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Social rebellion and mistreatments toward American Black People as portrayed in *The Help* (2011) movie by Tate Taylor based on Marxian perspective

Retno Ramadhina[1*], Noviana Lestari[1], Neneng Sri Wahyuningsih[2]

[1]English Literature, Universitas Pertiwi, Bekasi, Indonesia
[3]English Literature, Universitas LIA, Jakarta, Indonesia
**Corresponding author: retno.ramadhina@pertiwi.ac.id*

ABSTRACT

Racial discrimination against Black Americans remains a persistent social issue rooted in the legacy of slavery and segregation, and it continues to be represented in literary works such as film. Previous studies on *The Help* (2011) mostly examined individual and institutional racism, prejudice, the sympathy of white characters, intersectional discrimination, and maxim flouting, leaving the specific factors of social rebellion underexplored. Marx's social conflict theory treats society as an arena of struggle between groups occupying unequal positions relative to economic production, power, and resources not as a smoothly functioning system where everyone's role serves the collective good. That framing suits The Help especially well because the film's central relationship This study aimed to explore the factors of social rebellion portrayed in the movie and to analyze the mistreatments of American Black people shown within it. Using a qualitative, descriptive method grounded in a sociological approach highlighting Karl Marx's social conflict theory, the researchers repeatedly watched the movie, took notes on primary data (dialogues and acts) and secondary data from related literature, categorized the data thematically, and analyzed selected scenes. The findings showed that social rebellion appeared through both individual acts, such as Aibileen and Minny's growing defiance and Celia's rejection of racial boundaries, and collective acts, such as the maids' participation in and publication of Skeeter's book. Mistreatment was found at institutional and interpersonal levels, including bathroom segregation, wrongful dismissals, denied education, and racially motivated fear and violence. This study concludes that rebellion in the film emerges directly from sustained mistreatment, reflecting the unequal competition for social and material resources central to social conflict theory, and contributes to a deeper understanding of how race, class, and gender intersect in shaping resistance within American cinema.

Keywords: mistreatment; race relations; social conflict theory; social rebellion; The Help.

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INTRODUCTION

Racial discrimination, which frequently affects minority groups, is the societal issue that still afflicts American culture. African Americans have been pursuing freedom and equality since the 1950s, leading to the emergence of numerous black movements (Wahida & Yeni Prastiwi, 2023). A Marxian

sociological perspective proves particularly illuminating for this movie because the film's drama is never simply a matter of prejudice existing in people's minds; it is a drama about labor, dependency, and who controls the material conditions of everyday life. This is precisely the terrain Marx built his theory to explain, and it is why his framework fits this film so naturally. Numerous racial groups coexist in civilization, each with unique traits and customs. They develop their own racial identity as a result of the distinctions, which may lead to issues like intolerance. Racial groups are split into dominant and minority groups as a result of intolerance. The minority group is typically subjugated by the majority group. Additionally, their domination demonstrates both their superiority and inadequacy. The majority group asserts that they are a superior group with a privileged or advantageous life (Syafik et al., 2023). It is an important mechanism, for it automatizes and disindividualizes power since its principle is not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution (Calhoun et al., 2002). Black individuals and other minorities have difficulty finding jobs because they have fewer educational options, fewer job prospects, and insufficient services and attention (Schnurmann, 2020).

Racism is differences in behavior and inequality based on skin color, ethnicity, race, and a person's origin that result in restrictions or violations of a person's rights and freedoms. It is usually based on the physical characteristics of a person of a race and their innate behavior, including personality, intelligence, morality, and other cultural characteristics (Afifulloh et al., 2024). African American women have been discriminated against in terms of racism, classism, and sexism. For instance, they received unfair treatments in public facilities, where they were discriminated based on their skin color. To separate Whites and non-Whites, the public facilities were labeled as “pure white” or “colored” in libraries, restrooms, public transportation, and other facilities (Liao & Wang, 2023). Therefore, action against racism, sexism, and classism is required. Blacks and other minorities are oppressed under White supremacy because Whites are viewed as the superior race. Additionally, when a country is founded on a system that is upheld by racism, sexism, and White privilege, it can result in numerous forms of oppression for women with diverse skin tones. It is not only expressed through hatred, verbal abuse, or direct violence, but also through stereotypes, exclusion, prejudice, and unequal treatment that become part of everyday social life (Banaji et al., 2021). This problem becomes more serious when racist attitudes are accepted as normal and repeated through daily interactions, social habits, and public institutions (Zhang et al., 2022). As a result, marginalized groups often experience limited freedom, unequal opportunities, and the loss of dignity in both private and public spaces (Ikawati, 2018).

The issue of racism is also widely represented in literary works, including movies (Nazar et al., 2024). Movies are important cultural texts because they not only provide entertainment but also reflect social realities, historical experiences, and power relations in society (Nugroho, 2023). Through characters, dialogues,

conflicts, and settings, films can show how racism operates in everyday life and how marginalized groups experience discrimination (Saleem et al., 2026).

The culture behind the creation of literary works can be compared to the sober expectations of literary figures. The resulting stream of written elements determined by the author's beliefs is the expression of a literary producer who believes the type of literature he creates is the only appropriate genre (Sofiani et al., 2024). Movies are also a part of popular literary works that present many social issues to be analysed in research studies (Marleni et al., 2026).*The Help* is a 2011 American historical drama movie directed by Tate Taylor and produced by Chris Columbus, Michael Barnathan, and Brunson Green (Taylor, 2011). The screenplay was written by Tate Taylor and is based on the novel *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett. The film stars Viola Davis (as Aibileen Clark), Emma Stone (as Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan), Octavia Spencer (as Minny Jackson), Jessica Chastain (as Celia Foote), Bryce Dallas Howard (as Hilly Holbrook), and Allison Janney (as Charlotte Phelan).*The Help* premiered in Beverly Hills on August 9, 2011, and was released in the United States on August 10, 2011.

The movie was set in 1963. "Skeeter" Phelan (Emma Stone) returns to her hometown, Jackson, Mississippi, after graduating from college, in writing. She notices how badly the black maids are treated by their employers, who are well-to-do housewives of her own age. In spite of this, the maids take good care of the children, in some cases better than the mothers themselves. Skeeter embarks in a writing project about the maids' lives and working conditions, but the maids refuse to take part as they risk losing their jobs. Gradually, the black women pick up the courage to share their stories, anonymously. Sad things and funny things happen in the process, and lives are changed.

The movie, which depicts in great detail the discrimination and abuse of the African American population at the period, demonstrates how this research might influence an individual's social life. The most crucial part of evaluating this work is realizing how intersectionality may help us comprehend how different kinds of relationships such as those based on race, class, or gender emerge in the lives of characters in a movie. Gaining a deeper comprehension of the topics discussed in *The Help* is crucial. The latest study enables us to understand how literary works both influence and are influenced by current social and political events. *The Help* examines black community issues, police brutality, and racial injustice all of which are still pertinent in light of social movements like Black Lives Matter.

The Help movie was selected by the researchers for this study because it offers a glimpse into the social rebellion issues that Black Americans face, as well as mistreatment that may be connected to both past and present lives. The author suggests conducting a study titled "Social Rebellion and Mistreatments toward American Black People as Portrayed in *The Help* (2011) Movie by Tate Taylor" based on the backgrounds mentioned above. Analyzing this work using the most recent references allows us to better understand how systematic racism operates and

how it affects individuals. Thus, the research problem of this study are the factors of social rebellion portrayed and how mistreatments toward American Black People be shown in the *The Help* movie. Meanwhile, the research objectives are to explore the factors of social rebellion portrayed and to analyze the mistreatments toward American Black People shown in *The Help* movie.

Theory is a way of thinking that comes from something, or a number of theories are employed as instruments to examine the results. Additionally, theories serve as a framework that directs the focus of a single study. The researcher will provide a clear explanation of the hypothesis in this part. Writing down the theory's fundamental idea, justifications for its application, and criticisms of the theory including, its advantages and disadvantages, is one approach defining it. In this study, the researcher employed sociological approach with the highlight in social conflict theory by Karl Marx that stated people from different socioeconomic backgrounds make up society, and they compete for social, material, and political resources like jobs, leisure time, food and shelter, and education. This competition is reflected in the fundamental differences of social institutions like government, education, and religion, which help to maintain an unequal social structure. What distinguishes the present study is a shift in the level and nature of analysis. Where previous researches has largely treated racism in the film as a matter of belief, attitude, and cultural narrative, the present study treats it as rooted in a concrete labor relationship, with racial ideology functioning as the mechanism that justifies and naturalizes that relationship rather than as its origin.

Some previous studies have been done on this movie. First, an article titled *The Portrayal of Racism in The Help Movie* by (Putu et al., 2026) focused on the individual and institutional racism depicted in the movie.Second, an article written by (Afifulloh et al., 2024) titled *Race and Prejudice: Constructing Identity in "The Help" Movie* that discussed about how prejudice constructed someone's perception to others.Thord, an article by (Syafik et al., 2023) titled *The White Woman's Sympathy and Black Women Resistance in the Tate Taylor The Help Film* which talked about the sympathy given by a white woman to her African American female maid.Next, and article written by (Liao & Wang, 2023) titled *The Demarginalization of Female Discourses on the Intersectional Discriminations Againts Women in The Help* that focused on the intersectional discrimination against women in the movie.Last, an article by (Hamidah et al., 2022)titled *Analysis of Flouting of Conversational Maxims by characters in The Help Movie* which talked about the maxim flouting by the characters in the movie. Based on this gap, the study wanted to highlight the social rebellion portrayed on the movie.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative research design, specifically a descriptive qualitative method grounded in library and literary research. A

qualitative approach was considered appropriate because this study did not aim to measure or quantify data numerically, but rather to describe, interpret, and analyze the meanings embedded within the dialogues, actions, and scenes of the movie. As a form of library research, the data sources of this study consisted of literary and documentary materials; namely the movie itself as the primary text, along with journals, scientific articles, e-books, and other written sources as supporting references rather than data obtained through fieldwork, questionnaires, or direct interviews with human subjects. The analysis in this study was directed by a sociological approach to literature, which was employed to examine how the movie reflects, represents, and critiques social phenomena such as racial mistreatment and rebellion, particularly through the lens of Karl Marx's social conflict theory specifically class inequality, power domination and conflict between dominant and subordinate group. To carry out this research systematically, the researchers followed five main procedural steps:

1. Identified the type of study,
2. Identified the object of the study,
3. Identified the data and data sources,
4. Decided on the data collection method,
5. Decided on the data analysis method.

The object of this study is *The Help*, a period drama movie directed by Tate Taylor, which was first premiered in 2011. This movie was selected as the object of analysis because it explicitly portrays the social dynamics between Black domestic workers and their white employers in Jackson, Mississippi, during the early 1960s, offering rich cinematic material for examining both racial mistreatment and the emergence of social rebellion against it. The researchers focused specifically on the acts, dialogues, character interactions, and narrative developments within the movie that depict how Black characters were treated by the dominant white social group and how they, in turn, responded to and resisted such treatment.

This study utilized two types of data: primary data and secondary data. The primary data of this research were the acts, dialogues, or statements made by the characters in the movie that explicitly or implicitly showed social rebellion and mistreatment toward Black people. These included verbal expressions of defiance, scenes depicting discriminatory treatment, and behavioral changes among characters that signified resistance against the prevailing racial hierarchy. The secondary data sources for this research were gathered from various related sources, such as journals, scientific articles, e-books, official websites, and other publications relevant to the topics of racial discrimination, social rebellion, and sociological approaches to literature and film. These secondary sources served to support, contextualize, and strengthen the interpretation of the primary data drawn directly from the movie.

The data for this study were gathered through the technique of watching the movie, commonly referred to as documentation or content-viewing technique in film-based literary research. This data collection process consisted of several systematic steps, described in detail as follows.

1. First, the researchers watched the movie repeatedly. Repeated viewing was necessary to ensure that no relevant scenes, dialogues, or subtle non-verbal cues related to mistreatment and rebellion were overlooked, as certain forms of resistance in the movie;particularly close or covert forms of rebellion.
2. Second, the researchers took note of important parts of both primary and secondary data. During and after each viewing, the researchers recorded timestamps, transcribed relevant dialogues, and wrote descriptive notes about scenes considered significant to the research focus
3. Third, the researchers arranged the data into several groups based on its theoretical category. At this stage, the highlighted scenes and dialogues were classified into thematic categories corresponding to the study's two main areas of focus; the social rebellion and mistreatment.
4. Fourth, the researchers selected particular parts considered important and relevant for analysis.
5. Fifth, the researchers drew conclusions and formulated suggestions.

After collecting material from the movie and other supporting sources, the researchers analyzed the data by describing and interpreting the ways in which social rebellion and mistreatment toward Black people were shown in the movie. The researchers used content data analysis which highlighted the dialogues and narrations sponek by the caharcters. Next, the researchers interpreted the organized data and drew meaningful conclusions about how mistreatment functioned as a catalyst for the various forms of social rebellion portrayed in the movie, and verifying these interpretations by cross-checking them against the primary data and relevant secondary sources (Taylor, n.d.).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Social Rebellion Acts Portrayed in *The Help* Movie

The social rebellion acts portrayed in *The Help* movie are explained as follows:

a. 00:14:00 – 00:17:00 (Skeeter challenges Hilly's Home Help Sanitation Initiative)

Hilly : *"They carry different diseases than we do."*

Skeeter : *"Maybe we should just build you a bathroom outside, Hilly."*

This scene illustrated one of the most explicit examples of institutionalized racism in the movie. Hilly Holbrook introduced the “Home Help Sanitation Initiative,” a proposal requiring Black maids to use separate bathrooms from those used by their white employers. Hilly argued that African Americans carried diseases and that sharing bathrooms with them posed a health risk to white families. Her proposal was not based on scientific evidence but on long-standing racist

stereotypes that portrayed Black people as unclean, inferior, and biologically different from white people. By attempting to formalize this practice, Hilly sought to reinforce racial segregation within the private sphere of the home.

b. 00:27:00 – 00:34:00 (Skeeter interviews Aibileen and begins the book project)

Skeeter : *"Did you ever dream of being something else?"*

Aibileen : *"My mama was a maid. My grandmama was a house slave."*

Aibileen's statement highlights how racial discrimination was passed down from one generation to the next in American society. By explaining that her grandmother worked as a house slave and that her mother also spent her life serving white families, Aibileen reveals how Black women were often trapped in the same cycle of domestic labor for generations. This pattern was not simply the result of personal choice but was deeply rooted in the legacy of slavery, segregation, and limited educational and economic opportunities available to African Americans. Her words illustrate how the historical institution of slavery continued to influence the lives of Black people long after its abolition, creating social and economic structures that maintained racial inequality.

At the same time, Skeeter's decision to interview Aibileen represented a significant act of social rebellion against the racial norms of Jackson, Mississippi, during the early 1960s. In a society where Black women were expected to remain silent and where their experiences were rarely acknowledged by white people, Skeeter actively sought out Aibileen's perspective and treated her story as valuable and worthy of being heard. By listened to Aibileen and documented her experiences, Skeeter challenged the unwritten social rule that Black voices should be ignored or marginalized. This action not only broke racial barriers but also created a space for Black women to share their realities, exposed the injustices they faced and questioned the legitimacy of the segregated social order. Through this interaction, the film portrayed the beginning of a collective effort to confront racial prejudice and gave visibility to voices that had long been silenced.

c. 00:34:00 – 00:40:00 (Aibileen decides to tell the truth)

Aibileen began sharing her experiences despite the risks involved. Aibileen's decision to participate in Skeeter's project represented a profound act of courage and social resistance within the context of 1960s Mississippi, a society deeply shaped by racial segregation and discrimination. During this period, African Americans who challenged racial norms often faced severe consequences, including job loss, social ostracism, harassment, physical violence, and even threats to their lives. For Black domestic workers in particular, employment in white households was often their primary source of income, meaning that any action perceived as disloyal or rebellious could jeopardize their ability to support themselves and their families. As a result, many Black maids were forced to remain

silent about the mistreatment they experienced, fearing retaliation from powerful white employers and community leaders.

Aibileen's choice to share her experiences with Skeeter became a significant act of social rebellion. Initially, she hesitated to participate because she understood the dangers involved. She was aware that speaking openly about racism could lead to unemployment, public humiliation, or other forms of punishment. Nevertheless, she eventually decided that telling the truth is more important than remaining silent. By agreeing to be interviewed, Aibileen broke an unwritten social rule that Black people should not publicly criticize white individuals or expose the realities of racial injustice.

d. 00:50:00 – 00:58:00 (Minny refuses to submit to Hilly's power)
Hilly : *"Nobody wanted to hire a sass-mouthin', thievin'..."*
Minny : *"I'm glad you like it." (during the pie incident)*

Minny's character serves as a powerful challenge to the racial and social expectations imposed on Black domestic workers in the segregated South. Unlike Aibileen, who is generally cautious and reserved when interacting with white employers, Minny is outspoken, assertive, and unwilling to remain silent when she witnesses unfair treatment. Her strong personality distinguishes her from the stereotype of the obedient, submissive Black maid that many white families in Jackson expect. In a society where Black domestic servants are expected to be grateful, compliant, and unquestioningly loyal to their employers, Minny's willingness to speak her mind represents a direct challenge to the established racial hierarchy.

e. 01:02:00 – 01:10:00 (Celia Foote rejects racial boundaries)
Minny : *"You're supposed to eat in the dining room."*
Celia : *"I'm fine right here, Minny."*

This act represented a subtle yet significant challenge to the racial and social norms that governed relationships between Black domestic workers and white employers. During the 1960s in Mississippi, Southern social conventions dictated that Black servants and white employers maintained a clear social distance from one another. Although Black maids worked closely within white households, they were expected to remain in subordinate positions and were rarely treated as equals. Social customs reinforced racial hierarchy by limiting personal relationships between Black and white individuals, ensuring that interactions remained strictly professional and unequal. White employers were expected to exercise authority, while Black domestic workers were expected to be obedient, respectful, and emotionally detached.

Celia's treatment of Minny Jackson directly challenged these expectations. Unlike many white women in Jackson, Celia did not view Minny merely as a servant whose purpose was to cook, clean, and follow orders. Instead, she treated

Minny with kindness, respect, and genuine concern. She spoke to Minny as a person rather than as a subordinate, valued her opinions, and often sought her advice. Rather than enforcing rigid social boundaries, Celia welcomed Minny into her personal life and gradually developed a relationship based on trust and mutual support. This behavior was unusual within the social context of the film because it contradicted the racial etiquette that defined interactions between white employers and Black domestic workers.

f. 01:15:00 – 01:25:00 (More maids join the project after Medgar Evers' assassination)

Several maids agreed to contribute their stories. The assassination of civil rights leader Medgar Evers served as one of the most significant historical moments referenced in the movie, emphasizing the harsh realities of racism and racial violence in the American South during the early 1960s. Evers was a prominent civil rights activist in Mississippi who worked tirelessly to challenge segregation, expand voting rights for African Americans, and promote racial equality. His murder in June 1963 demonstrated the extreme risks faced by individuals who openly opposed the racial status quo. The event sent shockwaves throughout the Black community in Jackson and reinforces the understanding that the struggle for civil rights is not merely a political issue but a matter of life and death.

Within the film, news of Evers's assassination deeply affected Aibileen, Minny, and the other Black maids. His death served as a painful reminder that racism was not limited to social exclusion, verbal insults, or discriminatory laws; it was sustained through intimidation, violence, and fear. The murder illustrated the lengths to which defenders of white supremacy were willing to go in order to preserve racial segregation and silence those who demand equality. For many African Americans, Evers's death confirmed that remaining silent did not guarantee safety, as racial injustice affects every aspect of their lives regardless of whether they openly protest it.

g. 01:30:00 – 01:40:00 (Minny describes the relief of telling the truth)
Minny: *"It's something about that word truth..."*

Minny Jackson’s decision to share her experiences in the movie represented a powerful act of personal liberation and social resistance. For much of her life, Minny had been forced to suppress her anger, frustration, and pain in order to survive within a deeply racist and unequal society. As a Black domestic worker in 1960s Mississippi, she occupied a vulnerable position where openly criticized white employers or challenged discriminatory treatment could result in severe consequences, including dismissal from work, economic hardship, social isolation, or even physical danger. Because her livelihood depended on maintaining employment in white households, Minny was often expected to tolerate disrespect and injustice without complaint.

h. 01:45:00 – 01:55:00 (Publication of the book *The Help*)

The anonymous book began circulating throughout Jackson. Throughout the film, segregation was maintained not only through laws and customs but also through silence. The experiences, perspectives, and grievances of Black domestic workers were largely excluded from public discussion, allowing white society to preserve an image of racial harmony and social stability. By collecting and publishing the testimonies of Black maids, the book disrupted this silence and exposed realities that many white residents would prefer to ignore.

The book was particularly threatening to the existing social order because it gave a public platform to individuals who had traditionally been denied the opportunity to speak for themselves. In the segregated South, Black women working as domestic servants occupied one of the lowest positions in the social hierarchy. They were expected to perform essential labor while remaining invisible and voiceless. Their role was to care for white families, not to criticize them or reveal what happens behind closed doors. By allowing Black maids to tell their own stories, the publication challenged the assumption that only white voices deserved authority and public recognition.

i. 02:05:00 – 02:10:00 (The "Terrible Awful" revelation humiliates Hilly)
Minny: *"And something else real special."*

This scene, despite its comedic presentation, was an important act of resistance against an oppressive system of social and ethnic dominance. Hilly Holbrook was shown throughout the movie as a strong white socialite who had a significant impact on Jackson, Mississippi. She enforced discriminatory policies like the Home Help Sanitation Initiative and utilized her income, social standing, and racial power to manipulate others, especially Black domestic workers. Her reputation as a reputable, moral, and powerful member of society served as a major source of support for her authority. As a result, every danger to her reputation turns into a challenge to the basis of her authority.

Minny Jackson's choice to covertly feed Hilly the "Terrible Awful," a chocolate pie filled with her own feces, served as a symbolic act of defiance against years of humiliation, prejudice, and abuse. Because of the racial injustices and power disparities prevalent at the time, Minny was unable to confront Hilly directly, but she managed to get revenge in an inventive and clandestine manner. In a society that routinely denied Black women the chance to openly oppose, the act enabled Minny to restore her sense of dignity and personal autonomy.

j. 02:18:00 – 02:23:00 (Aibileen confronts Hilly and refuses intimidation)
Aibileen to Hilly: *"You a godless woman."*

This scene represented the culmination of the social rebellion portrayed throughout the movie and served as one of the movie's most powerful moments of

resistance against racial oppression. From the beginning of the story, Hilly Holbrook functioned as a symbol of institutional racism, white supremacy, and the social structures that maintained racial inequality in Jackson, Mississippi during the early 1960s. As a prominent member of the white upper class, Hilly used her social influence to enforce segregation, controlled the lives of Black domestic workers, and preserved a system that privileges white people while marginalizing African Americans. Her authority extended beyond individual prejudice, represented the broader racist institutions and cultural norms that limit the freedom, dignity, and opportunities of Black citizens.

k. 02:23:00 – 02:26:00 (Skeeter leaves for New York)

Charlotte: *"Courage sometimes skips a generation.*
Thank you for bringing it back to our family."

In the movie, Skeeter Phelan's choice to become a writer was an important example of social rebellion since it went against the strict gender norms that were placed on women in the USA in the early 1960s. During that period, marriage, childbirth, and involvement in social groups were typically used by Southern society to determine a woman's success. It was expected of young white women from middle-class and upper-class backgrounds to find a good spouse, take care of the home, rear children, and uphold the community's social ideals. Public careers, intellectual independence, and professional aspirations were frequently viewed as secondary to these household duties. Women who didn't live up to these ideals ran the risk of being shunned by peers and family as well as facing social ridicule and solitude.

Skeeter was shown to be distinct from the other ladies in her social circle right from the start of the movie. Skeeter exhibited a strong interest in education, writing, and intellectual growth, but her acquaintances, such as Elizabeth Leefolt and Hilly Holbrook, concentrated on marriage, family life, and social standing. After graduated from college, she came home with goals that went beyond the stereotype of Southern women. Her ambition to become a professional writer put her at conflict with social standards right away because she valued job advancement and personal success more than finding a husband and fitting in.

2. Mistreatments towards American Black People Shown in *The Help* Movie

The social mistreatment acts toward American Black People in *The Help* movie explained as follows:

a. 00:08:00 – 00:13:00 (Bathroom segregation: The "Home Help Sanitation Initiative")

Hilly : *"They carry different diseases than we do.*
That's why I've drafted the Home Health Sanitation Initiative."

Skeeter: *"The what?"*

Hilly : *"A disease-preventative bill that requires every white home to have a separate bathroom for the colored help."*

This sequence demonstrated one of the most overt instances of institutional racism in the film, showing how racial discrimination is frequently upheld not only by individual prejudice but also by institutional practices, social regulations, and cultural ideas. The scene took place when Hilly Holbrook advocates for the "Home Help Sanitation Initiative," a plan that mandated that white households construct separate restrooms for their Black maids. Hilly contended that shared facilities could allow white families to contract diseases carried by African Americans. Despite framing her plan as a health and safety issue, her justification was based solely on racial preconceptions rather than empirical data.

This scene was significant because Hilly's suggestion was more than just a manifestation of personal bias. Instead, it was an attempt to turn racist ideas into socially acceptable policies. When discriminatory beliefs were ingrained in laws, customs, and organizations that consistently penalize a specific racial group, it was known as institutional racism. Hilly tried to institutionalize racial prejudice by urging other white families to use separate restrooms and by leveraging her community connections to support the project. Her deeds showed how racism functions on a systemic level, impacting African Americans' everyday lives thru social norms and laws rather than just thru isolated acts of animosity.

b. 00:10:00 – 00:16:00 (Aibileen was forced to use an outdoor bathroom)

Hilly : *"A disease-preventative bill that requires every white home to have a separate bathroom for the colored help."*

Aibileen took care of Mae Mobley, prepared meals, and cleaned the house for the majority of the day. However, she was not allowed to use the family's indoor restroom. She had to leave the house and go outside each time she needed to use the restroom. Despite her vital contributions, this scene represented her exclusion from full inclusion in the home. The restroom turned into a symbol of racial injustice. It continually reminded Aibileen that despite her devotion and diligence, she was still seen as inferior due to her race.

c. 00:18:00 – 00:22:00 (Minny was fired for using the indoor bathroom)

Hilly : *"Minny? Minny, are you in there?"*
Minny : *"Yes, ma'am."*
Hilly : *"And just what are you doing?" (Minny flushes the toilet)*
Hilly : *"Get off my toilet! You are fired, Minny Jackson!"*

Minny's choice was driven by necessity. Using the outside restroom was dangerous and challenging due to the weather. However, Hilly viewed the action as a transgression of racial boundaries rather than a sensible reaction to the circumstance. The penalty was harsh and instantaneous. Minny's career, earnings, and reputation were all lost. This illustrated how Black employes' lives were heavily

influenced by white bosses. The incident emphasized how vulnerable African American domestic workers were, since they might be fired for small infractions that white employes would not have been held accountable for.

d. 00:45:00 – 00:50:00 (flashback) (Constantine and Rachel were humiliated because of race)

Charlotte : *"Why don't you go around back.*
Wait in the kitchen." ...

Gracie Higginbotham: *"You may put up with this kind of nonsense,*
but I do not."

Charlotte : *"Both of you. Leave. Now."*

This scene illustrated how African Americans might face consequences just for showing up in white social settings. Despite spending a large portion of her life helping Skeeter's family, Constantine was not loyal when racial norms were questioned. Constantine was deeply devastated by the humiliation because she understood that racial prejudice could not be eradicated by years of work. Despite their commitment and close ties to white families, African Americans continued to be marginalized, as seen by her dismissal.

e. 00:55:00 – 01:05:00 (Black maids fear telling their stories)

Aibileen and other maids repeatedly express concern that speaking out could cost them their jobs or place them in danger. The atmosphere of racial horror in the South was exemplified by the servants' apprehension. They were aware that disclosing discrimination may result in physical harm, social punishment, or even unemployment. They had been intimidated for years, so their quiet was not voluntary. Racism operated not merely thru acts of discrimination but also thru the fear that kept victims from speaking out about injustice.

f. 01:06:00 – 01:10:00 (Yule May was denied educational opportunities for her sons)

Yule May respectfully asked Hilly for financial assistance to help her sons attend college, but Hilly refused. The goal for upward social mobility via education was evident in Yule May's request. Hilly's rejection demonstrated her inability to back initiatives that could enhance African Americans' quality of life. The scene illustrates how racial inequalities persisted for many centuries. Many Black families found it challenging to break free from poverty and rise in society due to limited access to education.

g. 01:12:00 – 01:18:00 (Yule May was arrested and publicly humiliated)

Police arrested Yule May after Hilly reports her for stealing a ring. Yule May's arrest acted as both a severe warning to other Black domestic workers in Jackson and a form of retribution for her thievery. Black maids live in a society

where even small acts of defiance could have dire repercussions for the entire movie. Yule May's choice to steal one of Hilly Holbrook's rings was motivated by desperation even though it was against the law. Knowing that education was one of the few ways African Americans could better their life, she needed the money to send her twin kids to college. Hilly utilizes her social connections to get Yule May arrested and convicted right away, exhibiting little empathy for her situation.

h. 01:15:00 – 01:40:00 (Fear Caused by Racial Violence and the Murder of Medgar Evers)

News reports and conversations referenced the assassination of civil rights activist Medgar Evers. Characters reacted to the murder of Medgar Evers, a real-life civil rights leader who was assassinated in Mississippi in 1963. For African Americans, the murder stood as a horrifying reminder that confronting racial injustice in the segregated South could have deadly results. Many African Americans who tried to defend their rights, challenged racial injustice, or engaged in social activity during the Civil Rights era were intimidated, violently attacked, imprisoned, or even killed. The murder shown in the movie illustrated the brutal truth that racism was upheld by acts of physical violence meant to uphold white dominance in addition to discriminatory legislation and social norms. The incident sent a strong message to the Black community that challenging the current racial order could endanger their own and their families' lives.

i. 01:58:00 – 02:05:00 (Aibileen was wrongfully fired)

Near the end of the film, Hilly accused Aibileen of theft and pressures Elizabeth to dismiss her. Despite years of faithful service, Aibileen lost her job because Hilly seek revenge after the publication of Skeeter's book. The fact that Aibileen was fired showed how little protection African American workers had. When racial prejudice entered the picture, her years of devotion and commitment were ignored. The scene was particularly important since it highlighted how precarious Black workers' financial security was. A career could be ruined by a single complaint from a white employer. However, Aibileen's choice to depart with dignity was an act of defiance against the system that had mistreated her all of her life.

CONCLUSION

This study explorer the factors of social rebellion portrayed in *The Help* (2011) and analyzes the mistreatments toward American Black people shown throughout the movie, using a sociological approach grounded in Karl Marx's social conflict theory. The findings answered the two research problems formulated in the introduction.

First, regarding the factors of social rebellion, the findings showed that resistance in *The Help* emerged along a spectrum, ranging from quiet, individual acts of defiance to more open and collective forms of confrontation. At the personal level, Aibileen's decision to share her story with Skeeter, Minny's refusal to remain submissive to Hilly, and Celia Foote's rejection of racial boundaries by treating Minny as an equal all represent close and semi-open forms of rebellion that challenge the racial etiquette governing relationships between white employers and Black domestic workers. At the collective level, the growing number of maids who join the book project following Medgar Evers's assassination, the eventual publication of the book, and Aibileen's direct confrontation of Hilly demonstrate how individual courage gradually develops into a broader, more visible challenge to the segregated social order. Meanwhile, Skeeter's pursuit of a writing career defies the gendered social expectations imposed on white Southern women, indicating that social rebellion in the film is not limited to racial boundaries alone but also intersects with gender norms. Taken together, these findings suggest that social rebellion in *The Help* functions as a response to the unequal competition for social, economic, and political resources described in Marx's social conflict theory, as characters who are denied access to dignity, fair employment, and self-representation gradually reclaim agency through acts of resistance.

Second, regarding the mistreatments toward American Black people, the findings show that racial mistreatment in the film operated on both institutional and interpersonal levels. Institutionally, Hilly's "Home Help Sanitation Initiative" illustrates how racist ideology is formalized into policy, reinforcing segregation through socially sanctioned rules rather than isolated prejudice alone. Interpersonally, incidents such as Aibileen being forced to use an outdoor bathroom, Minny's abrupt dismissal for using the indoor toilet, Constantine's humiliation and firing despite years of loyal service, Yule May's denial of educational assistance and subsequent arrest, and Aibileen's wrongful termination near the film's end collectively demonstrate how Black domestic workers remained economically and socially vulnerable to the will of their white employers. The pervasive fear expressed by the maids throughout the film, intensified by the real historical violence surrounding Medgar Evers's assassination, further shows that mistreatment in the film is sustained not only through direct discriminatory acts but also through the constant threat of retaliation. These findings confirm that the social structures depicted in the film maintain racial inequality by restricting Black characters' access to material security, education, and dignity, consistent with the competitive and unequal social order described in the social conflict theory applied in this study.

In conclusion, this study demonstrated that mistreatment and rebellion in *The Help* are closely interconnected: the systemic and everyday mistreatment experienced by Black characters becomes the very condition that provoked their acts of resistance, whether subtle or overt. This study was limited to the analysis of

verbal and behavioral evidence within the movie itself and does not extend to a comparative reading of Kathryn Stockett's original novel. Future research was encouraged to compare the representation of social rebellion and mistreatment between the novel and the film, or to apply alternative theoretical lenses, such as intersectionality or resistance theory, to further enrich the understanding of how race, class, and gender intersect in shaping both oppression and resistance within literary and cinematic works.

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RR and NL conceptualized the study, developed the methodology, performed the data collection and analysis, and wrote the original draft of the manuscript. NSW proofread the manuscript. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted technologies were used during the preparation or writing process of this manuscript.

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