

Theodore Finch's Social Conflict in All the Bright Places by Jennifer Niven

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Abstract

This article aimed at analyzing the social conflict of Theodore Finch in All the Bright Places Novel by Jennifer Niven. This study focused on the main character, Theodore Finch. Finch is a man fascinated by death. This study used a descriptive qualitative method for analyzing the data. In this study, the theories the researcher uses were social conflict by Lewis, cause of conflict by Mike, and New Criticism Theory. This method was applied to analyze the main character's conflict in society and his cause of conflict, and how he solved the conflict. The finding was that Finch underwent social conflicts: conflict of position, conflict of interest, and conflict of role, whilst, cause of conflict refers to the difference in perception and difference in personality. The last was Finch's problem solving: being patient, being careful in behavior, and being casual and normal.

Keywords: Social conflict, new criticism, Theodore Finch

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a part of writing, which has expressed and communicated human feelings (Johansen 2010). Many kinds of academic work are inspired based on everyday life as well as people's mind. The human mind's representation as a social creature draws and explores the cultural system and social society in writing. Because humans are social beings, they need each other (Kurniawan 2012). As a social being, he needs others to be able to grow into a whole human being. Developing people's opinions and attitudes can change because of the interaction and mutual influence between people.

Further, the interaction between people in society itself shows a conflict or problem (Harris & Orth 2019). Competition is a general phenomenon going to happens in the community. In this study, the researcher only focuses on Theodore Finch as the main character. Because the researcher thinks his character is unique because he is fascinated with death and trying to commit suicide, but he is also trying to live. Because of what he does, the main character deals with social conflict in society.

Lukens (2003) states that the fundamental conflict is the battle against the individual and themselves, the individual fight against another person, and the individual against nature which is undergone by a character in All the Bright Places.

Theodore Finch's character in *All the Bright Places* novel is that teens have a bad attitude and a right attitude, and it depends on how he behaves, leading them to fight against others. Further, a character told in the novel always has an exciting analysis because Finch's character reveals the full drama of life. Isaac (2008) states that the story is along with narrative and imaginary characters and also the events shown in a realist; it is usually about the writer's real life.

The main character is a figure who plays an essential role in a story. In presenting Theodore Finch as a character of the story, it is associated sometimes with a social context because the characters featured in this novel have a social conflict. Social conflict experienced by the main character in a story reflects human attitudes and behavior in society. Thus, this study aimed to describe the social conflict of Theodore Finch in *All the Bright Places* by Jennifer Niven.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative method to analyze the data. The researcher chose the descriptive qualitative method to analyze the data, in order to find the deepest analysis in *All the Bright Places* novel by Jennifer Niven. The researcher used social conflict by Lewis, cause of conflict by Mike, and New Criticism theory to analyze the character of Theodore Finch in the *All the Bright Places* novel. The focus point of the theory was Lewis's theory about social conflict in Theodore Finch. Lewis divides his social conflicts theory into three; (1) Conflict of Positions; Social conflict causes interference between social positions to be a position conflict (Majekodunmi 2017). Social position is the position of the individual in a society and culture. (2) Conflict of Interest; Maslach and Leiter (2016) state the individual stands in a particular relationship. It is the situation when an individual is in a position of need. (3) Role conflict occurs due to mismatches and differences in attitudes and behavior of a person's social values and perceptual values in achieving the goals played (Sedarmayanti 2017).

The second theory was according to Mike lowe (para 5), in understanding the cause of conflict, there were (1) Different information: Communication often leads to misunderstandings that could lead to the cause of social conflict. (2) Different interests; competition over perceived by the person could cause it. (3) Different personalities: Personality differences can lead to conflict when we expected other people to behave in the same way we behave. (4) Past life: memories that we could not forget.

The last theory was New Criticism, Carter (2006) states that New Criticism is a theory that focuses on intrinsic elements such as themes, points of view, plot, background, symbols, character, and characterization. New Criticism focuses on the text itself to find the meaning of a literary work. A character, Theodore Finch was to analyze in *All the Bright Places* novel. To know more detail about the meaning of the character in this research, the researcher needed to understand the description in general of that character. How the author told the story and showed a character in the story was called characterization. Naturally, the author had to offer readers to know the character in the story. Readers could see from attitudes, dialogue, and physical appearance from the other characters' thoughts about that character and the things that were always done by the character (Minderop 2010).

RESULT

Conflict of Position

This conflict refers to Finch's having arguments with his teacher. Finch is a high school student, a teenager who often faces circumstances with different traits and behavior from others. It is uncommon for student characters to notice. The youth need proper guidance or direction. That is why he is able to live a good life. Embryo once again narrows his eyes, squints, and stares at Finch hard, tries to induce a sweat.

"Mr. Embryo once again narrows his eyes to a squint and stares at Finch, trying to indicate a sweat. "And can we expect you to show up and stay out of trouble this semester?"

"Absolutely."

"And keep up with your classwork?"

"Yes, sir."

"I will arrange the drug test with the nurse" he jabs the air with his finger, pointing at me"(Ch1/p.16)

The quotation above means that Mr. Embryo asks Finch to come for a drug test. Finch is the only one selected. Because Finch is a student and Mr. Embryo is a teacher, therefore, Finch cannot resist his teacher's wishes. Mr. Embryo's action leads Finch to try to commit suicide at school so that many teachers and kids are worried about Finch. Some teachers may give warnings to Mr. Embryo to overcome the problem. The actions of Mr. Embryo with Finch are a warning and look like a cold conflict. Nevertheless, this warning is given by the teachers through speech than writing.

Conflict of Interest

This conflict of interest refers to Finch's argument against Charlie about suicide attempt. As everyone has a conflict in their life against their friends, sometimes, conflict strengthens their friendship. A conflict in a friendship is common, and not all conflicts end badly, like beating each other. It is Finch's behavior that Charlie does not like. Because Finch insists on trying to kill himself, Charlie comes and challenges Finch's faith. Finch is uncomfortable and insulted. Though Finch is painful for a long time, he still keeps listening and talking to Charlie. The above explanation can be seen the quotation as follows:

“Charlie found out about my bad behavior, about my stupid suicide attempt, he just said “man, why do you do that?”“ because we all have to die someday, I just want to be prepared” Charlie must have thought but never once called me “weirdo” which is why he is my best friends.” (Ch 1/ p. 12-13)

The researcher regards the quotation above as the conflict of Interest because Charlie's behavior does not hurt Finch's feeling. Though there are differences in opinion between Finch and Charlie, Finch never hates Charlie. In fact, Finch enjoys befriending Charlie. "Weirdo" is the key word that Finch avoids naming Charlie, therefore, their friendship last long in spite of respect and honor shared to each other.

Conflict of Role

In this conflict, Finch is shunned by his friends. There are many factors that make Finch avoided by his friends: a crazy person, breaking windows, creating conflict, and fighting hobby that are labeled to Finch. Finch does such behaviors as he does not have parental cares leading him to finally unleash his anger at school.

“Finch seeing Amanda's face, freaked him out. At the time, Amanda with Violet. I laugh at the thought, almost fall. Amanda catches me and said, “weirdo!” she cups her big mouth.” (Ch1/9-10)

The quotation above implies that Amanda bullies Finch. Meaning that Finch's social conflict is not direct violence or physical but indirect violence that is mocking and facial expression. The researcher regards this conflict as the conflict of the role because the role here is material states like richness and poverty, violence like a popular, and finch-like a freak. Further, the researcher analyzes violence like mocking and facial

expressions from Amanda as a famous person toward Finch because he is a freak. It is a role conflict because his friends think that Finch is a strange as well as a low loser.

Cause of Conflict

Difference in Perception

As to the conflict between Finch and Mr. Embryo, the conflict arises as Finch's bickering to Mr. Embryo is not explained why he has done so to Mr. Embryo because Finch thinks that Mr. Embryo never believes what he says. Whatever Finch does looks terrible from other people's point of view that is annoying and troubling. All the teachers at school, even Mr. Embryo, think that Finch is indeed a bad boy, and they have given up warning Finch.

“the thing I don't say is: I want to stay alive. The reason I do not say it is because, given that fat folder in front of him, he never believed it. I'm fighting to be here in this shitty, _he never once mentioned Violet, and I'm relieved” (Ch1/p.16)

It explains that the cause of conflict against Mr. Embryo is a different perception. The difference in the statement obtained by Mr. Embryo is that Finch goes to the top of the building to commit suicide and makes everyone in the school, including teachers and students disturbed. The truth is Finch tries to make a suicide attempt, but Finch cancels his shot because Finch tries to help Violet who is shaking and shivering on the building, to jump. It is shown in the text below:

“She is shivering or shaking. I cannot tell which, and so I slowly inch my way toward her, hoping I don't fall off because the last thing I want to do is make a jackass out of myself in front of this girl!” (Ch1/7)

It explains that Finch thoughtlessly jumps up too and grabs Violet's hand so she would not fall. The suicide attempt of the two teens thwarts very dramatically because everyone at the school sees that action. However, no one knows the real story behind it except them.

As to the conflict of Finch against Charlie, the conflict arises when Finch goes to the bell tower and tries to commit suicide but thwarts because he suddenly tries to help someone who also attempts to suicide, the rescued action that is unknown by everyone but only known by Finch himself. As Finch's friend, Charlie does not expect and asks casually about what Finch is doing, which makes Charlie disappointed and worried, but

Charlie is so afraid that he would offend Finch. Finch just says in his usual joking tone and says that everyone will die, and Finch just wants to try it. It is shown in the text below:

“Man, why do you do that?”

Because we all have to die someday. I just want to be prepared” this isn’t the reason, of course, but it will be enough for him” (Ch1/ p. 12)

It implies that Charlie also thinks that Finch is weird because he has been fascinated by death, meanwhile, everyone in the world wants to live. What attracts Finch to end is his hatred for his father and his unhappy family. Meanwhile, Charlie is a cheerful kid with black skin and quickly brings a different woman every night. It seems Charlie and Finch's perception is very different. Their different perception can cause conflict.

Difference in Personality of Finch and His Classmates

Finch finds that there is something wrong with what he does that makes everyone at his school hate him, when he does something inappropriate as a student, such as destroying the school equipment, disrupting school activities by fighting against Romero during class session, and not paying attention to the warnings given by school principals and teachers. Everyone at school knows Finch’s lousy attitude; if other people think Finch is a bad boy, he will make himself look even worse. It is shown in the text below:

“That and sometimes I say and do things without thinking. People do not like that” (‘Ch5/ p.61-62)

The quotation shows that everyone at school does not like Finch's attitude. Finch knows that his work looks different from other people. He understands that all people at school look at him strangely and look like they mock Finch's behavior because Finch is a trouble maker, a school property destroyer, and a suicide attempt doer. It becomes a problem if his friends in public tease Finch and Finch cannot manage his anger, then there will be unexpected problems such as being expelled from school because Finch already has a lot of red notes and the quarrel between friends.

Finch's Problem Solving

Finch's being Patient

Finch resolves the misunderstanding with Mr. Embryo is by following his request, and does what he orders patiently. Mr. Embryo never questions the truth of the story from Finch. That is why Finch thinks that whatever he says, nobody will believe it. Finch has a great respect for Mr. Embryo, a teacher who cares about him. Whatever Mr. Embryo says to Finch, he will try to comply. It is shown in the text below:

“I am happy to, sir-I mean, I, like, really enjoy this conversation of ours-but I am good” (Ch1/p.15)

It implies that Finch enjoys being with Mr. Embryo. Finch also tries to get Mr. Embryo not to think much about Finch even though it is fun for Finch because Finch finally knows that someone cares about him. Mr. Embryo is very caring and kind to his students. Because of Mr. Embryo's concern, he considers what Embryo does is too much. Finch is worried about Mr. Embryo's health proved by how many cigarettes Embryo smokes, especially when Finch makes a trouble at school.

Finch's being Careful in Behavior

The way Finch tries to solve his conflict against Charlie is by appreciating Charlie's good attitude towards Finch as Finch has shown otherwise at school. Finch is grateful that Charlie is his best friend. Because not many people in the school like Finch, even their teachers try to avoid Finch's problems, but Finch still has a good friend, his name is Charlie. It is shown in the text below:

“Charlie may think it, but at least he does not say “weirdo” which is the way he is my best friend. Other than the fact that I appreciate this about him, we do not have much in common.” (Ch1/ p.12)

It implies how deep Finch's feeling is to Charlie even though Finch does not tell his problem, but his best friend never pushes or asks about his life. Finch appreciates his personality, even though as a friend, Finch has nothing in common regarding hobby with him, but they can still be made a good friend without a problem. If something goes wrong one day, Finch is sure Charlie will not do Finch any harm because of attitude appreciation.

Finch's being Casual and Normal

This problem solving refers to the conflict of Finch against his classmates; Finch accepts the unequal behavior of everyone, including himself. Although this is a question for Finch because many people care and pay attention to someone's behavior without knowing the cause and do not want to help Finch's problems. It is shown in the text below:

“Honestly, Violet, I do not know why the kids do not like me. I mean, I know, but I do not. I have always been different, but to me, different is normal. I decide a version of the truth” (Ch5/ p. 61)

It describes Finch's attempt to accept himself. When everyone is busy to blame Finch because of his bad behavior, Finch prefers self-reflect to other things. Finally, Finch is able to control himself well regardless of the people around him whose words can hurt Finch's feelings. It can solve Finch's problem through self-reflection.

CONCLUSION

In this part, the researcher has to admit that it is not so easy to apply the available theory in this article. There are some obstacles in this application; whether or not the theory of social conflicts are appropriate in this research, the researcher still maintains the theories as they support what the main character, Theodore Finch, does against the others. Besides, the explanation of conflicts, the causes of conflict, and problem solving of conflicts seem to fulfill one another.

Other obstacle is that the interpretation of the main character's characteristics that the researcher digs from the novel to support the theory of social conflict undergone by the main character, Theodore Finch, is not easy. However, through deeper understanding, the researcher is able to match with the theory even though there is still correction for the development of the analysis from other researcher in the future. Finally, the researcher hopes that Finch's conflicts: conflict of position, conflict of interest, conflict of role as well as cause of conflict: difference in perception, and difference in personality, and the last analysis that is problem-solving consisting of being patient, being careful in behavior, being casual and normal can give additional knowledge of conflicts in society.

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