

**WHITE RACE SUPERIORITY IN *AMERICAN EAGLE'S GOOD JEANS*  
ADVERTISEMENT: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

**THESIS**

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**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES**

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**WHITE RACE SUPERIORITY IN *AMERICAN EAGLE'S GOOD JEANS*  
ADVERTISEMENT: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

**THESIS**

Presented to:

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Sastra (S.S)

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2026**

## STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that the thesis entitled “**White Race Superiority in *American Eagle’s Good Jeans Advertisement: A Critical Discourse Analysis***” is my original work. I do not include any materials previously written or published by another person, except those cited as references and written in the bibliography. Hereby, if there is any objection or claim, I am the only person who is responsible for that.

Malang, May 22, 2026

The Researcher

Natasya Nur

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## LEGITIMATION SHEET

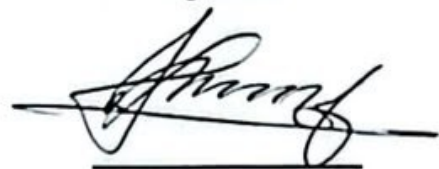
This is to certify that Natasya Nur Maulida's thesis entitled **White Race Superiority in American Eagle's Good Jeans Advertisement: A Critical Discourse Analysis** has been approved by the Board of Examiners as one of the requirements for the degree of *Sarjana Sastra* (S.S.) in the Department of English Literature.

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## MOTTO

إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

"Actually, along with difficulties, there is ease."

(Q.S. Al-Insyiroh:6)

"Yesterday is over, Tomorrow is yet to come, and today is yet unknown. So let us try to live today well."

-Yu Miji-

Our Unwritten Seoul

## **DEDICATION**

I am proud to dedicate this thesis first to myself, who has struggled and endured during the process of preparing this thesis. Second, I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Mrs. Sunarni and Mr. Ibadus Sholihin, as a form of gratitude for the prayers, moral support, affection, and expenses that are always given endlessly. I also dedicate this thesis to Bude Tukiye and Pakde Gimuk Sarwoto as second parents who always provide prayers and moral support during my study journey. Furthermore, for my cousin, who has become a support system and always gives encouragement. I also dedicate this thesis to my sister, Afna Dwi Amelia, who, although not much is directly involved, remains part of the journey and a source of enthusiasm in completing this thesis. Lastly, I dedicate this thesis to my dear friends who always provide motivation, support, and accompany the process of working on this thesis until it is completed.

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The author realizes that this thesis is still far from being perfect. Therefore, the author really expects constructive criticism and suggestions from all readers for the improvement and development of science in the future. Hopefully, this work can provide benefits for readers.

Malang, May 22, 2026

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## ABSTRACT

**Maulida, N.N.** (2026). *White Race Superiority in American Eagle Good Jeans Advertisement: A Critical Discourse Analysis*. Undergraduate thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Advisor Dr. Lina Hanifiyah, M.Pd.

**Keywords:** CDA, Fairclough, Advertising, White Superiority, American Eagle Brand

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Nowadays, competition in the fashion industry is getting tougher; many fashion brands do everything creative to attract their buyers. American Eagle is one of the fashion brands whose ads have sparked a debate about racial superiority that has created a space for discussion on social media. This article discussed how the American Eagle ad represents white racial superiority, and answer the question: 1) In what ways is racial superiority represented through textual analysis in the American Eagle's Good Jeans ad? 2) How is white supremacy represented through discursive practices and social practices in the American Eagle Good Jeans ad? This study used qualitative research with Fairclough's CDA and multimodal analysis to analyze the visuals. The data taken in this study are American Eagle brand advertising videos on their social media. Audience perception or marketing effectiveness is not covered in the scope of this study, as the focus of this study lies in the representation and construction of discourse in advert material. The results of the study found that the ads representing white superiority were conveyed indirectly and hidden using the language of the advertisement. The white racial superiority in the American Eagle ad shows the superiority of the white race through a very subtle language strategy, which is embedded in popular culture today. However, this study is still limited to data on short video ads uploaded on the YouTube and TikTok platforms only. Is recommended that future researchers explore other digital platforms or analyze direct responses from audiences to see how the discourse is received by consumers.

## الملخص البحث

ماوليدا، ن.ن. (2026). تفوق البيض في إعلانات الجينز الجيد لعلامة النسر الأمريكية: تحليل خطاب نقدي. أطروحة. قسم الأدب الإنجليزي، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية، مالانغ. المشرفة الدكتورة لينا حنيفة، دكتورة شرطة

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل الخطاب النقدي، فيركلوف، الإعلانات، تفوق البيض، علامة النسر الأمريكية

في الوقت الحاضر، أصبحت المنافسة في صناعة الأزياء أكثر صعوبة، فبعض العلامات التجارية تبذل كل ما في وسعها الإبداعي لجذب مشتركيها. أمريكان إيجل هي واحدة من علامات الأزياء التي أثارت إعلاقتها نقاشاً حول التفوق العرقي وخلق مساحة للنقاش على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. ستناقش هذه المقالة كيف يمثل إعلان النسر الأمريكي التفوق العرقي الأبيض، وستجيب أيضاً على السؤال (١) بأي طرق يتم تمثيل التفوق العرقي من خلال التحليل النصي في إعلان "جينز" الخاص بعلامة النسر الأمريكية؟ (٢) كيف يتم تمثيل تفوق البيض من خلال الممارسات الخطابية والممارسات الاجتماعية في إعلان علامة النسر الأمريكية؟ استخدمت هذه الدراسة أبحاثاً نوعية مع تحليل CDA من فيركلوف وتحليل متعدد الوسائط لتحليل الصور البصرية. البيانات التي تم أخذها في هذه الدراسة هي فيديو إعلاني لعلامة النسر الأمريكية عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي الخاصة بهم. وجدت نتائج الدراسة أن الإعلانات التي تمثل تفوق البيض تم نقلها بشكل غير مباشر ومخفية من خلال استخدام لغة الإعلان. يظهر التفوق العرقي الأبيض في إعلان النسر الأمريكي تفوق العرق الأبيض من خلال استراتيجية لغوية دقيقة جداً، وهي متجذرة في الثقافة الشعبية اليوم. ومع ذلك، لا تزال هذه الدراسة مقتصرة على بيانات إعلانات الفيديو القصيرة التي تم رفعها فقط على منصات يوتيوب وتيك توك. ثم ينصح الباحثون باستكشاف منصات رقمية أخرى أو تحليل الردود المباشرة من الجماهير لمعرفة كيف يستقبل المستهلكون النقاش.

## ABSTRAK

**Maulida, N.N.** (2026). *Superioritas Kulit Putih dalam Iklan Good Jeans Merek American Eagle: Analisis Wacana Kritis*. Skripsi. Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Pembimbing Dr. Lina Hanifiyah, M.Pd.

Kata kunci: Analisis Wacana Kritis, Fairclough, Iklan, Superioritas kulit putih, Merek American Eagle

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Di masa kini, kompetisi di dalam industri fashion semakin ketat, tidak sedikit merk fashion melakukan segala cara yang kreatif untuk menarik pembeli mereka. American Eagle salah satu merk fashion yang iklannya memicu perdebatan mengenai superioritas ras yang telah menciptakan ruang perbincangan di media sosial. Tulisan ini akan membahas tentang bagaimana iklan American Eagle merepresentasikan superioritas ras kulit putih, dan juga menjawab pertanyaan 1) Dengan cara apa racial superiority direpresentasikan melalui tekstual analisis dalam iklan American Eagle's Good Jeans? 2) Bagaimana superioritas kulit putih direpresentasikan melalui diskursif praktik dan sosial praktik dalam iklan American Eagle Good Jeans?. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian kualitatif dengan CDA milik Fairclough dan analisis multimodal untuk menganalisis visualnya. Data yang diambil dalam penelitian ini adalah video iklan merek American Eagle melalui media sosial mereka. Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa iklan tersebut merepresentasikan superioritas kulit putih disampaikan secara tidak langsung dan tersembunyi melalui penggunaan bahasa iklan tersebut. Superioritas ras kulit putih dalam iklan American Eagle menunjukkan superioritas ras kulit putih melalui strategi bahasa yang sangat halus, yang masuk ke dalam budaya populer saat ini. Namun, penelitian ini masih terbatas pada data iklan video pendek yang diunggah di platform YouTube dan TikTok saja. Peneliti selanjutnya disarankan untuk mengeksplorasi platform digital lain atau menganalisis respons langsung dari audiens guna melihat bagaimana wacana tersebut diterima oleh konsumen.

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## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of the study

In the current era, competition among fashion industries is intensifying. Various fashion brands are competing to attract buyers' attention in creative and innovative ways (Pahira et al., 2022). This competition can encourage brands to find unique ways to make their products stand out in the market. However, the controversial trends that have emerged in this competition are due to the strategies they employ. Showcasing specific aspects of an image or principle deemed appealing to a specific target market is one frequently used tactic. The hope is to increase sales through the sensation and discussion generated by this approach. According to (Raheem et al., 2024) some advertisements highlight one particular race as the standard or ideal of excellence, instead of showcasing diversity. This strategy is considered highly dangerous because it not only exploits sensitive issues for commercial gain but also has the potential to reinforce existing racial stereotypes and prejudices in society (Suhendi et al., 2023).

The American Eagle advertisement is a prime example of a discussion about racial superiority on social media that requires thorough examination. The American Eagle Good Jeans advertisement, which is used terms "genes" instead of "jeans," has been criticized for its use in the teaser video, which is considered to suggest Western beauty standards often associated with white physical characteristics such as blonde hair and blue eyes (D'inocenzio, 2025). In this context, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a highly relevant approach in this context because as said by (Reisigl & Wodak, 2005), CDA can be used if there

is social inequality (racial issues) in the object being studied, where there are parties who benefit and there are parties who are socially disadvantaged. This method views language as a social practice that reflects, shapes, and creates unequal power relations as well as means of communication (Karman, 2017). Therefore, this study can uncover hidden meanings through the CDA approach, and it can also understand how narratives of racial superiority are constructed and disseminated, and how this influences social interactions and public perceptions at large.

CDA is typically used to analyze texts to determine the messages contained within them. Thus, CDA does not only look at the text in general, but also examines how language relates to social, political, and cultural contexts (Anyanwu, 2025). CDA emphasizes that language is not just a means of communication, but a social practice that contains ideology and power (Nojeng et al., 2024). Language can shape replication and oppose existing social structures (Feretty et al., 2025). CDA theory is used to examine how the choice of words, symbols, and narratives used in *American Eagle's Good Jeans* advertisement creates representations of racial superiority. This study attempts to reveal how the visual language in this advertisement can reinforce certain ideologies using Fairclough's CDA, especially those related to the hegemony of Western beauty standards associated with issues of racial superiority (Rahardaya, 2021).

Racial superiority or beauty standards can be found in several previous studies, for example, in the research Puspita and Marginingsih (2024); Nurwahyuni and Samelia (2021) stated that racial discrimination can be shown

in films, and they found differences in treatment by a black character in the film. Previous studies have also discussed racial discrimination in the workplace (C. E. Hirsh & Kornrich, 2008; E. Hirsh & Lyons, 2010; Kerdpitak & Jermittiparsert, 2020). Their findings from interviews revealed that many workers felt discriminated against because of their race. There has not been much previous research discussing race in advertisements.

There are previous studies that have used the CDA framework to reveal how advertisements shape and reproduce social reality. Studies by Hidayat et al. (2020); Renaldo (2017); Rohmah (2020) found that beauty advertisements not only promote products but also construct ideologies about beauty standards that are embedded in society. Other studies demonstrate that advertisements can present a discourse of women's empowerment, albeit while still reproducing the ideologies of capitalism and commercialism (Lestari & Paramita, 2022; Suhendi et al., 2023; Xu & Tan, 2020). Meanwhile, other studies have exposed the construction of masculinity and femininity in advertisements that reveal gender-based power relations (Al Falaq & Puspita, 2021; T. A. Salsabila, 2024). All these studies confirm that advertisements are not neutral texts, but rather ideological tools that influence society's views on identity, gender, and the body.

However, despite numerous studies highlighting gender, body, and beauty representation in advertisements, the issue of racial superiority has not been widely addressed as a primary focus. Most existing studies still focus on the discourse of female beauty through skin care brands (Putri et al., 2020; Rohmah, 2020; Xu & Tan, 2020), body construction (Lestari & Paramita, 2022; Suhendi et al., 2023), and gender appearance (Al Falaq & Puspita, 2021; T. A.

Salsabila, 2024). Few studies have directly examined how international fashion advertisements highlight or reproduce racial discourse for commercial purposes. In other words, the aspect of the white race as a persuasive instrument in fashion advertising has been overlooked in CDA literature, despite its relevance in the context of globalization and competition between fashion brands.

Furthermore, previous studies have mostly been limited to beauty and health advertisements, whether on television, in magazines, or on social media. Not much research has been done on fashion advertising that often shows diversity of identity, but at the same time, they have the potential to reinforce social hierarchies based on race. Therefore, the study of *American Eagle's Good Jeans* advertisement is important because it provides space to critique discursive practices that exploit racial issues as a branding strategy.

The gap of this study lies in its focus on the white race's perceived superiority in global fashion advertising, a dimension that has rarely been explored in previous studies. While earlier studies have emphasized issues of gender, body, and representations of beauty, and beauty standards in film or the workplace, this study offers a new perspective by analyzing how racial discourse is constructed in *American Eagle's* advertising. This advertisement is new and still widely discussed on social media because its image is considered to represent the beauty of white people as a standard in fashion. The CDA approach used revealed the power relations and ideologies hidden behind the text, visuals, and discourse construction of the advertisement.

The reason for choosing *American Eagle's Good Jeans* advertisement as the object of this study is based on its uniqueness and widespread impact in the public sphere. This advertisement has been in the spotlight for successfully sparking global discussion and public attention, particularly through its provocative and controversial marketing approach. The advantage of this advertisement is that it not only promotes clothing but also addresses sensitive issues, such as racial superiority, which is subtly conveyed through its advertising message. In this case, this study chose the *Good Jeans* advertisement as its object because that advertisement is not merely a promotion of fashion products, but rather a discourse laden with ideology that has succeeded in sparking critical discussion in the public sphere. The uniqueness of this advert, which combines modern aesthetics with implicit messages about racial identity, makes it an ideal case for revealing hidden ideologies through a CDA approach.

This study assumes that *American Eagle's Good Jeans* advertisement is laden with representations that emphasize the discourse of white racial superiority, and that the advert not only functions as a promotional medium. The next assumption is that the audience is free to interpret the message contained in the advert, so that various reactions may arise, ranging from appreciation to criticism of the whole race issues contained therein. The final assumption is that this study can reveal how power relations, ideology, and discourse construction are produced through the advertisement using CDA, which will reveal the layers of meaning hidden behind the texts and visuals of the advertisement.

Using Fairclough's CDA approach, this study aims to analyze the representation of white racial superiority in the *American Eagle's Good Jeans* advertisement, focusing on the textual and visual elements used in the advertisement. This study seeks to reveal how discourse in the advert shapes or challenges the ideology of racial superiority, particularly in relation to the construction of whiteness. In addition, this study also focuses on identifying the power structure and ideological implications embedded in advertising discourse. Thus, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the formation and negotiation of racial identity in the advert.

## **B. Research Questions**

Based on the background of this study, specifically, this study seeks to answer two research questions:

1. In what ways does racial superiority represent through textual analysis in the *American Eagle's Good Jeans* advertisement?
2. How is white race superiority represented through discursive practice and social practice in the *American Eagle's Good Jeans* advert?

## **C. Significance**

Because it makes a significant contribution, this research has significant benefits. The results of this analysis served as an important case study to demonstrate how fashion advertising and mass media serve as tools to replicate and reinforce racial hegemony in society. This research also has two main benefits. First, it has the potential to raise public and consumer critical awareness of advertising, helping them identify and reject hidden discriminatory practices. Second, for marketing and advertising practices, this

research can serve as important feedback to encourage them to create more inclusive and socially responsible advertisements that avoid stereotyping.

#### **D. Scope and Limitations**

This study focuses on analyzing how the discourse of white racial superiority is represented in *American Eagle's Good Jeans* advert through linguistic and visual elements. Using Fairclough's CDA framework, this study examines how language and visual elements play a role in shaping racial ideology. The data from this study were analyzed in terms of how their language, visuals, and discourse strategies promote racial superiority. The analysis involved Fairclough's analytical framework, which is the three dimensions of textual analysis, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice used to explore how meaning is produced, distributed, and interpreted in the context of advertising discourse.

This analysis is limited to selected materials, including advertisements, slogans, and videos published. The limitation of this study also lies in the data sources, which were only taken from two social media platforms, TikTok and YouTube, meaning that not all social media platforms were included. These two platforms were selected because the content contains data in the form of utterances and advertising narratives that fulfill the data criteria for this study. The criteria of the data are that the data contains representations of race and racial discourse. Meanwhile, other social media platforms, such as Instagram, or websites, do not fulfill the data criteria for this study.

Audience perception or marketing effectiveness is not covered in the scope of this study, as the main focus of this study lies in the representation and

construction of discourse in advert material; thus, the findings of this study were derived from a critical analysis of advertising material, rather than a representation of the sociological and psychological effects on consumers. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to provide a critical understanding of racial representation in advertising discourse, rather than drawing general conclusions about the fashion industry.

#### **E. Definition of Key Terms**

1. White racial superiority refers to the ideology that believes in the dominance and superiority of the white race over other races. This term is measured by analyzing the dominance of visual and narrative representations of white models in *American Eagle's* advert, which are identified using elements of discourse structure.
2. CDA is a qualitative research method to uncover hidden ideologies, power relations, etc., in which CDA is applied as a tool for analyzing the text and the context of *American Eagle's* advert to reveal white superiority.
3. American Eagle's Good Jeans advertisement is the object of this study in the form of all promotional materials released on July 23, 2025, by the American Eagle brand to promote their jeans products, including official visual and textual content published on their social media.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW ON RELATED LITERATURE**

This chapter presents the main theoretical framework of the study and reviews several related concepts that support the analysis. To provide a solid foundation, this section discusses key theories, including CDA, Fairclough's CDA model, notions of representation, ideology, power, as well as race superiority. These theoretical perspectives are essential for understanding how discourse operates within social contexts and how meaning, dominance, and ideology are constructed and reproduced through language.

#### **A. Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a multidisciplinary theory that can be used to examine how language can shape and be influenced by social relations, power, and ideology within a given framework (Bob & Kwekove, 2024). Previous studies by Lubis et al. (2025) and Sutikno et al. (2025) found that CDA is a discourse analysis that has the purpose of being a tool to reproduce and hide power structures and social inequalities in language or in various forms of discourse. In addition, Putri et al. (2020) said that CDA can also be a tool to dive into discourse as a social practice that shapes and reflects identities and relationships between groups. CDA is different from other analyses, such as syntax and semantics, because it examines the critical part, namely, how language is used to oppose and defend power structures in society (Purnawati & Fathumakka, 2022). Therefore, CDA is not only a tool to describe discourse, but also plays a role in identifying and uncovering the hidden power relations and inequalities.

CDA has important principles that include the idea that the discourse is nostalgic, which means that it will always be in contact with the social changes that occur and the time (Akram & Saleem, 2022). On the other hand, Hidayat et al. (2020) and Salsabila, (2024) considered that the relationship between CDA and power is dynamic, so power is not stable; that is, power can be the result of a reciprocal relationship between social discourse and practice, in which they can challenge or reinforce each other. These principles also include the idea that discourse is often ideological, which means that the language is not neutral but loaded with values that support a particular group, so the task of the CDA is to dismantle the ideas hidden behind it (Imani & Wahyudi, 2025).

CDA and descriptive discourse analysis have a fundamental difference, which lies in their deeper purpose and orientation. In descriptive discourse analysis, it usually focuses only on describing the structure of language, such as syntactic patterns or semantic meaning, without probing the broader social implications (Karman, 2017). Instead, the CDA emphasizes the disclosure of dominance and inequality, i.e., where analysis does not stop at mere description but moves toward an active critique of how language is used to reinforce unequal power (Al Falaq & Puspita, 2021), as in mass media or public policies that hide social class or racial inequality. Therefore, CDA is not just an observation tool, but an emancipatory instrument that aims to empower non-dominant groups by uncovering mechanism of oppression hidden in everyday discourse.

Among the discourses we encounter every day, one is advertising. Advertising plays an active role in reflecting the social reality that is around us.

For example, the study of Al Falaq and Puspita (2021); Putri et al. (2020); Rahardaya (2021) said that beauty product advertisement that feature ideal body standards often don't just reflect general audience trends, but it creates new norms about what is considered beautiful or superior, thus influencing the way people perceive themselves and others. In the view of the CDA, discourse like this serves as a reality-conforming social practice, which means that the language and images in the advertisements establish a collective perception of gender, class, or even cultural identity, which changes social behavior and views in a tangible way.

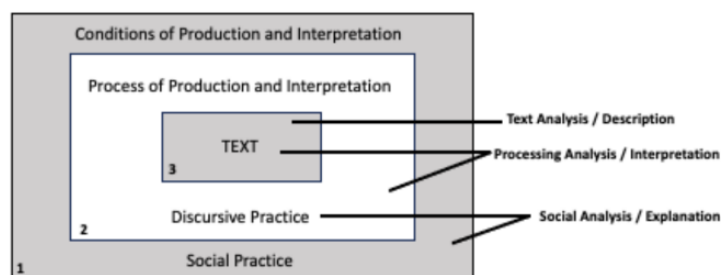
The role of CDA in analyzing mass media such as advertising is very important because this approach does not stop at the surface of the text but rather delves into how the dominant discourse is spread through these media (A. H. Salsabila, 2021). Through CDA, we can dismantle how media such as advertising often frame social issues. CDA serves as a critical lens for examining the mass media as the primary arena of dissemination of dominant discourse, one in which advertising is not only a commercial promotion but also a subtle mechanism of social control.

## **B. Fairclough's Model of CDA**

Among the various existing CDA models, Norman Fairclough's approach is interesting because of it systematically integrates micro and macro analysis. Therefore, it is an appropriate model for examining ideologically charged advertising. Fairclough a British linguist born in 1941, is considered one of the primary creators of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). He wrote books such as "Language and Power" (1995), emphasizing that language is not

neutral but can be a tool for maintaining or challenging power structures in society, drawing on his background as a professor at Lancaster University (Fairclough, 2012). Fairclough's most prominent role in CDA is a three-dimensional model that integrates text analysis with a broader social context, so that CDA is no longer merely descriptive but becomes a critical tool for uncovering hidden ideologies, such as class domination or discrimination<sup>5</sup>.

The choice of Fairclough's model for this research is based on its unique ability to connect text elements with deeper social dimensions, which are highly relevant to the research's subject. This model allows thorough analysis, that is, where the advertising text is not only seen as a collection of words and images, but also as part of social practices that produce racial inequalities in society. With a focus on the connection between language, power, and ideology, Fairclough's approach helps uncover how fashion ads like these subtly promote norms that benefit dominant racial groups. Fairclough (2013) model consists of three main dimensions that are interrelated, namely:



*Figure 2.1 Fairclough's CDA*

1. Textual analysis: In this dimension, the elements that are focused on and analyzed are linguistic elements such as lexical choices that reflect certain value, vocabulary, grammatical structures that form perspectives, the use of metaphors to hide meaning, as well as cohesion that unites the elements of

a text into a coherent narrative. Especially for advertisement that involve visual elements such as in the American Eagle's advert, this analysis also includes aspects such as the idealistic setting of the background, the composition of images that show certain objects, facial expressions that imply happiness or success, as well as the representation of race that often predominates with a white people figure as the center, thus reinforcing the image implicitly.

2. Discursive practice: this dimension is the dimension examines how discourse is produced, distributed, and consumed in a specific context. It involves the questions of who is producing the discourse, such as American Eagle, a global fashion brand based in the United States, whose advertisements are distributed on social media, official websites, or television ads that reach a wide audience. In the "Good Jeans" advertisement, this practice could reveal how the production of advertisements is designed to attract consumers by embedding dominant values, while their distribution through digital platforms extends the influence of white racial supremacist ideology to the strata of society.
3. Social practice: Dimensions of social practice expand the analysis to broader contexts such as social institutions, underlying ideologies, cultural structures, social culture, and power dynamics that shape and are shaped by discourse. Here, the results of the analysis of texts and discourse practices must be linked to ideological issues such as racial supremacy still in American culture, where institutions such as the fashion industry often reproduce standards of beauty and success based on the white race, thus

maintaining power inequality between races. This approach emphasizes that discourse is not a limited entity, but rather part of a larger social structure, which, in the case of the American Eagle ad, could show how the advert helped reinforce racial hegemony through biased representation. By applying Fairclough's 3-dimensional model, this study examines American Eagle's Good Jeans Advertisement to expose the mechanism of white racial supremacy implicit in the advert, so as not only to describe the elements of discourse but also to critique its ideological social implications more deeply.

### **C. Representation**

The concept of representation is not just a reflection of reality, but the active process of forming social meaning (Tjhen & Bangun, 2022). Through a system of signs, language, images, and symbols, representations work to produce specific meanings and use them in the collective consciousness (Pitkin, 2023). Thus, the reality that people see in the media has never been present in a neutral way but has been constructed according to certain cultural and ideological interests. In the context of the American Eagle's advert, visual representation is not just a marketing strategy, but rather a means of confirming long-standing racial values.

Al Falaq and Puspita (2021; Purnawati and Fathumakka (2022) believed that one strong form of representation can be in advertising, because advertising is able to combine images, emotions, and social aspirations in one persuasive message. Each visual element, such as model selection, facial expression, lightning, and the setting of the place, is never completely value-free, but contains constructions about class, gender, and especially race. In the Good

Jeans advert, the predominance of fair-skinned models in a free, confident, casual style shows how the white race is represented as a symbol of uniqueness and modernity. In the presence of models who are white, the ad reinforces the implicit leaps and bounds that “authenticity”, and “universal appeal” are synonymous with the skin. Thus, racial representation in these ads worked covertly to normalize racial hierarchies and reinforce the ideology of white superiority in the power of popular culture.

#### **D. Ideology**

In CDA, ideology is defined as the cognitive design that the dominant group has, as explained by Teun A. van Dijk (2006), who sees it as a collective mental model that governs how a group produces and interprets discourse to defend their position. Ideology makes discourse the main tool to reinforce ideology through the repetition of narratives that make injustice look natural (Van Dijk, 2006). For example, when the media constantly present success as belonging to a certain group, the dominant ideology is subtly reproduced until it is embedded in the minds of the audience, so that social inequality is no longer questioned, but accepted as part of the natural order.

Racial ideology, particularly that related to white superiority, is a type of hegemony that places white skin at the center of standards of beauty, intelligence, and success in Western society. American Eagle advertisements, which depict white people as idealized representations of aspirational lifestyles, are an example of how this concept evolved from advertising. Therefore, the discourse not only reflects racial superiority but also actively normalizes racial standards as universal (Ali & Salam-Salmaoui, 2024). As a result, other groups

are implicitly deemed less worthy or must conform to be accepted, ultimately resulting in racial hierarchies in everyday life.

### **E. Power**

In the CDA, the fundamental aspect to be exposed is power, with which ideology can operate and be accepted without real resistance (Lubis et al., 2025). In this context, power is not only understood in the form of direct domination or physical oppression, but more subtly, that is, the ability to control the way of thinking, speaking, and interpreting the social world. Power can work through control over social discourse and cognition (van Dijk, 2006), which means that whoever can determine the dominant narrative has the power to shape the collective consciousness of society. Thus, the power in advertising discourse can be hidden in the form of a form of coercion, but in the form of influence voluntarily accepted by the public.

Haugaard (2022) said that power is not merely repressive; it is also productive. Furthermore, power can lead to subjects, knowledge, and norms being unconsciously internalized by an individual. In the context of media and advertising, power operates through the production of seemingly natural meanings. Idealized images of success, freedom, and beauty appear to be the result of personal decisions, even though they have actually been shaped by larger structures of discussions. Power is not held by a single person or organization; rather it is dispersed across various social relations, such as in the process of cultural consumption, such as clothing and lifestyle (Mayr, 2008).

In the context of American Eagle's Good Jeans advert, the ideology of white superiority cannot be separated from the institutional power of

corporations that have enormous resources to define widely circulated visual narratives. D'inocenzio (2025), In her article, she said that company like American Eagle's brand are responsible for creating and disseminating visual discourse that shapes public perception. Their advertising not only sells goods but also disseminates social meanings that shape customers' racial values, identities, and lifestyles. This kind of power shows that ideological domination is not always accompanied by coercion, but through the process of free consumption, society becomes part of the mechanism of reproduction of power itself (Mayr, 2008). In other words, power in advertising discourse is power that works through beauty, aspiration, and desire, not through threat. And in that way, discourse remains effective at work, instilling white racial superiority as an unconscious social standard.

#### **F. Race Superiority**

Historically, racial discrimination or racial superiority in advertising has existed since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Raheem et al., 2024). Advertising has played an important role in shaping and reinforcing racial hierarchies, particularly by placing white people as the standards of beauty, progress, and social success, while non-white people are often represented in a stereotypical or subordinate manner (Kumara et al., 2025). Hackenesch (2014) explain that in early advertisements, Africans Americans were often used to promote European products, such as chocolate, but the black people were depicted as servants or in lower social positions. This representation reinforced the idea that white skin was synonymous with cleanliness and purity, while dark skin was associated with something dirty.

Another example of advertising the idea that white people are more desirable, as seen in an advertisement for a well-known brand. Which began with a black woman wearing a white T-shirt before using the brand soap. After that, the woman with the white T-shirt turned into a white person. These examples indirectly normalize the idea of white racial superiority as a social and cultural standard (Kumara et al., 2025). Although modern advertising practices have reduced openly discriminatory racial representations, various studies still show that more subtle forms of racial hierarchy often appear, for example, through the dominance of white skin beauty standards and the limited or stereotypical representation of other racial groups in global advertising adverts.

### **G. Multimodality**

Multimodality is a theory that refers to the way meaning is formed through several different modes of communication, not just verbal language. According to Kress, G., and van Leeuwen (2020), communication is not only formed through verbal language, but also through images, color choices, gestures, layouts, and other visual elements that work together. In modern texts, these elements do not stand alone (Awan Marpaung & Nurlela, 2025). Verbal language often requires visuals to clarify the context, and likewise, where images require explanatory text so as not to create a biased interpretation for the reader. Thus, understanding a text, especially media texts, requires attention not only to the choice of language, but also to the accompanying visual elements (Zhao, 2024). This approach helps us to understand how communication in the visually rich digital age works more completely.

Multimodality theory is an approach used to analyze how various semiotic modes work in an integrated manner in producing meaning. In contrast to analysis that focuses only on language, Multimodality considers the relationships between text, images, typography colors, and other visual elements (Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, 2020). This analysis is widely applied in media and advertising research because it can reveal communication strategies that are not visible when the analysis is conducted only on the verbal aspect (Kenalemang-Palm, 2023). This theory is particularly relevant for analyzing advertising and digital media, where persuasive messages are combined through a rapid blend of visuals and verbals.

Visual grammar according to Kress et al. (2020) offers a framework for reading how visual elements form meaning. This theory divides meaning into three main aspects. First, representational meaning, which explains how images represent the world, both through action and concept. Second, interactive meanings discuss the relationship between images and viewers, such as eye contact, social distance, or viewpoint. Third, compositional meaning which regulates how the layout, color contrast, and framing of elements in the visual space to emphasize the message. These three aspects are important foundations in understanding how messages are constructed through visual design in various forms of communication.

Advertising is essentially a product that relies heavily on a multimodal structure to deliver a persuasive message in a limited space. The combination of text, slogans, model selection, background color, and body position is designed in such a way not only to sell commodities, but also to reconstruct

certain ideologies or certain identities. Many previous researchers, such as Amatullah et al., (2019); Kenalemang-Palm (2023), have shown that strong coherence between visual and verbal elements can shape perceptions of certain social classes or lifestyle standards in consumers' perceptions. This is particularly relevant to analyzing the American Eagle advertisement. Through this theory, it becomes clear that the visual choices in the ads used are not just showing the product but are building a modern identity narrative that the brand wants to offer.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

This chapter outlines the research methodological framework, explaining the paradigm that guides the study, the instruments, and the data sources employed. It also described the methods used for collecting the data and the procedures applied to analyze them. Overall, this chapter provided a clear account of how the research was conducted to ensure validity, reliability, and coherence with the study's objective.

#### **A. Research Design**

Qualitative research is the method used in this study, employing Fairclough's CDA approach that focused on American Eagle's Good Jeans advertisement. This type of research was chosen because it aims to describe and interpret the ideological meaning in the text and visuals of American Eagle's Good Jeans advert without relying on quantitative measurements. The qualitative method is suitable for this study because it works to describe and interpret the representation of racial ideology in the advert's texts and visuals.

Like most studies, this study also used its own paradigm. Santoso et al. (2022) said that paradigm in research is an important foundation that will determine how the research methodology will be used. Of the three general paradigms, namely positivism, interpretivism, and criticism (Satria, 2021). Santoso et al. (2022) also said that each paradigm will have different conclusions. Thus, this study used a critical paradigm, which views language not only as a means of communication but also as a means of building and maintaining power and ideology. With this paradigm, this study aims to reveal

how media discourse, particularly in fashion advertisements, can reproduce the ideology of white racial superiority.

The main objective of this research design is to reveal how the ideology of white racial superiority is represented in American Eagle's Good Jeans advert. Therefore, this study not only focused on what is displayed on the surface of the text but also explored the implied meaning behind it. This design was chosen based on the belief that CDA, particularly Fairclough's model, is capable of connecting language analysis with the power structures and social practices that surround the media (Nojeng et al., 2024), including fashion advertisements such as the Good Jeans advert.

## **B. Research Instrument**

A researcher can be the main instrument for data collection (Santoso et al., 2022). In this study, the researcher acted as the main instrument. This means that the researcher collected the data by herself and determined the direction of data collection. The researcher also analyzed it and interpreted the findings.

## **C. Data and Data Source**

The data were taken from American Eagle's TikTok account; the videos selected were from the American Eagle X Sydney Sweeney collaboration, posted between July 23 and October 04, 2025. The data was also taken from a YouTube video uploaded by the @alienads801 account titled American Eagle commercial Sydney Sweeney on July 27, 2025. The data for this study included verbal and visual elements from American Eagle's Good Jeans advert. Verbal elements (utterances) included text such as captions, slogans, or narratives that appear in promotional materials. Visual elements include images, models, facial

expressions, colors, and poses used in the advert. These two forms of data complement each other to understand how representations of racial superiority and ideology are constructed. The selection of data was based on several criteria; (1) it contains representations of race, which displays figures based on their ethnicity, ancestry, or genetics in the advertisement; (2) it contains racial discourse, including visual and verbal (utterances) that represent the superiority of the white race; and (3) it is openly accessible in the digital space. Thus, the data sources for this study came from public materials for the Good Jeans advert released through the brand's social media accounts, YouTube, and TikTok.

#### **D. Data Collection**

The first step that was taken in this study was to collect all visual and text material included in the Good Jeans advert. After that, verbal texts such as slogans, captions, and narratives were manually transcribed, while visual elements were documented through screenshots. Next, the collected data were grouped into two broad categories (Raheem et al., 2024): visual and verbal. This classification made it easier for the researcher to identify the relationship between language and imagery in the construction of racial representations. From the results of this collection, this study selected the data that is the most prominent and relevant to the theme of white racial superiority.

#### **E. Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted using Multimodality theory and Fairclough's three-dimensional model, which consists of textual analysis (description), discourse practice (interpretation), and social practice (explanation) (Fairclough, 2013). To answer Research Question 1, the first step

was textual analysis according to Fairclough's first dimension; in the textual analysis stage, this study examined linguistic aspects such as diction, sentence structure, metaphors, as well as visual elements such as color, gestures, and image composition (Raheem et al., 2024). The next step was to conduct a visual analysis using multimodality theory, which includes Visual (gaze, composition, color, lighting, pose) and audiovisual modes (video format and music/sound potential) (Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, 2020). This analysis helped identify how text and visuals work together to construct specific meanings.

To answer Research Question 2, the step of analysis carried out was discourse practice. This study analyzed how the text was produced, distributed, and consumed by the audience (Fairclough, 2013). The focus of this stage is to understand the relationship between the advert creators and the general audience, including how dominant meanings are maintained or negotiated in specific sociocultural contexts.

In the final stage, namely sociocultural practice, this study focused on the relationship between discourse and broader social structure. This study explained how ideologies and power relate to white supremacy as represented in the advert, and how this reflects society's social practices regarding the issue of racial superiority (Indah et al., 2017).

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of this study. Using Fairclough's CDA, the study's analysis is also presented in this chapter. The analysis of data is presented in the findings, which cover the textual and visual data collected and how it was analyzed. While the discussion section presents the results and relates them to previous studies on related topics

#### **A. Findings**

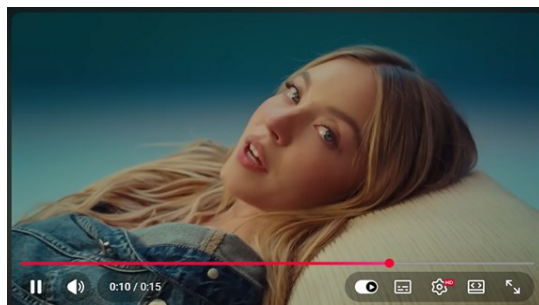
This chapter presents the findings of the data that has been analyzed using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis approach and Multimodality theory. In this section, the researcher does not separate the answers to Research Question 1 and Research Question 2 because they are interrelated. The representation of racial superiority that emerges through word choices, slogans, and visual advertisements cannot be separated from how discourse is produced, disseminated, and associated with the ideology and power relations that work in it. Therefore, textual analysis, which integrates visual (Multimodality), discursive practice, and social practice, are discussed continuously so that the meaning of each data can be understood more fully in accordance with the context of the advertisement being analyzed.

Before presenting the data findings in detail, the general context of this study's object is outlined. The object of this study is the "Sydney Sweeney Has Great Jeans" campaign. A collaborative project between the global fashion brand American Eagle (AE) and actress Sydney Sweeney, which was launched in July 2025 via their social media platforms. Visually, this advert features a

white woman, Sydney Sweeney, as the center of attention. She wears the promoted jeans in a relatively simple style, without many eye-catching elements. The advertisement was distributed via TikTok and YouTube, indicating the target audience. Since both platforms are associated with users ranging from teenagers to adults, this advertisement was designed to reach that age group.

There are five data points, both textual and visual data. The textual are transcribed from the video's utterances, and the remaining visual data consists of screenshots. These data are presented through three stages of Fairclough's CDA. The first stage is textual analysis, which also integrates multimodal analysis to examine both language elements and images. The next stage is discursive practice, which focuses on how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed by listeners or readers in a specific context. The final stage is called social practice, which explains the sociocultural context. Thus, this study aims to uncover the representation of white superiority that lies behind the advertisement.

### **Datum 1**



*Figure 4.1*

Utterances:

*“Genes are passed down from parents to offspring, often determining traits like hair color, personality and even eye color. My genes are blue”*

Context

Data video 1 features actress Sydney Sweeney as the lead model. This video has a minimalist background in light blue that is aesthetically pleasing and modern. In the early part of the video, the situation is built casually through the visual of the model lying on a large pillow while tidying up her denim jacket and buttoning her jeans. This relaxed atmosphere is reinforced by the model's slow, whisper-like tone of voice when delivering his first speech about genetics. The situation then takes a more personal and confident turn when the model changes the position of her eyes directly towards the camera (*close-up*) to confirm the saying *"My jeans are blue."* At the end of the video, the atmosphere turns cheerful and conclusive as the model shows a satisfied, smiling expression facing upwards, which is supported by the appearance of large white text on the screen as well as the male narrator's *voice (voice over)* confirming the slogan *"Sydney Sweeney has great jeans"*.

#### 1. Textual analysis

At the textual level, the main appeal of this data lies in the phonetic ambiguity or homophony between the words *“Genes”* and *“jeans.”* Sydney Sweeney begins with the statement: *“Genes are passed down from parents to offspring, often determining traits like hair color, personality, and even eye color.”* The choice of the word *“genes”* at the beginning of the video was deliberately pronounced in a situation where the model was lying

relaxed, buttoning her jeans. This creates an ambiguity of interpretation for the audience between “good biological genes” (which refer to the actress's physical beauty) and “good jeans” (American Eagle products). Linguistically, starting with the use of the simple present tense, it can be understood as the advertisement conveys the impression that the information presented is general and that the condition described is factual. The lexical choice between “*genes*,” “*traits*,” and “*offspring*” terms is associated with biological which can give the opening sentence informative and formal tone. This sentence establishes a proposition about biological inheritance that is permanent and unchangeable.

However, the transition to the next sentence, “*My jeans are blue*,” instantly shifts the meaning from biology to commodities. The choice of the word “*blue*,” metaphorically not only refers to the color of the denim but also resonates with her eye color (blue eyes), just mentioned earlier. The use of this simple declarative sentence structure creates a parallel identity.

The close-up of Sydney, with her blonde hair and blue eyes, serves as physical evidence of the “*genes*” she is discussing, instantly reinforcing the text’s validity. When viewed from Multimodal, the visuals presented in this advertisement are like blonde hair, blue eyes that seem to be modified by her Caucasian genetics (People of White European descent (Blumenbach, 2024)). The background in the commercial, which is dominated by blue, creates an atmosphere of calm and peace. The model's direct gaze into the camera makes an emotional connection with the audience directly. In addition, the soft lighting in the ad and the emphasis

on the visual of Sydney Sweeney's face convey the meaning of the visual representation.

## 2. Discursive practice

In terms of discursive practice, this narrative is crafted to create a pleasant cognitive dissonance for the audience. Creative content that seeks to use linguistic ambiguity to communicate in the digital space is the subject of this article. From the perspective of “by whom” and “for whom,” this message is aimed at social media users who possess a basic understanding of human genetics. This advertisement is not intended to provide medical information; rather, it serves as entertainment, combining scientific discussion with everyday items, such as jeans. Because “*genes*” and “*jeans*” sound similar, Sydney Sweeney as the model of the advertisement is now selling herself as the ideal genetic combination. Furthermore, the words demonstrate the author’s attempt to capture the audience’s attention by incorporating humor and lightheartedness into the complex topic of genetics. The text not only appears humorous on digital platforms but also encourages creative thinking by connecting self-identity (genes) with lifestyle (fashion), making it accessible to a wide range of audiences without appearing patronizing. The advertisement’s video is calm visuals with soft lighting that support this story, giving the impression that this message is not just an advertising script read in a studio, but an intimate and personal truth.

### 3. Social practice

At a macro level, this data demonstrates the white supremacist ideology of this video. The advertisement links jeans to traits such as hair and eye color. These jeans indirectly reflect the ideal of “*white genetics*.” the hidden message suggest that Sydney Sweeney Caucasian’s physical perfection stems from “*great genes*,” and that audiences can meet the standard by purchasing “*good jeans*.” This highlights a social practice where systemic racism is often disguised through popular science and beauty metaphors. The power relations here are powerful but subtle. The notion that certain human categories possess “*genes*” that are more desirable or attractive than others is perpetuated by narratives of “*trait determination*” or genetic use to market products to a mass audience. In this context, American Eagle is not just selling clothes; it is also cleverly selling a narrative of racial exclusivity, claiming that white people are the universal standard of what is considered socially and biologically “*good*.”

#### Datum 2

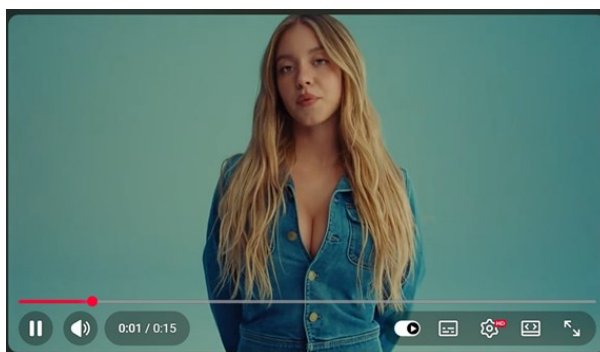


Figure 4.2

Utterances:

*“My body’s composition is determined by my genes. Hey, eyes up here!”*

Context

This data 2 video again features actress Sydney Sweeney as the model, with a minimalist background in plain turquoise. At the beginning of the video, the situation is provocatively constructed through a camera movement from the model's face towards her chest. She is wearing an open denim jacket, coinciding with the model saying her first speech about body composition (*“My body's composition is determined by my genes”*). The atmosphere of the video instantly changes from sensual to confrontational and interactive when the camera moves up quickly again due to a direct rebuke from the model through *the “Hey, eyes up here”* with a flat and firm facial expression. At the end of the video, the situational tension melts into a cheerful and confident atmosphere as the model throws a sweet smile at the camera, which is reinforced by the appearance of the white text of the ad's slogan, *“Sydney Sweeney has great jeans”* and the voice of the male narrator (*voice over*) who closes the ad with the spread of brand identity.

#### 1. Textual analysis

Textual analysis in this video is highlighted by the line *“My body’s composition is determined by my genes. Hey, eyes up here!”* The vocabulary choices in the first line continue the wordplay established in the first video, but this time with a more explicit physical description. The lexical choice of *body’s composition”* directly refers to Sweeney’s physical appearance and shape, and by stating that, the ad once again establishes an association

between the product and the ideal body. The cohesive use of the pronoun "My" confirms Sweeney's authority over her biological identity, which is modeled as the ideal standard for the audience. The second line, "*hey, eyes up here!*" is the most problematic ideologically. The use of an imperative sentence creates a firm and interactive tone. It encourages the audience to engage directly with the ad's subject and follow the text's instructions. This phrase is also interpreted as an expression commonly used in popular culture by someone who feels their body is being sexually objectified, a way to redirect attention deemed to be fixated on the body. However, in the context of multimodality, the phrase is spoken with a smiling expression, in a lighthearted and humorous tone, not in a genuine objection. This creates a paradox: Sydney Sweeney's body is depicted as something attractive to look at, but she pretends to reject it. As a result, the audience's attention is instead drawn to her body.

## 2. Discursive practice

This ad's caption borrows scientific language that is used to legitimize certain body standards as "*natural*" or "*genetic*," even though those standards are deeply cultural and racial. Overall, the discursive practice in this ad demonstrates that this text does not emerge in a vacuum. It is created within a fashion industry environment that has long maintained whiteness as an aesthetic standard, distributed through platforms that broaden its ideological spectrum, and consumed by consumers who do not have critical reading, might perceive these representations as normal and unquestionable.

### 3. Social practice

At a macro level, this data demonstrates how white supremacist ideology exploits the “*naturalization*” of Caucasian beauty. The assertion that exceptional “*genes*” determine body composition once again reinforces the racial hierarchy of beauty. This advertisement seems to suggest that Sydney’s superior white genetic heritage is the reason for her ideal body. Sweeney’s body is seen as “*proof*” of the product’s quality because her fair skin and slimness meet Western beauty standards. This is more than just selling jeans; it’s selling the idea that having a body like Sweeney’s is desirable, and that these jeans are one way to achieve it. Here, superiority isn’t just about skin color or eye color, but also about having a body deemed “*perfect*” by Western society. By linking the “*genes*” that determine body composition to the “jeans” one wears, American Eagle perpetuates the myth that white genetic and visual success should be respected, desired, and ultimately purchased through the products they offer.

## Datum 3



Figure 4.3

Slogan:

*“Sydney Sweeney has great ~~genes~~ jeans.”*

Caption:

*“Posters up, Secrets out: Sydney Sweeney has great jeans.”*

Context

Data 3 shows the process of attaching a giant American Eagle advertising poster on a graffiti-filled city street wall. The video shows a woman wearing the same jeans, who then attaches the poster sheets manually with a long-handled palm broom and a red bucket. In the latter half of the video, the visual focus shifts entirely to the result of the poster installation, where Sydney Sweeney's face staring intently into the camera is combined with the main slogan. At the level of written discourse, the visual slogan inside the poster features a white hand graffiti that crosses out the word "genes" and replaces it

with the words "*jeans*". This narrative is reinforced by a TikTok caption that reads "*Poster ups, secret outs... Get them at the link*" which serves as a commercial call *to action* for social media audiences to access the purchase link.

### 1. Textual analysis

In this advertisement use of the phrase "*Sydney Sweeney has great genes jeans*" there is a words play or homophone words between "*jeans*" and "*genes*" is the most striking thing. Similar to the first data, this slogan uses a play on words, genes (biological) and jeans (product), to complement appearance while promoting the product. Linguistically, the use of these words is a statement of biological identity rather than a marketing strategy for denim pants. This text talks about Sydney Sweeney and links the quality of the denim (product) to genetic quality (genes). By using the lexical "*great,*" someone is demonstrating a certain standard of excellence. The sentence "*Sydney Sweeney has great genes*" appears directly below the actress's face, who has white skin, blonde hair, and blue eyes, indirectly commodifying racial identity. There is an implicit message that white physical traits define "ideal" or genetically "superior" beauty. These physical traits are then used as the main attraction in their product marketing.

The phrase "*Poster ups, Secret outs*" creates a sense of exclusivity, as if the audience has just discovered the "secret" behind the celebrity's attractive appearance: the product she's wearing. Thus, "*get them*" is an imperative modality that gives a direct and strong instruction to the

audience, while “*has*” indicates an undeniable fact. This advertisement blends biological and commodity. By analogizing “jeans” with “genes,” the company seeks to position its product as a crucial component of a person’s identity and attractiveness, as important as their own genetics.

Visually, this ad shows a close-up of the Sweeney model's face with a direct gaze at the camera. The gaze creates a direct connection with the audience. In addition, there is a woman who stands with her back to the camera and faces the billboard. The position of the woman creates the point of view of the audience who sees the poster. The relationship between visuals and the slogan “*Sydney Sweeney has great genes*” has the potential to reinforce the view of the ideal beauty standard that is still dominant in society.

## 2. Discursive practice

Moving into the discursive level, this way looks at how these ads are produced and consumed through social media, in this case TikTok. The caption reads “*Posters up. Secrets out: Sydney Sweeney has great jeans*” tries to build a narrative of familiarity with a young audience. The use of the word “Secret” gives the impression of exclusivity, as if the audience is being invited into the high-end lifestyle standards. TikTok, as a distribution medium, demands content that feels like “breaking news” or leaks. The narrative of “secrets revealed” is interpreted by the audience as an opportunity to gain the same social status as celebrities. It is a marketing practice that leverages the fear of being left behind (*FOMO*). Sydney is shown in a *close-up* position that fills the poster frame, while on the right

side is a female figure (perhaps the same person or another model) with her back to the camera. The dominance of denim blue and the graffiti-filled urban background creates a sharp contrast. Here, American Eagle tries to position itself as an inclusive brand, but ironically, they still use very traditional beauty standards as the main face in the ad.

### 3. Social practice

On a broader level, this advertisement supports the notion of White superiority, which remains powerful in the global fashion industry. The use of the “great genes” metaphor is linked to a long history of scientific racism that often prioritizes white genetics over everyone else’s. When a well-known brand like American Eagle uses the “great genetics” narrative alongside white models, they indirectly support unfair beauty standards. The presence of many people with white skin, blonde hair, and beautiful Western faces in public spaces is not insignificant. It is a type of visual hegemony that develops gradually: the more a type of face dominates public and digital spaces, the stronger the belief that it is the “normal,” “ideal,” and “worthy.”

## Datum 4

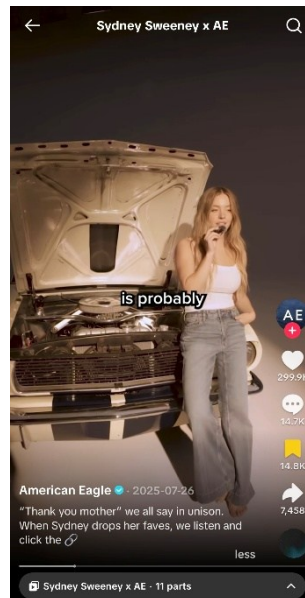


Figure 4.4

Caption:

*“Thank you mother, we all say in unison. When Sydney drops her faves, we listen and click the link.”*

Context

This data 4 video comes from TikTok, which lasts 37 seconds. This video has a *behind-the-scenes concept* that shows Sydney Sweeney's busy life during the filming of the American Eagle commercial. Here, the atmosphere in the video is made super relaxed and familiar, unlike a formal TV commercial. Throughout the video, Sydney often appears in casual clothes, namely a white tank top and jeans. Sydney is sitting on the hood of an antique car with the engine open, holding a small microphone, then answering various personal questions, such as her favorite type of jeans, morning routine, to confidence-

boosting snacks. These casual chats are cut into pieces with visual footage as she works: from posing on a blue sofa, looking at the footage on the monitor with the crew, taking pictures with her dog, to the moment she laughs freely on set. The content that seems to be "leaked" and as it is closed with an intriguing caption text from the American Eagle account, *"Thank you mother" we all say in unison. When Sydney drops her faves, we listen and click the link"*, which uses internet slang to approach young people by inviting them to click on the shopping link.

#### 1. Textual analysis

From a textual perspective, the caption on this video is unique. The term *"Mother"* is used here not in its biological sense, but rather in internet slang to refer to a female figure considered particularly iconic, significant, or exceptionally stylish. The word *"Mother"* here used not in its biological sense because the sentence *"When Sydney drops her faves, we listen and click the link"* it can be interpreted as a mother who gives birth to trends, extraordinary works, iconic fashion styles, or a big influence on social media. The text creates a collective narrative by using the phrase *"we all say in unison,"* suggesting that every viewer agrees to praise Sydney Sweeney as a powerful figure in terms of beauty and lifestyle. In the composition, Sydney Sweeney stands in front of the open hood of a classic car with the engine inside.

The phrase *"drop her faves"* also demonstrates contemporary marketing language that disguise as personal advice from a friend or idol rather than selling denim. The use of declarative sentences conveys a high

degree of confidence. This portrays the audience's action as a necessity following Sydney Sweeney's recommendation, rather than a possibility. The use of the pronoun "*her*" makes the relationship between parts of the text cohesive because the reader understands that the subject being talked about remains the same, who is Sweeney.

The visual choices of the classic car, the engine, and Sydney Sweeney wearing a white tank top and jeans emphasize the "Americana" aesthetic. Her expressions and gestures show a dominant, comfortable, and authoritative impression. The filming focused on Sydney made the audience's attention focused on Sydney as a center of information and recommendations. In addition, the simple yet aesthetic visual appearance creates an image of Sydney as an authentic and trustworthy figure. This reinforces the message that Sydney's recommendations deserve attention.

## 2. Discursive practice

On a discursive level, this ad is produced in a behind-the-scenes (BTS) style, or the casual interview style that's so popular on TikTok. The use of a small microphone held by Sydney demonstrates the production's effort to make traditional TV commercials seem less polished. This builds audience trust, as if Sydney is genuinely choosing her favorite. Through the earlier term "Mother," the consumption process involves community interaction. As a producer of discourse, American Eagle attempts to speak to its audience using their language. In this way, they don't appear stiff. However, there is an effort made to associate jeans with Sydney's cool lifestyle.

## 3. Social practice

In this level, the caption in the ad functions socially to establish an asymmetrical power dynamic between Sweeney “*Mother*” as the ideal figure and consumer as followers “*we all*.” In addition to selling goods, Sweeney has the cultural authority to determine what is worth buying, wearing, and wanting in this relationship. And that cultural authority is inseparable from her physical appearance, which fits Western white beauty standards and is part of symbolic capital. Furthermore, the phrase “*we all say in unison*” implicitly defines who is included in that “*we*.” In the context of an advertisement visually dominated by a single physical type, the “*we all*” in question refers to those who idolize and wish to resemble Sweeney. This is a form of exclusion operating through the language of false inclusivity.

## Datum 5

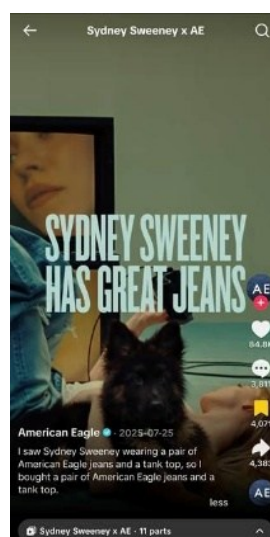


Figure 4.5

Caption:

*“I saw Sydney Sweeney wearing a pair of American Eagle jeans and a tank top, so I bought a pair of American Eagle jeans and a tank top.”*

### Context

In this 5 data, the video is set against the background of vintage aesthetic with an empty light blue studio room in the middle of which there is a stack of two old tube TVs. At the beginning of the video, the situation feels cinematic because the TV screen shows a close-up cut of Sydney Sweeney's *face* with the texture of lines typical of old tape recordings. The mood of the video suddenly changes to very relaxed as the camera *zooms out*, showing Sydney lying on her back on the floor with her legs raised above the TV, holding a small *camcorder*, and accompanied by a dog on her stomach. The relaxed pose of the model, who wore only a white tank top and faded jeans, continued until the end of the video, where she moved her legs in the air while smiling at her own camera, coinciding with the appearance of the words *"Sydney Sweeney Has Great Jeans"* and the American Eagle logo.

#### 1. Textual analysis

The caption in this ad structurally uses a very simple casual pattern. Cause: seeing Sydney wear something, effect: buying the same thing. No other considerations are mentioned, not because of the comfort. It's simply because Sweeney wears it. The use of the first-person singular pronoun "I" is highly strategic. This caption is written as if from the perspective of an ordinary consumer, not from the American Eagle brand account. This creates a testimonial effect, as if there is someone out there who voluntarily bought the product because they saw Sydney wearing it, and is now sharing

that experience, yet that caption was posted from the official American Eagle account. This laid-back-style visual discourse is reinforced by a *caption text* that quotes the iconic dialogue from the popular film: "*I saw Sydney Sweeney wearing a pair of American Eagle Jeans and a tank top, so I bought a pair of American Eagle Jeans and a tank top*".

## 2. Discursive practice

On a discursive level, this ad was created by mimicking consumer behavior patterns on social media. In fact, the quote illustrates how modern lifestyle discourse works: people buy things not because they need them, but because they see someone wearing them. American Eagle deliberately crafted text that sounds like the candid musings of a fan to create a sense of connection. By writing "*so I bought,*" the brand is dictating how the audience should interact with their content. This isn't just a suggestion or advice, but a normalized pattern of behavior.

## 3. Social practice

At this level, the data highlights the power of consumerist ideology, which relies heavily on endorsements from white celebrities. The phrase "*I saw... so I bought...*" is a manifestation of the society of the spectacle, where images replace reality. As ideal representation of Caucasian beauty, Sydney Sweeney becomes a commodity that drives the economy. The primary focus of this research is the superior simplicity of white skin. By depicting Sydney in very basic clothing, such as a tank top and jeans, yet still looking "extraordinary" and worth being emulated, the fashion industry promotes the idea that white physical characteristics are the most effective

“canvas” for making ordinary clothing appear unique. This perpetuates a social structure in which white beauty standards are considered universal. People believe that by purchasing the clothes that Sydney wears, they are also purchasing a portion of the “aura” of beauty and social status attaches to their racial identity.

## **B. Discussion**

### **1. Ways of racial superiority are represented through textual analysis in the American Eagle’s Good Jeans advertisement.**

Based on the findings in the previous chapter, the representation of racial superiority in this advertisement at the textual level is not conveyed directly or explicitly, but rather constructed through subtle, layered, and often seemingly light-hearted language strategies. Various textual elements, including lexical choice, sentence structure, wordplay, and the relationship between text and visuals, help depict white racial superiority in the American Eagle Good Jeans advertisement. This representation does not emerge directly through a clear belief that white people are better than other races. According to Fairclough (2012), subtle language strategies in a text can conceal actions, people, groups, and activities. Instead, this ideology implicitly encourages the standardization of certain physical features associated with Western beauty standards.

A consistent pattern in the relationship between genetics and aesthetic values is shown in data 1, 2, and 3. Terms such as “genes,” “great,” “traits,” and “body’s composition” form a biological meaning field related to the body, inheritance, and physical identity. According to (Barker & Jane,

2016), the human body is not just a biological entity, but a space where biology/genetics and culture intersect and intertwine. In this advert words such as "*genes*," "*great*," "*traits*" and "*body's composition*" are culturally encoded as the universal standard of aesthetic perfection. In this advertisement, the character Sydney Sweeney is portrayed as a representative of the ideal white woman, and these biological terms are used to neutralize her. This suggest that the advertisement attempts to associate "good genes" with certain physical characteristics, such as white skin, blonde hair, and blue eyes. Research by Rohmah (2020) also found that writing and language can shape a person.

The lexical choice of "great genes" in data 3 establishes a hierarchy of meaning because the word "great" indirectly indicates a genetic category that is considered superior to others. The results align with previous research on racial representation in media. They said that some texts or words, such as "*good*" and "*better*," etc. They also found that advertisements often use evaluative language to maintain dominant beauty standards without labeling other groups as inferior (Hidayat et al., 2020; Lestari & Paramita, 2022). In other words, rather than explicitly denigrating a particular race, racial superiority operates by holding a particular race as a universal standard.

Furthermore, the homophonic play between genes and jeans seen in data 1, data 2, and data 3 is a very important textual strategy for constructing advertising ideology. Biological identity is commodified in marketing strategies, as demonstrated by the combination of the terms genetics and fashion products. Jeans are no longer just clothing; they are now considered a

symbol of social identity and the ideal body. The results indicate that advertising language has a communicative and ideological function because it is able to link consumption with racial identity. This is also found in Akram and Saleem (2022); Purnawati and Fathumakka (2022); Renaldo (2017) that said language in advertising can be used to persuade people.

According to representation theory Pitkin (2023), Language functions to create social realities rather than simply convey messages. Therefore, the term “*biological*” is important in this advertisement because it creates the impression that certain beauty is genetically inherited and natural. This concept is related to the representation of white racial superiority, where the physical characteristics of white people are considered ideal, normal, and worthy of admiration.

This meaning is reinforced by the grammatical structures used in some of the data. Universal belief in statements about genetics is conveyed by the use of the simple present tense in data 1. It seems as if the sentence is an undisputed scientific fact. As a result, the audience more easily accepts the relationship between genetics and beauty as something natural. This suggests that the grammatical style used in advertising plays a significant role in supporting a particular ideology (Hidayat et al., 2020).

The text-visual relationship also reinforces representations of racial superiority. The text about “*great genes*” appears alongside a close-up of Sydney Sweeney’s face in data 1 and 3. This relationship reinforces the meaning of the text and the visual (Ravelli & Van Leeuwen, 2018). Words about genetics would not have the same ideological power without the

accompanying image of a white woman conforming to Western beauty standards. Therefore, the meaning of superiority stems not only from the words themselves, but also from the person chosen to represent them (Rohmah, 2020).

However, the existence of a power relationship between the text and the audience is indicated using imperative forms in data 2 and 3, such as “*hey, eyes up here!*” and “*get them.*” In the form of imperative sentences, the audience is positioned to see, pay attention, and ultimately follow the standards displayed. Lestari and Paramita (2022); Renaldo (2017); Rohmah (2020) also found this in their research, that in the advertisements they studied, they also found this in their research, they also found the use of imperative language that forms a power relationship between the text and the audience. In this context, the white female body is depicted as a visual object and the center of aesthetic authority.

The use of the term “great genes” in relation to the history of racial dominance in advertising also recalls past practices of scientific racism, where genetics were often used to justify hierarchical racial structures (Akram & Saleem, 2022). These findings align with previous research on how the fashion and advertising industries portray race. Studies have shown that Western media consistently portrays white people as symbols of perfection, beauty, and contemporary beauty (Riyadh & Qadoury, 2013). White bodies are often considered the “standard of beauty” in the fashion advertising industry, while non-white people are often viewed as complementary or marginalized (Hackenesch, 2014). The use of the term “genetics” in the

context of beauty still reflects this ideology, even though this advertisement does not explicitly mention the biological superiority of the white race. In more contemporary forms, racial dominance is now expressed less explicitly or openly, but rather through aesthetics, humor, and seemingly casual popular languages.

Therefore, the text analysis of this advertisement constructs as a representation of white racial superiority through lexical choices that suggest biological superiority, wordplay between genes and jeans, the uses of grammatical structures that create a factual impression, and a strong connection between the text and the visuals. All of these elements contribute to the stereotype that white people's physical attributes are the ideal and desirable standard of beauty.

## **2. The white race superiority is represented through discursive practice and social practice in the American Eagle's Good Jeans advertisement**

The research findings show that the American Eagle brand employs a communication approach intended to convey a relaxed, relatable, and engaging tone to its social media audience. An example of the discursive practice of representing white racial superiority is evident in how the advertisement is created, distributed, and consumed in digital culture (Satria, 2021). This advertisement was created to align with TikTok and YouTube media, as demonstrated by its use of informal language, comedy, internet slang, and short-form content format.

How the American Eagle brand seeks to build an emotional connection with consumers is demonstrated in data 4 and 5. Data 4

demonstrates the use of popular language to create a sense of community and general admiration for the celebrity, for the use of terms like “*Mother.*” In this situation, Sydney Sweeney is perceived not only as an advertising model but also as a reliable example of lifestyle and beauty.

Fairclough (2012) argued that texts are created based on specific social conditions and are intended to shape the audience’s thinking, thus making the discursive practices appropriate. While American Eagle generates seemingly lighthearted and entertaining debates, underlying these debates lies a process of normalizing certain beauty standards. The public is educated to view white bodies as the primary representation of beauty.

The caption pattern in “*I saw Sydney Sweeney wearing American Eagle, so I bought it*” also demonstrates the discursive practice in data 5. The sentence creates the illusion of authenticity by imitating the way ordinary consumers speak. However, the text was created by the official American Eagle brand account. This strategy demonstrates how the global fashion industry builds a pseudo-relationship with consumers, so they feel that their purchasing choices arise naturally rather than being influenced by advertising. Social persuasion and imitation are ways power is used in this situation (Asrina et al., 2024).

For years, racial hegemony in Western media has been linked to social representations of white superiority (Kumara et al., 2025). Raheem et al. (2024) in their research found that white figures are central to visual representations, although viewers are not forced to admire visuals of white physical, constant visual exposure helps them internalize these standards as

ideals. This suggests that Western beauty standards continue to be a benchmark for the global industry; in this situation, racial superiority functions through normalizing representations rather than direct discrimination (Akram & Saleem, 2022).

This pattern is nothing new in the world of American advertising (Raheem et al., 2024). Since the beginning of the advertising industry, white skin has often been depicted as a symbol of modernity, high social class, and aesthetic perfection (Kumara et al., 2025). On the other hand, modern advertisements like those of American Eagle no longer use narratives of explicit superiority. This ideology is disguised through humor, visual aesthetics, popular language, and more subtle digital marketing strategies. This aligns with Ali and Salam-Salmaoui (2024) findings that ideology is hidden in an advertisement through both verbal and non-verbal aspects.

Therefore, the representation of white superiority in discursive and social practices is visible through media production processes that adapt to digital culture, the massive distribution of visuals, and the normalization of Western beauty standards in social life. These representations demonstrate that advertising not only sells goods but also revives long-standing ideologies and power relations within society.

Overall, the results of this study show that American Eagle ads represent white racial superiority implicitly and concealed through a very subtle language strategy. The discourse of superiority is inserted in such a way that it has succeeded in integrating into today's popular culture. Therefore, this finding is very relevant as well as filling the research *gap*, considering that

there are still not many CDA studies that examine this phenomenon in the context of global fashion advertising.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter contains the conclusion and suggestions. The conclusion is based on the findings and discussion in the previous chapter. Based on these findings and discussion, this chapter concludes and provides suggestions for future researchers.

#### A. Conclusion

This study finds that, based on the previous chapter's analysis and discussion of the American Eagle "Good Jeans" advertisement, representations of white racial superiority are no longer conveyed through overt assertions of dominance. Instead, the American Eagle brand demonstrates white racial superiority through very subtle linguistic strategies, which have entered today's popular culture.

Textually, the primary tool for transforming biological identity in the advertisement is the use of the words "*genes*" and "*jeans*." The advertisement links the product's quality to Sydney Sweeney's physical features, such as her blue eyes and blonde hair. This indirectly establishes Caucasian beauty standards as those of "great genes." Furthermore, the advertisement's use of declarative sentence structure and the present tense make it seem as if the connection between the white race and ideal aesthetic standards is a clear scientific fact.

In terms of discursive practice, American Eagle successfully disguise this ideology by employing a more casual digital communication style, using slang like the term "Mother," and using content formats like real testimonials

on social media. This results in normalization, where society is thought to view Western beauty standards as a desirable lifestyle rather than discrimination. Overall, this advertisement demonstrates the continued dominance of white visual in the global fashion industry, disguised in contemporary aesthetics and humor. As a result, intense power relations persist online.

## **B. Suggestions**

### 1. Suggestions for advertising practitioners

This study shows that there is a tendency to glorify the physical features of certain races. Therefore, brand and other advertiser care must be taken when creating promotional stories to avoid becoming trapped by a single standard of beauty. In the future, marketing strategies must focus more on the true value of inclusivity. This means that the quality of products like jeans is no longer dependent on genetic

### 2. Suggestions for future researchers

For future research, it is recommended to expand the scope of the study beyond TikTok and YouTube to include other social media platforms to ensure consistency across platforms. Since all social media platforms is not covered in this research. Furthermore, given that this study focused solely on the researcher's text creation, it would be helpful for future researchers to analyze audience reception to determine how they respond to or even reject the proposed ideology. In addition, future researchers can utilize supporting theories such as audience perception analysis or otherwise. Because audience perception or marketing effectiveness is not covered in the scope of this study.

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## CURRICULUM VITAE



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