data and secondary data. This study will manage to obtain the primary data from the selected sentences and dialogues of the novel series *The Heroes of Olympus* by Rick Riordan which consists of *The Lost Hero* (2010), *The Son of Neptune* (2011), *The Mark of Athena* (2012), *The House of Hades* (2013), and *The*

*Blood of Olympus* (2014). The sentences and dialogues that will be chosen are those related to the characters descriptions, cultural references and interactions between the white characters and the characters of color which explicitly or implicitly contribute to the representation of whiteness.

Besides primary data, this study also employs secondary data or the supporting data to derive ultimate insights which are unbiased. The secondary data are taken from documents with related topic regarding the topic of discussion. The secondary data is employed as external sources to support the basic assumption.

### **3.3 Data Processing and Data Analysis**

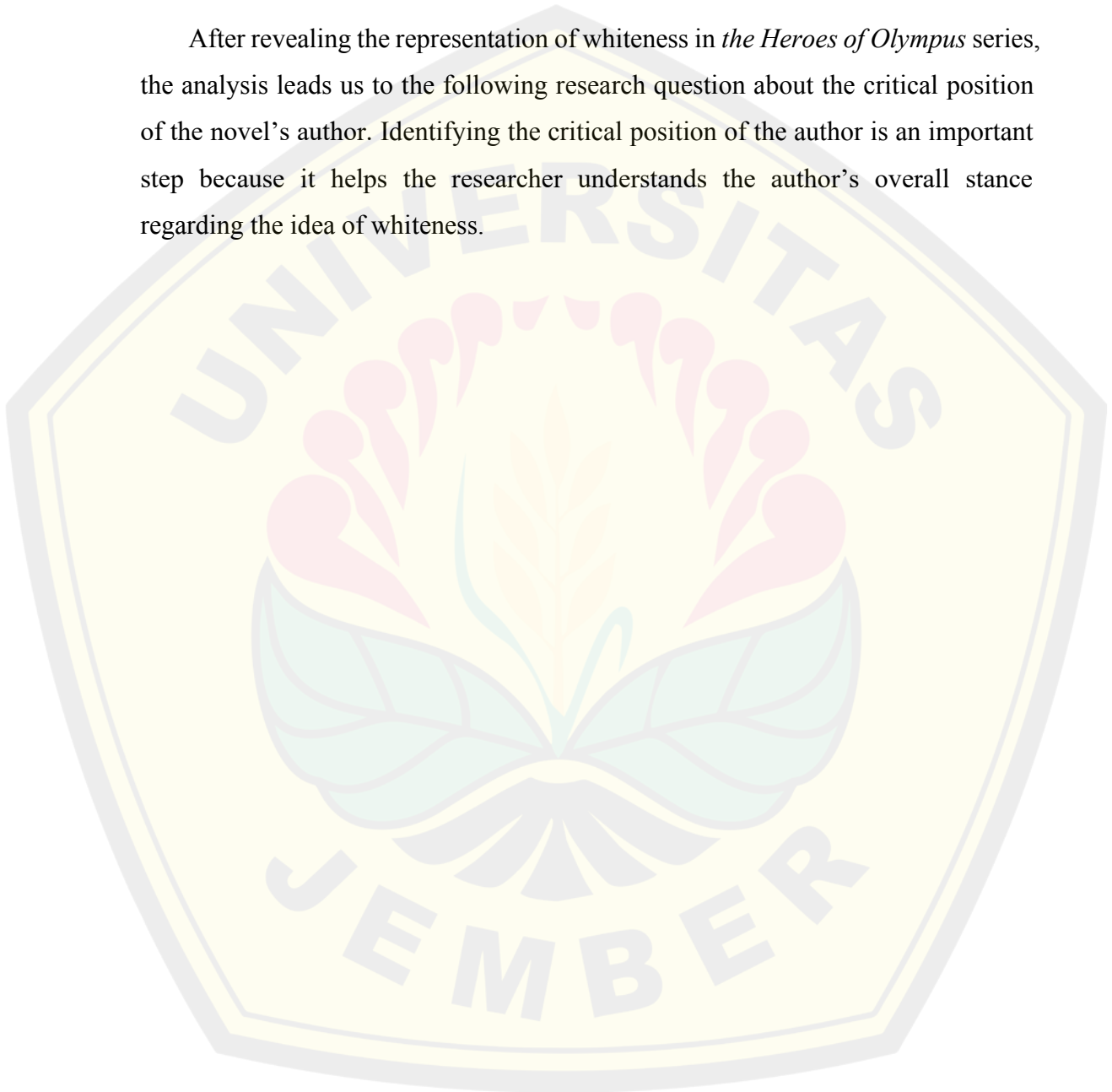
According to Creswell (2014), data processing in research study refers to the conversion of a data set into usable information. In data processing, the collected data is being organized, converted and verified so that it can be comprehensible. The obtained data which has been processed will then undergo the next step that is data analysis. Data analysis summarizes the obtained data through the use of analytical reasoning to describe facts, determine patterns, develop explanations and test hypotheses. (Creswell, 2014).

In this study, the data which has been obtained will first be checked to determine its validation and relevancies with the topic of discussion. In this stage, both primary and secondary data will undergo thorough examination, and any data which are found to be irrelevant will be excluded from the subsequent analysis. The inclusion of only pertinent and validated data is necessary in order to make the thesis well written and its finding to be comprehensible.

Once the data has undergone a verification process, the subsequent step involves in-depth data analysis. To answer the first research question, an analysis of the validated primary data is conducted through content analysis to be able to find the discourse of whiteness embedded within the narrative of the novel. The identified sentences and dialogues, which are presumed to encapsulate

representations of whiteness, are systematically categorized based on Garner's theory of whiteness. The data are categorized according to the four types of whiteness. Furthermore, the discourse of whiteness portrayed in the seven main protagonist characterization and their interactions to each other is viewed using Hall's constructionist approach.

After revealing the representation of whiteness in *the Heroes of Olympus* series, the analysis leads us to the following research question about the critical position of the novel's author. Identifying the critical position of the author is an important step because it helps the researcher understands the author's overall stance regarding the idea of whiteness.



## CHAPTER 4. DISCUSSION

This Chapter displays further explanation towards the analysis and discussion, which aims to answer the research questions. This part consists of two subchapters discussing the representations of whiteness in *the Heroes of Olympus* and the critical position of Rick Riordan as the author of the novel towards the issue of whiteness.

### 4.1 The Representation of Whiteness in the Heroes of Olympus

This subchapter discusses the discourse of whiteness represented in *the Heroes of Olympus* novel series using the categorisation of Garner's theory of whiteness with Hall's constructionist approach. By applying these theoretical perspectives, this analysis seeks to uncover the ways in which whiteness is depicted and constructed within the narrative of *the Heroes of Olympus* series.

#### 4.1.1 Whiteness as Terror and Supremacy

Whiteness as terror and supremacy refers to the socio-cultural constructs and systems that have historically elevated white identity and culture to positions of power, often at the expense of marginalized communities. This concept delves into the ways in which white dominance is maintained through the use of violence, coercion and intimidation. Furthermore, whiteness as terror is a manifestation of whiteness as supremacy, which is the underlying belief system that justifies the use of terror against people of color. In *the Heroes of Olympus* series, there is substantial evidence of the use of terror, particularly directed towards characters of color, aiming to instill fear and maintain dominance as we can see from the data below.

“I hope you'll support me for praetor. It would mean so much to me.”

Hazel clenched her fists. “Me. Support. You?”

Octavian took off his toga, setting it and his knife on the altar. Percy noticed seven lines on Octavian’s arm- seven years of camp, Percy guessed. Octavian’s mark was a harp, the symbol of Apollo.

“After all,” Octavian told Hazel, “I might be able to help you. It would be a shame if those awful rumors about you kept circulating... or, gods forbid, if they turned out to be true.”

Hazel took a deep breath. Her knuckles were white. “I’ll think about it.”

(Riordan, 2011:47)

Hazel Levesque is a Roman demigod, the daughter of Pluto (the Roman counterpart of Hades) and an African-American woman named Marie Levesque. It is narrated that Marie summoned Pluto with the gris-gris spell and they eventually fell in love. Pluto granted Marie one wish, and she wished for all the riches of the earth due to being tired of being poor despite Pluto’s warning that the greediest wishes cause the greatest sorrow. Marie’s wish, hence, came with a curse. Hazel was born with the ability to summon precious metal and gems from the ground. However, every precious metal and gems that Hazel summons from the ground would bring doom to those who take the treasures. When Hazel was brought to Camp Jupiter, the Roman equivalent of Camp Half Blood, she kept her secret from fellow demigods, fearing that they will reject her. However, Octavian discovers Hazel's secret.

Octavian is a Roman legacy of Apollo and the augur of Camp Jupiter. The author has never explicitly mentioned Octavian’s race, however, due to his portrayal of having pale skin, blue eyes and blonde hair, it is apparent that Octavian is depicted as a white. Born into a family which has been attending Camp Jupiter for centuries, Octavian wields considerable power, allowing him to intimidate those who oppose him. From the data above, it can be seen that Octavian uses his power to blackmail Hazel, threatening to expose her secret unless she votes in his favor in the forthcoming election of praetor since the last praetor, Jason Grace, went missing. Blackmail and threats are coercive tactics designed to instill fear and control. In this instance, Octavian exploits his position of power to intimidate Hazel, making her

feel like she is powerless to resist him. This intimidation mirrors the systemic patterns where individuals from marginalized groups are vulnerable to coercion and manipulation, perpetuating a culture of fear and subservience associated with whiteness as terror.

#### 4.1.2 Whiteness as a Kind of Absence

Whiteness as a kind of absence refers to the idea that social construction of whiteness, particularly in certain contexts, is often defined by what it lacks or what it is not. This perspective highlights the normative positioning of whiteness as the default or standard against which other racial and ethnic identities are measured or defined (Garner, 2003). Whiteness has been theorised as both invisible and visible. It is only invisible to white people, but it is very visible to the other. In *the Heroes of Olympus* series, the ideas that whiteness is invisible to the whites and very visible to the others can be found through the portrayal of the white characters. The white characters never have to define themselves. Instead, they are defined by the people of color characters.

Leo didn't pay much attention to how other guys looked. He supposed that came from hanging around Jason—tall, blond, rugged, and basically everything Leo could never be.

(Riordan, 2012:84)

Leo Valdez is a Greek demigod, the son of Hephaestus and Latino woman Esperanza Valdez. He is often described as having a slim build with Latino features. The data above is taken from the third book of *the Heroes of Olympus, the Mark of Athena*, where Leo and Hazel were searching for celestial bronze, a magical metal that is often used to make weapons for demigods, in order to repair the Argo II. During their search, they encounter Narcissus at the Salt Lake in Utah. Narcissus is using a large sheet of celestial bronze as a mirror. Leo and Hazel plan to steal the celestial bronze mirror, but their efforts are hindered by numerous nymphs, nature spirits, who gather around, captivated by Narcissus' beauty. However, due to his

time spent with Jason whom he described as ruggedly handsome, Leo does not get impacted by Narcissus' look.

From the data above, the people of color character, Leo, defined the white character, Jason, as tall, blond, rugged, and everything he could never be. It reinforces the idea of whiteness as a kind of absence because the white character does not have to define themselves. The characterization of the white character is described from the people of color's point of view. It signifies the absence of whiteness because white character is not required to explain to others how 'whiteness' should look like, because 'whiteness' is the dominant culture that sets the norms. Everybody else is then compared to that norm. Leo compared himself by saying that Jason is basically everything that Leo could never be. This physical depiction of white characters through the eyes of people of color characters does not only happen this once. For instance, Hazel Levesque and Piper McLean described Percy Jackson and Jason Grace in an amused manner.

Piper couldn't help thinking how amazing he looked with his blond hair glowing in the firelight, his regal features like a Roman statue's.

(Riordan, 2010:86)

The description of Jason's appearance reflects traditional Eurocentric standards of beauty and power. The use of terms like 'blond hair glowing in the firelight' and 'regal features like a Roman statue's' conveys a sense of admiration and idealization, aligning Jason's physical attributes with classical Western aesthetics. This portrayal reinforces the notion that whiteness is often associated with beauty and a historical legacy of power. In contrast, Piper, who is mentioned to be of Cherokee descent, is never described in the same elevated terms. The choice of highlighting Jason's features in a positive light while Piper's perspective is used to observe this difference may inadvertently contribute to the perpetuation of racial hierarchies. It implies that whiteness is the standard of beauty against which others are measured, reinforcing the idea of whiteness as a default or absence.

At first, when she saw him stumbling up the highway with the old lady in his arms, Hazel had thought he might be a god in disguise. Even



though he was beat up, dirty, and stooped with exhaustion, he'd had an aura of power. He had the good looks of a Roman god, with sea-green eyes and wind-blown black hair.

(Riordan, 2011:48)

While Jason is described as looking like a Roman statue, Percy is described as looking like a Roman god. The physical appearance of Percy Jackson, who is described as having sea-green eyes and wind-blown black hair and the good looks of a Roman god underscores the idea that certain physical features associated with whiteness are often elevated and considered as the ideal. From the data above, both Piper and Hazel described Percy and Jason as being incredibly handsome. Piper's comparison of Jason to a Roman statue and Hazel's initial impression of Percy as a god in disguise signifies that the same notion in which the whites do not have to define themselves is repeated multiple times in the narrative. The phenomenon where white characters are not required to define themselves, and instead, their identities are shaped by the characters of color, reinforces the notion that whiteness is invisible and operates as a kind of absence. The white characters are not compelled to explicitly articulate their racial identity because they exist within a framework where their race is considered the unmarked, neutral standard. This absence of explicit racial definition for white characters contributes to the reinforcement of the idea that whiteness is the unspoken norm. By contrast, characters of color are often required to define and articulate their racial and ethnic backgrounds, emphasizing their otherness in relation to the assumed white default.

Whiteness is at once so normalized as to be invisible (Garner, 2007). The invisibility of whiteness can inadvertently grant a certain privilege for the bearer. The normalization of whiteness means that it often goes unquestioned or unremarked upon, allowing individuals who identify as white to move through the world without the burden of constant racial scrutiny or bias. The whites are privileged in which they are treated as individual rather than as a raced member of collective. In *the Heroes of Olympus* series, the white characters are rarely described in terms of their race or ethnicity, while the people of color characters are constantly

identified by their race or ethnicity. This narrative suggests that the people of color characters are not treated as an individual.

“My grandmother told me I would close the circle—bring our family honor and all that. But my cousins here...they acted kind of cold and distant, like they didn’t want me around. I don’t think they liked that I’m a son of Mars. Honestly, I don’t think they liked that I’m Chinese, either.”  
(Riordan, 2014:171)

The data above is spoken by Frank Zhang, a Chinese-Canadian demigod of Mars, in the fifth book of *the Heroes of Olympus* series. Frank tells Piper, the daughter of Aphrodite, about his experience when he met his long relatives who is the descendants of Periclymenus the Argonaut. He tells her that he had told his cousins about the story of how the Zhang family had gone from Greece to Rome to China to Canada. However, they had acted cold and distant, stating that long-lost relatives returning to Pylos had happened before and Frank believes that they did not want him around for the fact that he is the son of Mars and a Chinese descent. The emphasis on Frank’s Chinese heritage suggests that his identity is defined primarily by his racial background, contributing to a narrative where people of color are often reduced to singular dimensions rather than being portrayed as fully realized individuals. Piper McLean, who is a Cherokee descent demigod, faced the same experience like Frank Zhang.

Piper McLean is the daughter of Aphrodite with a Cherokee man named Tristan McLean. Throughout the series, Piper is always depicted wearing eagle’s feather as head accessories. The data below is one example where Piper used eagle’s feather on her hair.

For a child of Aphrodite, Piper tried hard to play down her beauty. Today she was dressed in tattered jeans, worn-out sneakers, and a white tank top with pink Hello Kitty designs. Her choppy brown hair was braided down the right side with an eagle’s feather.

(Riordan, 2012:5)

In Cherokee culture, feather is considered to be sacred. It is seen as a symbol of the Creator, the spirit world and the interconnectedness of all living things. Feather is usually used in Cherokee ceremonies and rituals. There are different types of feathers that are used by the Cherokee and each type of feather has its own specific meanings. The eagle's feather, however, is considered to be the most sacred feather. Eagle is considered as the animal that can fly the highest to the Creator, hence, eagle's feather is only used in ceremonies and dances which involve communication with the spirit world (Aftandilian, 2011).

From the data above, it can be concluded that Piper uses eagle's feather on a daily basis. This is not in accordance with the existing culture of Cherokee tribe, in which eagle's feather is used only at certain ceremonies. Eagle's feather can only be used by spiritual leaders or warriors, and must be gifted by an Elder of the tribe. Putting an eagle's feather in Piper's hair can therefore be concluded as an act of stereotyping. When people of color are stereotyped, they are reduced to a single set of characteristics. The stereotype contributes to the marginalization of characters of color, as their stories become framed within the confines of their racial identity.

In this novel series, the people of color characters are constantly identified by their race or ethnicity. The whiteness within the white characters appears to be invisible because they never have to define themselves, instead, their identity is depicted from the point of view of people of color which increasingly emphasizes the idea that whiteness is invisible to the whites but it is very visible to the others. Additionally, the invisibility of whiteness which has been theorized as granting privilege to the bearers in which they are treated as individuals rather than as race members of the collective is also evident in the Heroes of Olympus series. Frank and Piper are the examples of how people of color characters are treated as members of a race rather than as an individual who has their own unique character. The continuous identification of people of color characters by their racial or ethnic backgrounds reinforces the notion that their identity is collectively defined by these characteristics which overshadowing their individuality.

### 4.1.3 Whiteness as Values, Norms, and Cultural Capital

Whiteness as values and norms means that whiteness is defined as the normal or accepted range of conduct and characteristics while all other racial categories are contrasted with whiteness (Morris, 2016). In *the Heroes of Olympus* novel series, the people of color characters are often portrayed as the opposite of the white characters. The portrayal of people of color as the opposite of white characters reinforces the idea that whiteness is the norm and that all other races are deviant. For example, in *the Heroes of Olympus* novel series, the white character Jason Grace is described as being tall, blond, and handsome. He is also portrayed as being a natural leader and a skilled warrior. The people of color characters, on the other hand, are often described in terms of their physical differences from Jason. For example, Leo Valdez, a Hispanic demigod, is described as being short and scrawny.

“And now... the worst insult of all. The gods mock me by sending you.”

Anger bubbled in Leo’s stomach.

Yeah, typical. If Jason were here, Calypso would fall all over him. She’d beg him to stay, but he’d be all noble about returning to his duties, and he’d leave Calypso broken hearted.

(Riordan, 2013:379)

The data above is a scene between Leo and Calypso which takes place in the book *the House of Hades*, the fourth book of *the Heroes of Olympus*. During a fight with Khione, the Greek goddess of snow, Leo is flung to Ogygia. Ogygia is an island where Calypso has been cursed to live for eternity. Calypso is also cursed to fall in love with anyone who reaches the island. Before Leo, Percy had been sent by Hera to Ogygia to recover after he causes the eruption of Mount Saint Helens. She nursed him back to health and they eventually fell in love. However, due to her curse, Calypso is trapped in Ogygia so she offered Percy to stay with her forever. Percy declined the offer because he knew that he had to return to his friends and family. He left Calypso broken hearted.

Calypso's line, "And now... the worst insult of all. The gods mock me by sending you," (Riordan, 2013:379), is a reference to the fact that Leo is a scrawny, awkward Hispanic teenager. Before Leo, Calypso is used to meet handsome, muscular Greek demigods as suitors on her island including Odysseus, Sir Francis Drake and Percy Jackson. Calypso clearly does not see Leo as being in the same league with the previous suitors. The line 'Yeah, typical. If Jason was here, Calypso would fall all over him'(Riordan, 2013:379), is a reflection of Leo's insecurities. Leo knows that he is not as attractive or as impressive as Jason, and he feels that Calypso would be more interested in Jason if he were there. The scene between Leo and Calypso signified that people of color are considered as less attractive and desirable than the whites. The contrasting portrayal between Leo and Jason reinforces the idea that whiteness is the default. It is important to note that the comparisons in terms of physical appearance occur repeatedly within the novels. In *the Lost Hero*, Leo, Piper, Jason, and Coach Hedge—the satyr who accompany their quest, encounter the goddess of love and beauty, Aphrodite, on their quest to free Hera and Piper's father. Before continuing their journey, the group members receive Aphrodite's blessing. Aphrodite gave Leo, Piper, and Coach Hedge a drastic makeover, while Jason does not.

"Well," Jason said, "at least your mom overlooked me."

Piper knew that wasn't exactly true. Aphrodite's message was clear:

*This one needs no improvement.*

(Riordan, 2010:280)

The drastic makeover to characters of color but not to the white character signifies the idea that whiteness is considered as the norm and does not require improvement or alteration. By specifically signing out characters of color for a makeover, the narrative implies that their original appearance needed enhancement, thereby positioning their natural features as somehow less desirable. In contrast, the absence of such makeovers for Jason, the white character, suggests an unstated assumption that his appearance is already aligned with the accepted standard of attractiveness. The data above reflects a common societal bias where Eurocentric

features are often regarded as the beauty ideal, and deviations from this norm are treated as needing correction or improvement. The portrayal of people of color characters receiving makeovers perpetuates the harmful notion that their natural appearances are deviations from the norm, reinforcing the underlying assumptions that whiteness is the unmarked standard.

The author of the novel series does not only delineate the characters of color based on physical distinctions but also delves into the portrayal of people of color experiencing a sense of shame regarding their own cultural backgrounds. In addition to highlighting the physical differences among characters, the narrative also explores the nuanced complexities of identity by depicting individuals from diverse racial backgrounds grappling with a sense of embarrassment or shame concerning their cultural heritage.

She'd learned to be vaguely uncomfortable about her ancestry- like Dad's old pictures from the eighties, when he had feathered hair and crazy clothes. *Can you believe I ever looked like that?* he'd say. Being Cherokee was the same way for him- something funny and mildly embarrassing.

(Riordan, 2010:236)

The data above reflects a nuanced perspective on the concept of whiteness as norms, particularly in the context of Piper's discomfort with her Cherokee ancestry. The passage suggests that Piper has internalized a sense of embarrassment about her heritage, drawing a parallel with her father's reaction to his past appearance with 'feathered hair and crazy clothes'. The concept of whiteness as norms refers to certain cultural, social, and physical attributes associated with whiteness which are considered as the standard in a given society. In the passage above, Piper's discomfort about her Cherokee ancestry could be seen as a manifestation of the impact of whiteness as norms. The comparison to her father's reaction to his past appearance implies a similar attitude towards their Cherokee heritage—something viewed as 'funny and mildly embarrassing'. The data implies that Piper's cultural background does not align with the perceived norm of the dominant culture, thus

reinforces the idea that the default or ideal identity is those which aligns with whiteness.

In addition to being described in terms of their physical differences, and their cultural backgrounds which is considered as an embarrassment, the people of color characters within *the Heroes of Olympus* series are also portrayed as having different values and norms than white characters. This is done in a variety of ways, both subtle and overt.

Annabeth saw the logical thing, the tactical move. Piper had gut reactions that were anything but logical.

(Riordan, 2014:384)

The passage above can be interpreted as reinforcing the stereotype that the whites are better than the people of color. The text implies that Annabeth, who is a white demigod, is more intelligent and rational than Piper, who is a person of color. It is because Annabeth is said to see the logical thing and make the tactical move, while Piper is described as ‘anything but logical’. The data above presents Annabeth and Piper as representatives of two different ways of thinking; logic and intuition. This dichotomy is often used to reinforce racial stereotypes, with whites being associated with logic and reason, and people of color being associated with intuition and emotion (Giroux, 1998). The data suggests that the white demigod is more intelligent, rational and logical than the demigod who is part of people of color. In addition to depicting whiteness as a symbol of rationality, *the Heroes of Olympus* series also portrays the white character as someone who offers charismatic leadership to the Others while the characters of color are portrayed as in need of uplift and direction.

“Okay,” Hedge said. “So, you, me, and Jason distract him. Piper sneaks around and frees her dad.”

They all looked at Jason.

“What?” Jason asked. “I’m not the leader.”

“Yes,” Piper said. “You are.”

They’d never really talked about it, but no one disagreed, not even Hedge. Coming this far had been a team effort, but when it came to a life-

and-death decision, Leo knew Jason was the one to ask. Even if he had no memory, Jason had a kind of balance to him.

(Riordan, 2010:287)

The passage above is taken from *the Lost Hero*, the first book of *the Heroes of Olympus* series. In the passage, the characters are discussing how to rescue Piper's father who is held hostage by the giant Enceladus. They decide that Piper will sneak around and free her father while Hedge, Jason and Leo distract the giant. Jason is reluctant to take on the role of leader, but Piper insists that he is the best person for the job. Leo and Piper recognize that Jason has a natural leadership ability. Leo reckons that Jason has a kind of balance to him even though he has no memory of his past. It suggests that Jason's leadership qualities are innate. They are not based on his experience or knowledge, but rather simply a part of who he is.

Throughout the series, the white characters are consistently cast as leaders and decision-makers. The data presented below serves to underscore and highlight the consistent portrayal of white characters as the primary figures in positions of authority within the storyline.

Percy had been their backbone. He'd given them confidence as they sailed across the Atlantic and into the Mediterranean. As for Annabeth—she'd been the de facto leader of the quest.

(Riordan, 2013:8)

After Percy and Annabeth tumbled into a pit leading straight to Tartarus—the great pit beneath the earth that is used as the prison for the Titans and for the wicked, the remaining crew of the *Argo II* continue their journey across Italy following Percy's instructions to find the doors of death in the House of Hades where they plan to stop Gaea's forces and rescue Percy and Annabeth. It is narrated that the remaining members of the crew face a lot of difficulties since their two most important members fell into Tartarus. Percy is described as their backbone because he has been the source of strength and support, a pillar upon which the crew has leaned. Simultaneously, Annabeth is described as the de facto leader of the quest



because she has been the one to make most of the decisions and plans. To fill the vacancy in the leadership position, Jason stepped up and took the role of leader.

He sat at the head of the table, kind of by default. Since they'd lost Annabeth, Jason had done his best to act as the group's leader.

(Riordan, 2013:66)

Whiteness is commonly associated with leadership qualities, such as intelligence, strength, and decisiveness, while people of color are not seen as possessing those qualities (Vera & Gordon, 2003). The passage 'he sat at the head of the table, kind of by default' suggest that Jason's leadership is not earned but rather falls to him because he is a white demigod who possess the leadership qualities. Jason is not explicitly chosen or appointed to be the leader of the group. He simply takes on the role by default. The fact that the group needs a leader suggests a narrative of helplessness, reinforcing a subtle hierarchy where characters of color are depicted as dependent on a white leader for direction. This portrayal perpetuates stereotypes about people of color being in need of guidance, signifying the problematic narrative that certain racial groups inherently lack the leadership qualities associated with whiteness.

From the data above, it can be concluded that the white characters are consistently cast as leaders and decision-makers, while characters of color are portrayed as followers or in need of assistance. White characters are depicted as leaders, exuding confidence, competence, and an innate ability to command respect. In contrast, characters of color are often relegated to roles that reinforces stereotypes, portraying them as individuals in need of guidance and upliftment. The portrayal of white characters as natural leaders reinforces the deeply ingrained belief in white supremacy where whiteness serves as the norms. This narrative suggests that white individuals possess inherent qualities that make them suited for leadership, while people of color lack these qualities and require external direction. This trope extends to the portrayal of white characters as saviors, swooping in to rescue and uplift characters of color. This dynamic reinforces the notion that people

of color are incapable of self-determination and require intervention of white figures to achieve progress.

Besides the contrasting portrayal between white characters and the characters of color which implies that whiteness is the normal of accepted range of conduct, the idea of whiteness as cultural capital can also be found within the narrative of the novels. Whiteness as cultural capital suggests that white culture and identity confer certain advantages in society, including access to resources, opportunities and privileges. In *the Heroes of Olympus* series, there is a perpetuation whiteness as cultural capital which is found within the narrative in the second book, *the Son of Neptune*.

“I need a partner in power—but I’d prefer someone like Jason. A warrior not a schemer.”

She waited. Percy realized she was sending him a silent invitation.

His throat went dry. “Oh... you mean...oh.”

“I believe the gods sent you to help me,”

“Look, I’ll help,” he promised. “But I’m new here. You’ve got a lot of good people who knows this camp better than I do. If we succeed on this quest, Hazel and Frank will be heroes. You could ask one of them—”

“No one will follow a child of Pluto. There’s something about that girl... rumors about where she came from... No, she won’t do. As for Frank Zhang, he has a good heart, but he’s hopelessly naive and inexperienced. Besides, if the others found out about his family history at this camp—”

“Family history?”

“The point is, Percy, you are the real power on this quest.”

(Riordan, 2011:129)

In *the Son of Neptune*, Percy Jackson was brought to Camp Jupiter by the goddess Juno in attempt to unite the two camps, Camp Jupiter and Camp Half-Blood. Percy brought attention to the other campers because he arrived at Camp Jupiter with the blessing of Juno herself. Not long after Percy’s arrival at Camp Jupiter, the Romans received a prophecy from Mars, the Roman god of war. The god of war ordered a quest which must be undertaken to free Thanatos who is chained in Alaska, a land beyond the gods’ power. Mars ordered Frank and Percy

to head the quest. In order to complete the group, they needed one more person. Frank then chose Hazel as the third member of the group.

In Camp Jupiter, there are two highest-ranking officials who are responsible for leading the camp which are called as *praetors*. The *praetors* of Camp Jupiter are Reyna Ramirez-Arellano, the daughter of Bellona, and Jason Grace, the son of Jupiter. However, when Juno switched Percy and Jason into each other's camp, Reyna became the only remaining *praetor*. Before Percy left to start the quest, Reyna invites Percy for a private talk. She offers Percy the other *praetor* position. She knows that an army of giants is going to attack Camp Jupiter hence she needs another *praetor* at her side to help her lead the Roman troops into battle. Percy suggested another demigod such as Frank and Hazel whom he believes has the quality to become *praetor* to fill the position. Besides, Frank has shown his quality by bringing victory to the Fifth Cohort, the weakest cohort at camp, during the camp's War Game. Apart from that, Frank is also the son of Mars, the god of war. He surely can be a partner in power just like Reyna need. Frank is a warrior who is good both at strategy and combat. Besides, if the quest to free Thanatos was successful, Frank and Hazel would become heroes, the saviors of Rome, and thus meet the qualifications to be the *praetor*. However, Reyna insists that Percy should be the *praetor* because she believed that Percy is the real power in this quest.

The Romans began to chant, "Percy! Percy!"

They mobbed him. Before he knew it, they were raising him on a shield. The cry changed to, "Praetor! Praetor!"

(Riordan, 2011:341)

Even though Percy initially rejected Reyna's offer to become *praetor* before the quest is started, he ultimately filled the vacant position at the end of the book. Throughout the novel, Hazel and Frank played an important role in the success of this quest. Both Hazel and Frank had sacrificed their lives to free the god of death Thanatos and to defeat the giant Alcyoneus. Hazel who came back from the dead knows that there is a possibility that she will die when Thanatos is freed. She knows

that Thanatos would prevent anyone that was dead returning from the Underworld. Whereas Frank, whose life depends on a piece of firewood, also has to sacrifice himself because the only way to break the icy chains that bind Thanatos is by burning his firewood. However, the Romans thought that Percy is the key to their victory, hence they proclaimed him as the *praetor*.

Based on the data above, it can be concluded that Percy was appointed as the *praetor* due to his privileges as a white person. This narrative suggests that whiteness confers certain advantages, such as access to opportunities and positions of power. Additionally, the fact that Percy was chosen by Reyna, a Hispanic demigod, reveals that in this novel, the people of color internalize the superiority of the whites. This further reinforces the idea of whiteness as cultural capital within *the Heroes of Olympus* novel series.

#### 4.1.4 Whiteness as Contingent Hierarchies

In *Whiteness: An Introduction*, Garner (2007) stated that whiteness is an overarching mainstream value of Americanness. He argued that ‘whiteness’ is to do with cultural and political power and those who appear phenotypically white are not equally incorporated into the dominant groups. Migrants from the various Catholic, Southern, Eastern and Central European countries were not immediately accepted socially and culturally as white. Ideologically and culturally, they were indeed considered different and lesser white races (Garner, 2007). In *the Heroes of Olympus*, whiteness is constructed as a contingent hierarchy, with different groups of white people being privileged or marginalized depending on their cultural background.

In Greek mythology, there are three most powerful gods among the Olympians—Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades which are known as the Big Three. As a result of how powerful the Big Three are, their demigod children tend to be the most powerful demigods in existence. In *the Heroes of Olympus* series, Percy Jackson who is the son of Poseidon and Jason Grace who is the son of Jupiter, the Roman

counterpart of Zeus, are considered as the most powerful demigods in their respective camps. On the other hand, Nico di Angelo, an Italian-born Greek demigod, the son of Hades, who is often described as having a dark and intimidating aura, is depicted as less powerful than Percy and Jason. Compared to Percy and Jason, Nico's powers are more limited. His powers are more focused on summoning and controlling the dead which are less versatile than Percy and Jason's powers. Even Nico himself admit that Percy and Jason are more powerful than him.

Nico twisted his silver skull ring. "Percy is the most powerful demigod I've ever met. No offense to you guys, but it's true."

(Riordan, 2012:572)

Not to mention, it is narrated that Nico felt rejected by the other campers in Camp Half-Blood, thus prompting him to leave Camp Half-Blood and spent most of his time wandering the Underworld. On the other hand, Percy and Jason were more easily accepted by the other campers when Juno exchange them into different camps. Jason was easily accepted by the campers in Camp Half-Blood due to his natural leadership, while Percy was easily accepted by the campers in Camp Jupiter because he arrived at Camp Jupiter with the blessing of Juno herself.

This phenomenon relates to the theory of whiteness as contingent hierarchies in which Garner (2007) stated that whiteness is not simply about having white skin color. Not all people who appear white are equally accepted into the dominant white society. The degree to which a person is considered white is not fixed, but can change depending on their cultural background. In this case, Nico di Angelo, an Italian-born Greek demigod is deemed as the lesser white compared to Percy Jackson and Jason Grace who are both American.

The portrayal of Nico di Angelo as having a different and, to some extent, marginalized status compared to Percy and Jason mirrors historical attitudes toward Italian immigrants in the United States during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nico's perceived limitations and the challenges he faces in gaining acceptance within the two camps could be seen as an allegory for the struggles faced by Italian American who is considered as in-between people. Italian-Americans went through a prolonged

period where their racial identity was ambiguous or in-between. They were treated as socially and culturally inferior, and their status in terms of civilization and social standing was likened to that of black Americans (Roediger, 1994).

The implicit suggestion here is that the concept of whiteness is not universally standardized but rather it is context-dependent. Despite being of European descent, Nico's Italian heritage places him at a perceived lower tier within the intricate hierarchy of whiteness. This illustrates how the perception of whiteness can be influenced by factors beyond mere physical appearance, including cultural background and heritage. However, it is crucial to note that being considered as the lesser white does not mean that Nico is in the equal position to the people of color. As Garner (2003) states, Italian were always salvageable for whiteness in a way that black, Mexican, Asian and Native American were not.

In *the Heroes of Olympus* series, there are two demigods who are the children of Hades/Pluto, Nico di Angelo and Hazel Levesque. Having the same godly father should make them equal in power. However, in the novel, Nico is described as more powerful than Hazel.

Between them, they represented Pluto's two spheres of control: death and riches. Sometimes Hazel thought Nico had gotten the better end of the deal.

(Riordan, 2011:52)

Hazel's power to control gems comes with a curse which will bring misfortune to the person who possesses any gem that Hazel summons. On the other hand, Nico is the only one of the two who can communicate with the dead and summon them from the Underworld which gives him a significant advantage in combat. He can summon armies of undead warriors to fight for him. This unbalanced power between the two proves that not being white is not equal to being black.

## 4.2 The Critical Position of The Author

In constructionist approach, authors play an active role in constructing meaning. Authors are not seen as neutral conveyors of information but as individuals situated within specific cultural and social contexts, shaping their perspectives and influencing how they represent reality. Thus, it is deemed significant to unveil critical position of the author. Rick Riordan was born in San Antonio, Texas, United State in the year of 1964. Riordan attended North Texas State University in Denton before transferring to the University of Texas at Austin, from which he graduated with bachelor's degrees in history and English. He then received his teacher's certification from the University of Texas at San Antonio. After teaching middle school in Texas for about 15 years, Riordan quit to dedicate himself to writing full-time (Britannica, 2023).

Riordan is best known for his hugely popular *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* (2005-2009) novel series which blends Greek mythology with modern-day characters and settings. Riordan began writing for Percy Jackson and the Olympians when his son who was diagnosed with ADHD and dyslexia asked him to tell bedtime stories involving Greek mythology. Once he related all the myths he knew, Riordan began making up stories, and the idea for Percy Jackson was created.

Continuing to explore mythology, Riordan wrote *the Heroes of Olympus* series and elevated the narrative by introducing a rich array of diverse characters. The characters within the series hailed from various cultural background. In an interview with *Library of Congress* (2017), Riordan expressed his commitment to expanding representation in his books. He recognizes the power of literature to influence and inspire young readers and aims to create stories that reflect the diversity of the world we live in.

“As I realized that I'd been given a big platform, it was important to me to expand the representation in my books. [...] I want kids of all kinds to see themselves in my books.”

(Riordan, 2017)

Despite Riordan's attempt to promote diversity in his writing, criticisms have arisen regarding the portrayal of people of color in *the Heroes of Olympus* series. Some readers have pointed out that the people of color characters are often relegated to the roles of sidekick or love interests, while the white characters are given more agency and protagonism. This critique raises questions about the extent to which the narrative truly reflects the desired inclusivity.

Riordan handles his characters of color in three ways: they are tokenized, they reflect harmful stereotypes, or they conflate their own heritages with the Greek system of which they are now a part.

(Falkenberg, 2020)

Falkenberg (2020) argued that Riordan's characters of color are included as tokens rather than integral parts of the narrative. One example is the character of Leo Valdez, a Hispanic demigod, who is often portrayed as being the comic relief in the series. Another example is the character of Hazel Levesque, an African American demigod who is a powerful and complex character, but she is often sidelined in favor of other characters such as Percy Jackson and Nico di Angelo. The narrative of the novels suggests that people of color are not capable of being heroes of their own stories. Falkenberg (2020) also pointed out that characters of color are depicted as conflating their own heritages with the Greek system they are now a part of. The characters of color are also being stereotyped.

As previously mentioned, authors are not neutral conveyors of information but individuals influenced by cultural and social contexts. While Riordan has expressed his commitment to expanding representation in his books, one cannot overlook the potential influence of his Texas origins on the way he portrayed characters of color in his work. Texas, as the most strongly Republican state in the United States, has a political landscape predominantly shaped by white conservative values (Newport, 2009). White conservatives were likely to think that whites are being highly valued in society compared to other races. White conservatives also believe that efforts to be inclusive or to address historical inequalities are seen as attempts by minority groups to silence the whites (Al-Jazeera, 2022). This political backdrop may have



played a role in the way Riordan approached characters of color in his books, *The Heroes of Olympus* series. The tokenization, stereotyping, and portrayal of characters of color as lesser than white characters can be seen as a reflection of the racial dynamics present in Texas, where the power structures favor white communities. Such portrayals could inadvertently reinforce existing hierarchies, reflecting a social context where conservative ideals dominate.

Many readers have pointed out that *the Heroes of Olympus* series reinforces harmful stereotypes about Native Americans. For example, the character of Piper McLean, a Cherokee descent, is often portrayed wearing sacred eagle's feather on her hair. Another criticism of Piper's character is that she is not given enough depth or complexity. Piper is relegated to the role of Jason Grace's love interest, and her Native American heritage is not fully explored. In response to criticisms from the readers, Riordan issued a clarification titled *Feathers? Why Feathers?* on his personal blog.

“Okay, so Piper. First thing I would say: The feather-wearing was intentional. It was not an oversight or an unconscious use of tropes. [...] The first time she is shown wearing a feather is in *the Mark of Athena*. She wears a single eagle feather braided in her hair (2012:3). To me, this was an indication that Piper had begun exploring and claiming her heritage in her own way. She now feels comfortable wearing a powerful symbol of a warrior, and also a symbol of protection from the Cherokee tradition. Later, she is described as wearing two white feathers (207). I imagined these as being still eagle feathers. Conley notes that when present for protection or medicine purposes, feathers are often used in pairs (*Medicine* 2005: 137). On a couple of occasions, I note that the feather is swinging like a pendulum in Piper's hair, or that she is fiddling with it (2012:24). To me, this hearkened back to the importance of the feather as an indicator of protection from nearby medicine.”

(Riordan, 2020)

In Riordan's now-deleted blog post, Riordan addressed why Piper Mclean, who is a Cherokee descent, is described as wearing feathers in her hair. On the quotation above, Riordan explain his conscious intention in incorporating the feathers into Piper's character. He stated that Piper's decision to wear feathers represents her growing connection to her Cherokee heritage. The feathers symbolize Piper's

newfound sense of identity as a warrior and her appreciation for the protective power they hold in Cherokee tradition. Riordan's reference to the eagle feathers suggests Piper's sense of comfort and familiarity with her heritage.

For Piper's background, I started with James Mooney's book *History, Myths and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokee*. [...] After Mooney's book, I turned to the work of Robert J. Conley, a writer and member of the Cherokee Nation (the Western Cherokees). His *Cherokee Nation* is the official history of his people, sanctioned by the Western Cherokee leadership. (Incidentally, the book draws heavily on Mooney as a source, which goes to show how reliant we are on earlier imperfect written records. Mooney is mentioned 92 times!)."

(Riordan, 2020)

In the quotation above, Riordan stated that he began Piper's background research with James Mooney's book, *History, Myths and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokee*. This is where the problem lies. Despite having research by reading Mooney's book as the foundational resource for understanding Cherokee history and cultural practices, Riordan ignores the context of feather-wearing in Cherokee culture.

The eagle being regarded as a great *ada'wehī*, only the greatest warriors and those versed in the sacred ordinances would dare to wear the feathers or to carry them.

(Mooney, 1992)

In *History, Myths and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokee*, Mooney (1992) had clearly stated that eagle feathers was restricted to only the most respected members of Cherokee society, those who had proven themselves to be worthy of such a privilege. Piper McLean is not raised in immersed culture, thus does not make her in the position where she can wear the feathers as daily accessories. In addition, Conley (2008) stated that portraying a Cherokee with a very stereotypical traits which oversimplify the complexities and diversities of Native American's cultures can reinforce the idea that all Native American looked the same: Native Americans on horseback wearing feathered headdresses chasing buffalo across the plains.

“And that’s it! That’s why Piper wears those feathers. The final point I’d make: Piper has a headstrong personality and a stubborn streak, so she definitely is not a person who would think, Gee, I’m Native, so I can’t wear a feather because that might send the wrong message. If anything, she would say, To Hades with it. I don’t care what you think. I’m Cherokee and I’m going to express that however I want.”

(Riordan, 2020)

Riordan closed his clarification with a statement which appears to oversimplify the significance of wearing feathers in Cherokee cultures. As it has been explained before, feathers hold deep spiritual and symbolic meanings in Cherokee culture. Reducing the wearing of feathers to a simple expression of individuality without acknowledging the broader cultural context can be seen as dismissive of the cultural significance attached to these symbols.

The fact that this clarification has been deleted and that Riordan has never officially addressed the issue of his other characters of color representation indicates that Riordan does not prioritize providing good representation of diversity in his novels. When critics are dismissed, it sends the message that people of color’s perspectives are not valued or respected. This aligns with the broader dynamics of whiteness ideology where white perspectives and voices are positioned above others. Ignoring critics can also contribute to resistance in acknowledging and rectifying harmful representations. This resistance to change sustains the status quo and inhibits progress toward more inclusive and equitable representation which aligns with the preservation of power dynamics characteristic of whiteness ideology. Thus, it can be concluded that Riordan imposes the idea of white superiority by showing characters which relies heavily on stereotypes and tokenism. The issues of representation within Riordan’s book which are being left unaddressed signified Riordan’s inconsistencies to expand representation so that kids of all kinds can see themselves in his books.

### 4.3 Limitations of The Study

While this study aims to analyze the representation of whiteness ideology in Rick Riordan's *The Heroes of Olympus*, it acknowledges that the series comprises a vast narrative landscape spanning five books. Due to constraints of time, resources, and word count, this research may not be able to provide an exhaustive analysis of every character, subplot, or thematic element within the series. Consequently, certain aspects of the text may receive more extensive scrutiny than others, potentially limiting the comprehensiveness of the findings.

Furthermore, the decision to utilize Garner's conceptualization of whiteness may lead to a partial interpretation of the text, as the analysis remains largely confined within the boundaries of his theoretical framework. While this approach provides a cohesive and focused examination of specific facets of whiteness representation, it may neglect other dimensions of the text that fall outside the scope of Garner's theories. As a result, the thesis may inadvertently overlook other relevant dimensions or perspectives that could contribute to a more comprehensive analysis of the text.

## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the representation of whiteness in the novel series has revealed significant insights, centering around two pivotal questions that have guided this research. The first question navigated the representation of whiteness within the narrative, revealing a multifaceted construct embedded in four distinct structures: whiteness as terror and supremacy, whiteness as a kind of absence, whiteness as values, norms, and cultural capital, and whiteness as contingent hierarchies.

The author's construction of the narrative reflects an exploration of power dynamics, where whiteness is positioned as a dominant force shaping the heroes' journey. The examination of whiteness as terror and supremacy underscores how the narrative constructs a sense of white dominance through the use of terror directed towards the black character, Hazel Levesque. Moreover, whiteness is portrayed as a kind of absence within the novel series, where white characters are not required to define themselves. Instead, their identities are shaped by characters of color, reinforces the notion that whiteness is invisible and operates as a kind of absence.

Additionally, whiteness is positioned as values, norms, and cultural capital within the novels. Eurocentric features are often regarded as the beauty ideal, while characters of color are portrayed as unattractive. The characters of color are also depicted as experiencing a sense of embarrassment about their own culture due to internalized whiteness as the norm. The idea of whiteness as cultural capital is further evident in the narrative. Percy Jackson, a white character, is appointed as the praetor due to his privileges as a white person, even though characters of color such as Frank Zhang and Hazel Levesque are more than eligible to fill the position. Additionally, there is also an evident of whiteness as contingent hierarchies within the novels, where the concept of whiteness is not universally standardized but is context dependent. The portrayal of Nico di Angelo, an Italian demigod son of

Hades, implies that he is considered as the lesser white compared to American white demigods such as Percy Jackson and Jason Grace. However, it is crucial to note that being considered as the lesser white does not equate Nico di Angelo to people of color, as he is still portrayed as more powerful than Hazel Levesque, a black demigod who shares the same godly father.

Rick Riordan, in interviews and public statements, has acknowledged the need for improved representation in literature and expressed his commitment to addressing diversity in his works. However, while Riordan's narratives attempt diversity, they fall short of fully dismantling harmful biases. While characters from various backgrounds are introduced, there are instances where characters of color are still framed within narrow and stereotypical roles. It is also deemed significant to consider the potential influence of Riordan's Texas origins on his characters of color portrayal. The political and cultural landscape of Texas, as a predominantly Republican state with a history of conservative values where power structures favor white communities, might contribute to the shaping of character dynamics in Riordan's narratives. The portrayal of characters of color as lesser than their white counterparts could reflect not only the societal attitudes prevalent in Texas but also Riordan's individual biases.

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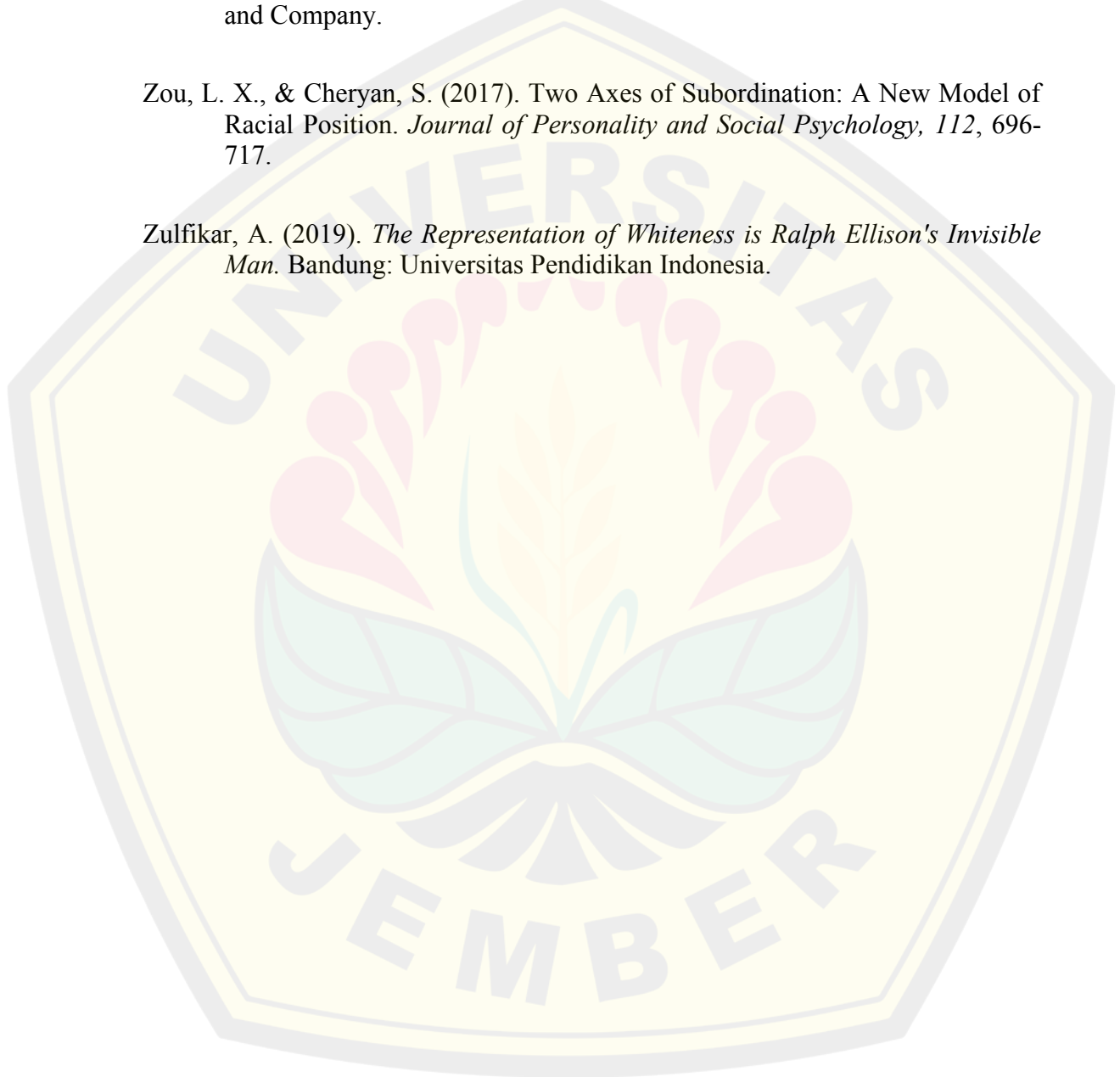
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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 (Primary Data)

#### The Data from The Novel

##### Datum 1

“I hope you’ll support me for praetor. It would mean so much to me.”

Hazel clenched her fists. “Me. Support. You?”

Octavian took off his toga, setting it and his knife on the altar. Percy noticed seven lines on Octavian’s arm— seven years of camp, Percy guessed. Octavian’s mark was a harp, the symbol of Apollo.

“After all,” Octavian told Hazel, “I might be able to help you. It would be a shame if those awful rumors about you kept circulating... or, gods forbid, if they turned out to be true.”

Hazel took a deep breath. Her knuckles were white. “I’ll think about it.” (Riordan, 2011:47)

##### Datum 2

Leo didn’t pay much attention to how other guys looked. He supposed that came from hanging around Jason—tall, blond, rugged, and basically everything Leo could never be. (Riordan, 2012:84)

##### Datum 3

Piper couldn’t help thinking how amazing he looked with his blond hair glowing in the firelight, his regal features like a Roman statue’s. (Riordan, 2010:86)

##### Datum 4

At first, when she saw him stumbling up the highway with the old lady in his arms, Hazel had thought he might be a god in disguise. Even though he was beat up, dirty, and stooped with exhaustion, he’d had an aura of power. He had the good looks of a Roman god, with sea-green eyes and wind-blown black hair. (Riordan, 2011:48)

Datum 5

“My grandmother told me I would close the circle—bring our family honor and all that. But my cousins here...they acted kind of cold and distant, like they didn’t want me around. I don’t think they liked that I’m a son of Mars. Honestly, I don’t think they liked that I’m Chinese, either.” (Riordan, 2014:171)

Datum 6

For a child of Aphrodite, Piper tried hard to play down her beauty. Today she was dressed in tattered jeans, worn-out sneakers, and a white tank top with pink Hello Kitty designs. Her choppy brown hair was braided down the right side with an eagle’s feather. (Riordan, 2012:5)

Datum 7

“And now... the worst insult of all. The gods mock me by sending you.”

Anger bubbled in Leo’s stomach.

Yeah, typical. If Jason were here, Calypso would fall all over him. She’d beg him to stay, but he’d be all noble about returning to his duties, and he’d leave Calypso broken hearted. (Riordan, 2013:379)

Datum 8

“Well,” Jason said, “at least your mom overlooked me.”

Piper knew that wasn’t exactly true. Aphrodite’s message was clear: *This one needs no improvement.* (Riordan, 2010:280)

Datum 9

She’d learned to be vaguely uncomfortable about her ancestry- like Dad’s old pictures from the eighties, when he had feathered hair and crazy clothes. *Can you believe I ever looked like that?* he’d say. Being Cherokee was the same way for him- something funny and mildly embarrassing. (Riordan, 2010:236)

Datum 10

Annabeth saw the logical thing, the tactical move. Piper had gut reactions that were anything but logical. (Riordan, 2014:384)

Datum 11

“Okay,” Hedge said. “So, you, me, and Jason distract him. Piper sneaks around and frees her dad.”

They all looked at Jason.

“What?” Jason asked. “I’m not the leader.”

“Yes,” Piper said. “You are.”

They’d never really talked about it, but no one disagreed, not even Hedge. Coming this far had been a team effort, but when it came to a life-and-death decision, Leo knew Jason was the one to ask. Even if he had no memory, Jason had a kind of balance to him. (Riordan, 2010:287)

Datum 12

Percy had been their backbone. He’d given them confidence as they sailed across the Atlantic and into the Mediterranean. As for Annabeth—she’d been the de facto leader of the quest. (Riordan, 2013:8)

Datum 13

He sat at the head of the table, kind of by default. Since they’d lost Annabeth, Jason had done his best to act as the group’s leader. (Riordan, 2013:66)

Datum 14

“I need a partner in power—but I’d prefer someone like Jason. A warrior not a schemer.”

She waited. Percy realized she was sending him a silent invitation.

His throat went dry. “Oh... you mean...oh.”

“I believe the gods sent you to help me,”

“Look, I’ll help,” he promised. “But I’m new here. You’ve got a lot of good people who knows this camp better than I do. If we succeed on this quest, Hazel and Frank will be heroes. You could ask one of them—”

“No one will follow a child of Pluto. There’s something about that girl... rumors about where she came from... No, she won’t do. As for

Frank Zhang, he has a good heart, but he's hopelessly naive and inexperienced. Besides, if the others found out about his family history at this camp—”

“Family history?”

“The point is, Percy, you are the real power on this quest.” (Riordan, 2011:129)

Datum 15

The Romans began to chant, “Percy! Percy!”

They mobbed him. Before he knew it, they were raising him on a shield. The cry changed to, “Praetor! Praetor!” (Riordan, 2011:341)

Datum 16

Nico twisted his silver skull ring. “Percy is the most powerful demigod I've ever met. No offense to you guys, but it's true.” (Riordan, 2012:572)

Datum 17

Between them, they represented Pluto's two spheres of control: death and riches. Sometimes Hazel thought Nico had gotten the better end of the deal. (Riordan, 2011:52)

## Appendix 2 (Secondary Data)

### The Data about The Author's Critical Position

#### Datum 1

“As I realized that I'd been given a big platform, it was important to me to expand the representation in my books. [...] I want kids of all kinds to see themselves in my books.” (Riordan, 2017)

#### Datum 2

Riordan handles his characters of color in three ways: they are tokenized, they reflect harmful stereotypes, or they conflate their own heritages with the Greek system of which they are now a part. (Falkenberg, 2020)

#### Datum 3

“Okay, so Piper. First thing I would say: The feather-wearing was intentional. It was not an oversight or an unconscious use of tropes. [...] The first time she is shown wearing a feather is in *the Mark of Athena*. She wears a single eagle feather braided in her hair (2012:3). To me, this was an indication that Piper had begun exploring and claiming her heritage in her own way. She now feels comfortable wearing a powerful symbol of a warrior, and also a symbol of protection from the Cherokee tradition. Later, she is described as wearing two white feathers (207). I imagined these as being still eagle feathers. Conley notes that when present for protection or medicine purposes, feathers are often used in pairs (*Medicine* 2005: 137). On a couple of occasions, I note that the feather is swinging like a pendulum in Piper's hair, or that she is fiddling with it (2012:24). To me, this hearkened back to the importance of the feather as an indicator of protection from nearby medicine.” (Riordan, 2020)

#### Datum 4

For Piper's background, I started with James Mooney's book *History, Myths and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokee*. [...] After Mooney's book, I turned to the work of Robert J. Conley, a writer and member of the Cherokee Nation (the Western Cherokees). His *Cherokee Nation* is the official history of his people, sanctioned by the Western Cherokee

leadership. (Incidentally, the book draws heavily on Mooney as a source, which goes to show how reliant we are on earlier imperfect written records. Mooney is mentioned 92 times!).” (Riordan, 2020)

Datum 5

The eagle being regarded as a great ada’wehī, only the greatest warriors and those versed in the sacred ordinances would dare to wear the feathers or to carry them. (Mooney, 1992)

Datum 6

“And that’s it! That’s why Piper wears those feathers. The final point I’d make: Piper has a headstrong personality and a stubborn streak, so she definitely is not a person who would think, Gee, I’m Native, so I can’t wear a feather because that might send the wrong message. If anything, she would say, To Hades with it. I don’t care what you think. I’m Cherokee and I’m going to express that however I want.” (Riordan, 2020)