

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The American Dream traditionally centered around the pursuit of success, wealth, and individual fulfilment through hard work, has long been a dominant narrative in American society. However, over time, this ideal has faced growing skepticism, particularly from younger generations who recognize its inherent flaws and contradictions. Richard Linklater's *Dazed and Confused* (1993) offers a critical lens on the American Dream, set against the backdrop of 1976, a period of post-Vietnam disillusionment. The film follows a group of high school students on their last day of school, who reject societal expectations and the conventional pursuit of career success or material wealth. Instead, they embrace personal freedom, rebellion, and living in the moment, raising important questions about the relevance of the American Dream in an era where cultural values were shifting. Through its portrayal of youth culture, *Dazed and Confused* (1993) rejecting the American Dream as an outdated, unappealing ideal for a generation disillusioned with modern American life.

Through its nostalgic portrayal of Post-Vietnam war, *Dazed and Confused* (1993) challenges the conventional ideals of the American Dream by presenting characters who reject the conventional paths to success. Instead of seeking material gain or upward mobility, the film's protagonists are drawn toward experiences that prioritize individual freedom, group identity, and a carefree approach to life. In doing so, the film

reflects the cultural transformation of the 1970s a period when many Americans, particularly younger generations, began questioning the attainability and relevance of the American Dream.

This cultural critique is further emphasized by the film's depiction of authority figures, such as parents, teachers, and other societal institutions, as largely absent, ineffective, or irrelevant to the characters' lives. These figures, who in traditional narratives would often guide younger generations towards success, seem disconnected from the characters' realities, reinforcing the notion that the pursuit of the American Dream is no longer a compelling or achievable goal for these teenagers. The film's setting, with its focus on a moment of freedom before the responsibilities of adulthood, serves as a metaphor for a larger cultural shift away from the idea that success and happiness are synonymous with economic and social advancement.

To comprehensively understand the rebellious nature of the characters and their rejection of conventional success, this study incorporates the framework of youth counterculture and alienation, identifies this phenomenon as the creation of a 'counterculture' that opposes technocratic values in favor of anti-authoritarianism and authentic human experiences. The film offers a window into how the younger generation's pursuit of personal freedom and nonconformity stands in contrast to the traditional pursuit of success, thereby offering a valuable critique of the American Dream itself.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of the study, the problems of this study will be divided into three primary analyses. The following are the research question:

1. What are the intrinsic elements of The film *Dazed and Confused* (1993) ?
2. How does the Post Vietnam War socio-cultural setting of *Dazed and Confused* (1993) shape the characters perspectives on life, freedom, and the future?
3. How does *Dazed and Confused* (1993) reject the traditional concept of the American Dream through the portrayal of youth attitudes toward success, freedom, and societal expectations?

1.3 Objective of Studies

The purposes of this study are:

1. To understand intrinsic elements in *Dazed and Confused* (1993)
2. To understand the influence of the Post Vietnam War socio-cultural setting in *Dazed and Confused* (1993) on shaping the characters' existential perspectives regarding life, freedom, and their future trajectories.
3. To understand how *Dazed and Confused* (1993) rejection the traditional concept of the American Dream through its cinematic portrayal of youth attitudes toward success, personal freedom, and societal expectations

1.4 Scope of Study

This research focuses on the film *Dazed and Confused* (1993) to understand how it rejection the traditional concept of the American Dream. By analysing the movie's intrinsic elements and key characters specifically Randall "Pink" Floyd and Mitch

Kramer the study demonstrates how their choices reflect a resistance to societal expectations tied to the pursuit of success, wealth, and social mobility. Furthermore, the research contextualizes this rebellion within the historical background of the 1970s, illustrating how post-Vietnam War disillusionment, growing anti-authoritarian sentiments, and the rise of counterculture shape the film's themes of personal freedom and nonconformity.

1.5 Previous Studies

In analyzing the film, the writer reviewed several studies that are relevant to the study conducted by the writer. The analysis presented in this chapter supports the scope of this study. As a result, reviews will focusing on the movie and these theory for the writer references. The writer has found four studies that were relevant to the writer's study. The first article: *Lamed Shapiro's American Stories (2011)* by Leah Garrett, the author portrays the disillusionment with the American Dream, particularly among the youth of the 1970s. It explores how the characters reject traditional notions of success, such as wealth and career advancement, in favor of personal freedom and social connections. serves as a commentary on the complexities of adolescence and the challenges of navigating the American Dream. article discusses how Shapiro's characters, particularly those in the American setting, grapple with the notion of the American Dream. Instead of finding freedom and fulfillment, they experience disillusionment and despair. This aligns with your thesis, which focuses on the rebellion against the idealized notion of the American Dream. The characters in

Shapiro's stories seek various forms of escape from their harsh realities, such as drugs or fleeting relationships.

However, these means of escape ultimately lead to destructive outcomes, reflecting a rebellion against the American Dream's promise of success and happiness. With highlights the cultural dislocation experienced by Shapiro's characters, who struggle to reconcile their Jewish identities with the American experience. This struggle can be seen as a rebellion against the homogenizing forces of the American Dream, where individual identities are often lost or marginalized. Shapiro's portrayal of violence and brutality in American life serves as a counter narrative to the ideal of freedom associated with the American Dream. This representation of violence can be interpreted as a form of rebellion against the sanitized version of the American Dream that ignores the struggles and suffering of marginalized individuals.

The second related study the writer review is written by Carey L Martin (2011) *Outsider Nostalgia in Dazed and Confused and Detroit Rock City*. the article mainly talking about analysis of the cultural context of the 1970s, including the rejection of disco and the embrace of rock music, can provide a framework for understanding how *Dazed and Confused* (1993) critiques the American Dream. The film's focus on the lives of teenagers who feel disconnected from mainstream aspirations can be seen as a commentary on the failures of the American Dream. The article emphasizes the outsider perspective in *Dazed and Confused* (1993) which can be linked to the writer exploration of freedom. The characters' experiences reflect a struggle against societal expectations, highlighting their quest for identity and autonomy. another related study is written by

Daud Firdaus Prakosa. Prakosa's thesis "*The Guidance of a mother in Achieving American Dream of the Main Characters in A Raisin in the Sun Movie.*" The thesis employs various analytical methods, such as literary analysis and psychological theories, which could provide the writer with methodological insights for its own research. This thesis highlights that different family members in "A Raisin in the Sun" have vary definitions of the American Dream, which leads to conflict within the family. Some view it as material success (fancy houses, cars, and businesses), while others prioritize familial happiness and unity. The thesis connects the American Dream to broader themes of equality and freedom, particularly for immigrants. It discusses how the pursuit of the American Dream is intertwined with the historical struggles for civil rights and social justice, especially for African Americans, In *A Raisin in the Sun*, the characters also grapple with their desires for freedom and the societal expectations that limit their aspirations. This theme of seeking personal identity and autonomy resonates with the idea of escaping the traditional notions of the American Dream.

The final related study by Katherine Hallemeier (2024), titled *The American Dreams in The Heart of Redness*, examines postcolonial optimism within post-apartheid South Africa through the lens of Zakes Mda's novel. Hallemeier explores the conflict between foreign economic dependency and local, self-sustained development, utilizing these economic debates to critique the pervasive narrative of the American Dream. In Mda's work, the characters' aspirations heavily mirror American economic ideals, which inevitably culminate in profound disillusionment. This thematic trajectory closely parallels the narrative of *Dazed and Confused* (1993), where youth

rebellion serves as a direct counter-response to the conventional American Dream. Both texts vividly illustrate a stark disconnection between rigid societal expectations and the pursuit of personal freedom. Just as characters like Camagu in *The Heart of Redness* challenge dominant paradigms of success to advocate for local empowerment, the characters in *Dazed and Confused* (1993) actively resist conformist pressures to carve out their own avenues of self-definition.

1.6 Methods of Study

1.6.1 Data and the Source of Data

This research will use two types of data sources, which are primary data and secondary data. Primary data is collected from the movie *Dazed and Confused* (1993). As manifested within the film's dialogue and various narrative sequences. In addition, the secondary data will be relevant books, journals, and papers.

1.6.2 Data and the Source of Data

To collect the data, the writer utilizes certain steps. First, the writer watches and attempts to understand *Dazed and Confused* (1993) movie. Next, the writer needs to conduct a thorough review of existing literature and academic sources related to the movie. Then, the writer needs to analyze the findings and compile critical insights and perspectives on American Dreams and freedom, rebellion, and the rejection of the American Dream. Using relevant books, journals, and papers to support the analysis.

1.6.3 Method of Approach

Writer applies a Sociological Approach to Film, utilizing the theoretical framework proposed by film theorist Siegfried Kracauer. Kracauer (1947;122) asserts

that films are not merely forms of entertainment but are profound reflections of a society's "inner dispositions" and collective psychological state. He argues that cinema, as a mass medium, unconsciously captures the hidden social tendencies, fears, desires, and ideological shifts of the era in which it is set and produced.

To deepen the sociological analysis, Kracauer's reflection of collective psychology will be intersected with Martin Heidegger's Theory of Existentialism. While Kracauer posits that the characters' rebellion in *Dazed and Confused* (1993) mirrors the collective societal disillusionment of the 1970s youth, Heidegger provides the philosophical underpinning for *why* this collective fracture occurs.

By applying this method, the Intrinsic elements, characters' nonconformity, anti-authoritarianism, and pursuit of personal freedom are analysed as sociological evidence of a shifting society. The approach will bridge the gap between the on-screen rebellion and the real world rejection of the traditional American Dream, demonstrating how the film serves as both a cultural mirror and an indictment of mainstream societal expectations regarding success and conformity.

1.7 Organization of The Writing

This research is described in five chapters through the following organization:

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the Background of the research, Problem statement, Purposes of the research, Previous studies, Scope of the research, and Writing organization.

CHAPTER II: INTRINSIC THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter contains a description of the Narrative element, Plot, Character and Characterization, Theme, Conflict, Settings, Cinematography, and Sound.

CHAPTER III: EXTRINSIC THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter contains a description of the extrinsic element about ; American Dream Theory, Existentialism Theory, and Youth Counterculture and Alienation Theory

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION

This chapter shows the result of the both Intrinsic elements and Extrinsic elements.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

This chapter contains The Conclusions of the Thesis

