



MAX WEBER CONCEPT ON SOCIAL CLASS AS REFLECTED IN

CRAZY RICH ASIAN MOVIE

FINAL PROJECT

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement
For S-1 Degree in American Studies
In English Department, Faculty of Humanities
Diponegoro University

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PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer states truthfully that this project entitled Max Weber concept on social class as reflected in *Crazy Rich Asian* movie is compiled by her without taking the results from other research in S-1, S-2, and S-3 degree and in diploma of any university. Furthermore, the writer as certain that she does not take the material from other publications or someone's work except for the references mentioned in the biography.

Semarang, July 13th 2020

Yuni Cinthya

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

“When you’re filled with self-love you make better choices.”

-Megan Roxanne-

“Because no matter how tough the world becomes, you must never run out of sweetness.”

-Bernardokath-

“Beauty is when you can appreciate yourself. When you love yourself, that’s when you’re most beautiful.”

-Zoe Kravitz-

“We must have courage and be kind.”

-Cinderella, Cinderella-

*I, from the deepest of my heart, dedicated this
Final Project to my beloved boyfriend who
always support me whenever I am and
whatever I do and my family also friends who
always helped and colored my life.*

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VALIDATION

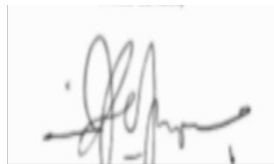
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I realize that this project is still far from perfect. I, therefore, will be glad to receive any constructive criticism and recommendation to make this project better. Finally, I expect this project will be useful to the readers who want to do the same research on film studies.

Semarang, July 13th 2020

Yuni Cinthya

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ABSTRACT

Social class is a group of people having same component of life opportunities. These components are represented by economic conditions such as property ownership or salary rates. The film *Crazy Rich Asian* describes the differences of social class differences in America. Social class is divided into several parts, namely the upper class, middle class, working class, and the lowest class. The theory applied in this study is Weber's theory and this study also uses library research in order to collect data. The results of this study show that 3 of the social classes proved to be in the film *Crazy Rich Asian*. Meanwhile in Max Weber's theory there are 4 social classes, the class that does not seem in this film is the lowest class, where this film rarely finds scenes of characters who are in the lower class due to the lack of high school under the theory described by Weber.

Keywords: Max Weber, *Crazy Rich Asian*, social class.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of study

Social status is a measurement of social value. Most of the concepts of social class in America are not only focused on race and ethnicity but also on the classification based on social status, especially economy.

“The German sociologist Max Weber developed a theory proposing that stratification is based on three factors that have become known as "the three p's of stratification": property, prestige, and power”. He claimed that social stratification is a result of the interaction of wealth (class), prestige status, and power (party). (Weber 1946:180).

Based on the definition above, social class is one of the factors that supports social class in the *Crazy Rich Asian* movie. Prestige is a significant factor in determining one's place in the stratification system. The ownership of property is not always going to assure power, but there are frequently people with prestige and little property. Property refers to one's material possessions and their life chances. If someone has control of the property, that person has power over others. He can use the property to his or her own benefit. Power is the ability to do what one wants, regardless of the will of others. This refers to two different types of power, which are possession of power and exercising power. For example, some people in charge of the government have an immense amount of power, and yet they do not make much money. (Weber 2007:203).

Each social class has a different role and function in society; for example income, Wealth and money owned are the main factors that determine one's, social class. According to Weber (2010), a person's wealth will determine his

lifestyle. People who have a lot of money can buy various luxury items, such as cars, luxury watches, jewelry, and much more. Therefore, wealth is an important determinant in social class. Another factor that determines one's social class is the educational background. A good education will affect the level of one's social class in the future.

The movie tells about a story that illustrates the family life of American who immigrated to America. They are Chinese people who grew up in America. This happened due to the dark past by her mother and ex-husband at the time. Meanwhile, this immigrant process occurs when one of the main male characters from a prominent family invites the female main character from a middle-class family where she is an independent girl who is the girlfriend of the male main character to go to Singapore. The reason the writer raised this movie to be a social class analysis in *Crazy Rich Asian* is that this is the first Hollywood film played by Asians who bring issues about relationships due to social class differences. (Anthony,2018:23).

Crazy Rich Asian is directed by Jon M. Chu and produced by Nina Jacobson, Brad Simpson, and John Penoti. The movie is starred by Constance Wu, Gemma Chan, Henry Golding, Lisa Lu, Nico Santos, Ken Jeoung, and Michele Yeoh.

This movie tells about the relationship between two lovers who were not approved by a large family of men because of social status. The main female character named Rachel Chu is a professor at the University of Economics at New York University who is originally from Cupertino, California. She was raised by

her single mother and leads a typical middle-class life. While the male lead character is Nick Young, He is also a professor at New York University. Though growing up in London, Nick is a Singaporean native. This film shows many moral messages, the ones that Nick struggles to convince his mother. Likewise, Rachel is not easy to give up despite coming from the middle class and experiencing some discrimination from Nick's big family.

In this research, the writer will focus on the analysis of social class represented by the characters in *Crazy Rich Asian* movie. The theory used in this paper is Weber's theory. Therefore, this study focuses to analyze the effects of social class differences on the thinking of the characters

1.2. Purpose of the Study

1. To explain Max Weber's concept of social class appearing in *Crazy Rich Asian* movie.
2. To explain the effects of social class differences in *Crazy Rich Asian* movie.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Social Classes according to Max Weber theory

The definition above shows that the social class of society also influences people's life opportunities. Example, there are differences in the economic conditions of each community. Besides, the division of social classes according to Max Weber is similar to what is applied by most people in the United States.

(Weber,1976:45) explained an example of social conditions in a divided area.

Here are some social classes in their various forms:

1. The first social class is the upper-class society. Upper- class society, however, is still divided into two classes. Both sections are in the upper and lower classes. The upper class is made up of people who own the "old" capital inherited from one generation to the next generation. Meanwhile, the lower upper class is made up of "new" money people who get through their own hard work or fortunate investment. They have a similar lifestyle, but they have not been able to enjoy the luxury of such an upper class.

2. The second one is the middle class. Those who are categorized into the middle class are those who typically live in the suburban area and work as businessman, lawyers, financial advisors, and other occupations.

3. The third one is the working class. They are people who work as blue collar workers like factory workers, serving buildings or restaurants, or any other jobs that belong to the less skilled position.

4. The last one is the lower class. Most of the people in this social class are lack of high school qualifications and many of them are unemployed or only working for the semi-skilled or unskilled jobs.

3. Research Method

The research applies library research. According to Beasley. D (2000:27-42) "A library research is an extensive store house of information classified for quick retrieval". Moreover, the writer uses a close viewing method to discover the scenes within the movie which reflect the issues that are discussed in the *Crazy*

Rich Asian movie. The writer uses two types of data when reviewing the film, they are the primary and secondary data.

The primary information consisting of quotations from the scene's dialog and images is taken from Nina Jacobson's movie *Crazy Rich Asian*. The writer applies the close reading method's by reading the movie script of *Crazy Rich Asian*. Based on Fisher and Frey (2014: 35) close reading is "an instructional exercise that makes multifaceted text attainable using repetitive reading, cognitive scaffolding, and discussion". In addition, secondary information is taken from related articles and books. The writer uses the theory of Max Weber in his book *Sociology: Understanding and Changing the Social World* in analyzing the social class aspect shown in the film. In addition, a contextual method by using a sociological approach is applied to explain how social status is represented in the movie. The sociological approach helps the writer to analyze the movie through characters. According to X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia, "when using the sociological approach, a critic examines the economic context of literature in which it is writing or receiving." (1995: 2194). One of the aspects of society that can be studied is the relations between the opposing groups, example. the rich and the poor.

4. Discussion

In this chapter, the writer discusses the social class contained in the film *Crazy Rich Asian* using Max Weber's theory and the author will explain which characters belong to that class of society, as follow:

4.1.1 Upper-Class

The upper-class society is still divided into two groups. Those are the upper-upper class and lower upper class. The reason behind this classification is because the upper-upper class is the group for the old money society while the lower-upper class is for the newly rich people. Some are used to being rich and some are just getting rich, so sometimes their way of life is different.

4.1.2 Upper-Upper Class

The upper class in modern societies is the social class composed of people who hold the highest social status, usually those are the wealthiest members of class society, and wield the greatest political power. According to Digby (1958:15), historically, in some cultures, members of an upper class often did not have to work for a living, as they were supported by earned or inherited investments (often real estate), although members of the upper class may have had less actual money than merchants.

This can be proven in this movie, there are characters that belong to this group. These people is Elanor Young family. Elanor family is a rich family from generation to generation. This does not make Elanor have to work hard to meet the needs of her life, because Elanor family owns apartments and hotels in Singapore. It can be seen in this short dialogue between the hotel manager and Mrs. Eleanor Young.

The hotel manager: “The hotel to my dear friends the young family of Singapore”.

Mrs. Elanor young: “My family and I wanted to be shown to our suite”.
(*Crazy Rich Asian*, 00:26:38).



Picture 1

Picture 2

Picture 3

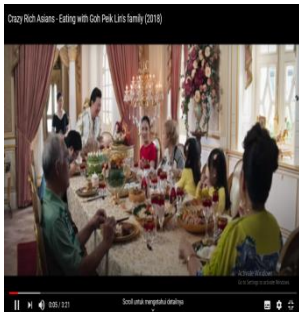
Crazy Rich Asian: 00:26:38 *Crazy Rich Asian*:00:36:12 *Crazy Rich Asian* 00:37:45
Elanour Young came to the hotel and talked to the hotel employees about how to prepare a sweet room for herself | a conversation between the hotel manager and Elanor that the hotel belongs to Elanor Young | Elanor Young went to the hotel room accompanied by the hotel manager

From the short dialogue and picture above people can see that Elanour Young came to the hotel and talk to the hotel employees about how to prepare a sweet room for herself. Elanor Young went to the hotel room accompany by the hotel manager because they know each other.

4.1.3 Lower Upper Class

This class has a concept when a person has an established life and job, he or she is also able to meet all his or her needs. The lower upper class includes those with new money or money made from investments, business ventures, and so forth. Their wealth will be exhausted if they stop working. From the *Crazy Rich Asian* movie, it can be seen that Goh Piek Lin family has valuable assets that are acquired through their own hard work. These assets include stately homes, luxury cars, branded clothes, and others. Goh Piek Lin is a friend of Nick Young while studying in America. Goh Piek Lin is a fairly simple person, but because of her hard work, she can buy everything she wants for herself and her family. It can

be seen that the new rich have partly acquired their wealth through time and process. It is in contrast to the old rich people, whose wealth has been kept for a long time through regeneration. From the *Crazy Rich Asian* movie, it can be seen that the two friends in this film have a different storyline, Nick Young comes from an old rich man with many assets such as apartments, hotels, and so on, while Goh Peik Lin comes from a new rich woman with wealth gained from her struggles so far. It can be concluded that both of them have equal lives from the lens of wealth. The difference between the two (Goh Peik Lin and Nick) are that Goh Peik Lin's family must continue to work, so that their wealth can be maintained, while in Nick Young's family, money may come without involving their participation.



Picture 4

Crazy Rich Asian:00:42:03
Goh Peik Lin's family was having dinner at a stately home.



Picture 5

Crazy Rich Asian:00:55:05
Goh Peik lin has luxurious clothes and shoes



Picture 6

Crazy RichAsian:00:57:07
Goh Peik Lin is driving a luxury car and runs into Nick Young

From the picture above people can see that Rachel gets dinner with Goh Peik's family. Then Goh Peik lent luxurious clothes and shoes to Rachel and accompany Rachecl to Nick's house with her luxury car.

4.2 The Middle Class

Those who are categorized into the middle class are those who usually live in suburban areas and work among themselves as entrepreneurs, lawyers, financial advisors and other occupations. Most of them very often have college degrees by looking at their work. Based on the *Crazy Rich Asian* movie, there is one character who is in the middle class, named Michelle Yeoh who works as a lawyer from Elanor. According to Max Weber's theory, characters of Micheol Yeoh can be classified in the middle class. This can be seen in the scene when the lawyer meets Rachel Chu in a room. Apart from lawyers, there is one character who works as a businessman. It can be said that businessmen can be categorized in the middle class based on Max Weber's theory, as they have business, high education and respected because of their profession. The middle class is interested in maintaining the social system, which will provide conditions for successful development. The role of the middle class is that it acts as the main social base of civil society. It is an opponent of the big bourgeoisie, high officials and extremely hostile part of the lowest social strata. In addition, the middle class is the main co-component of productive social forces; they are, capable of working hard, acquiring new skills, being creative, and raising a new generation.



Picture 7

Crazy Rich Asian:01:41:03
Rachel and Nick met



Picture 8

Crazy Rich Asian:01:43:05
Rachel met a lawyer



Picture 9

Crazy Rich Asian:01:45:15
Rachel and a lawyer talk

From the picture above people can be seen in the picture when a lawyers talking to consumers, there is also a businessman who talks to Nick Young discusses business. Rachel and Nick met a businessmen and lawyer. After that, Rachel and Lawyer talk about business matters.

4.2 The Effects Of Social Class Differences On The Oppressed

In the *Crazy Rich Asian* movie, beside the existence of social class that can distinguish the classification of each other, the writer also discusses about the effects of social class differences. Social class can also encourage the effects of social class differences on the oppressed. These effects include difficulties in relationships, terror, and inferiority as follows:

4.2.1 Difficulties in relationships

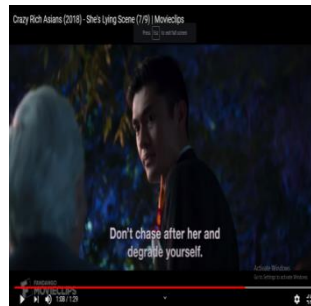
One of the inhibiting factors in running a relationship with differences in social class is difficulties in relationship. This can be proven in *Crazy Rich Asian* movie, Nick is still trying to bring Rachel to his big young family, especially Grandma and Elanor. In this scene Grandmother insisted on forbidding Nick and Rachel to continue their relationship. This problem got worse when the grandmother found out about Rachel's family background. Rachel's and Nick's relationships is still not approved. This can be seen from the conversation between grandmother, Rachel and Nick.

Nick Young : “Grandma,this is Rachel Chu, she is a pretty and kind”.
Grandmother : “But, I will not permit you to ruin my grandson with your ambition”.
Rachel Chu : “Well.”
(*Crazy Rich Asian*, 05:27:38).



Picture 10

Crazy Rich Asian: 05:27:38
Grandma did not allow Rachel to date Nick



Picture 11

Crazy Rich Asian: 05:36:11
Nick tries to convince Grandma about the compatibility of Rachel and Nick's relationship



Picture 12

Crazy Rich Asian 05:38:12
Grandma forbids Nick to chase Rachel who leaves the house

From the short dialogue and picture above people can see that Grandma did not allow Nick to date with Rachel, but Nick tries to convince Grandma about the compatibility of their relationship. Grandma forbids Nick to chase Rachel who leaves the house. This is because Grandma knows Rachel's lie by saying her father was dead. On the other hand, the truth is that her father divorced her mother before Rachel was born.

4.2.2 Terror

From the existence of a difficult relationship, it can encourage several actions against the oppressed, one of which is the evidence, namely terror. Another reason shown by one of the high-class women who did not like Rachel Chu in this *Crazy Rich Asian* movie was the inequality between Rachel Chu and Nick Young because of social class. This is evident when there is a scene where a beautiful woman and her riches, especially the ex-girlfriend of Nick Young, do an unpleasant scene to Rachel by putting fresh blood in the window of Rachel's room. In addition, she also has a large fish covered in blood. This is a form of warning to Rachel Chu that she does not deserve Nick Young. On the other hand,

this shows that the rich are the most powerful. Terror gives impacts to individuals, communities, and societies on multiple levels. Through acute and chronic symptoms of anxiety and depression, changes in health related behaviors, or long term strain and tension, the impact reaches many aspects of health.



Picture 13



Picture 14



Picture 15

Crazy Rich Asian:06:41:03 Crazy Rich Asian: 06:42:01Crazy Rich Asian:06:45:03

Some terrorized Rachel chu with writing of a matrealistic woman

In this part of the scene, you can see the words "I won't let them be happy.

Apart from being terrorized by writing, Rachel was also terrorized with dead fish covered in blood.

From the picture above people can see that Rachel Chu gets some terrorized since came to the Singapore with Nick. Some terrorized Rachel Chu with writing of a materialistic woman. Rachel was also terrorized with dead fish covered in blood.

4.2.3 Inferiority

Apart from a complicated relationship and acts of terror Rachel feels inferior. The meaning of inferiority is a psychological condition (subconscious level), when one party feels inferior / weak / inferior to the other party, or when he feels insufficient in a standard in a system.(Schultz,2009:10).

Starting from differences in social class, a female character named Rachel Chu feels inferior because the relationship between Nick is not accepted by the Elanor family. Beside that, Elanor does something to make Rachel give up by inviting Rachel to play gapple, with the agreement that when Rachel wins she will get Nick. In this scene Rachel Chu wins the gapple game, but she feels inferior and gives Nick completely to Elanor's mother. As following the dialogue between Elanor and Rachel when Rachel feels inferior in the scene :

Elanor Young :“So you chose for him?”

Rachel Chu :“I’m not leaving cuz I’m scared but because I’m not enough because maybe for the first time in my life, I know I’m I just love Nick so much I dont want him to lose his mom again. So I just wanted you know that one day when he marries another lucky girls who is enough for you and you’re playing with your grandkids while the town of oz are blooming and and the birds are chirping but it was because of me a poor raises by a single mother,middle class, immigrant,nobody”. (*Crazy Rich Asian*, 03:42:01-03:52:32)



Picture 16

Crazy Rich Asian:03:42:01
Rachel and Eleanor start the game by agreement.

Picture 17

Crazy Rich Asian:03:50:12
Eleanor lost the game and asked Rachel

Picture 18

Crazy Rich Asian:03:52:32
Rachel felt inferior

From the short dialogue and picture above people can see that Nick's mother does something to make Rachel give up to her son by invite Rachel to play gapple, with the agreement when Rachel win the game, she can get Nick and if she

lost the game, Rachel have to leave Nick. The result is Nick's mother lost the game, but Rachel still feels inferior. Inferiority happens in that movie because social class differences. Rachel Chu gets inferior because her relationship with Nick is not approved by Elanor's family due to class differences that is Nick's family is old money in Chinese, but Rachel is new money and does not have Father. Impacts of inferiority are linked with depression, insomnia, and hostility. It causes an individual to be selfdeprecating, and they will only feel good if they are doing better than others. They also have a hard time receiving compliment or praise.

5. Conclusion

From the analysis, it can be concluded that indeed social class is very much emerging. There are some evidences in the movie that supports class differences caused by salary and rate in wages. Meanwhile, based on Max Weber's theory, there are only three social classes contained in the *Crazy Rich Asian* movie, namely the upper class, middle class, working class. From *Crazy Rich Asian* movie, it can be seen feature luxury home and wedding interiors, fashion, and make up. However, based on the film *Crazy Rich Asian* wealth is very much a benchmark for determining a class, the effect of class differences is Rachel Chu gets inferior because her relationship with Nick is not approved by Elanor's family.

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