

A PROJECT'S JOURNAL

THE SOCIAL CHANGE AND COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

DEPICTED IN RICHARD LONCRAINE'S *5 FLIGHTS UP*

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ABSTRACT

Basically every individual experiences changes in their life. People change, and so do society. In the *5 Flights Up* Film, the writer is interested to find the major sources of social change such as the population growth, the infrastructure development, and technological innovation that produces smartphones and the internet. Somehow, technological innovation has influenced the life style, way of living, and behavior of the society in this modern era. The writer is also interested in analyzing the types of collective behavior namely rumor, mass hysteria, and panics among the society regarding a particular issue. In analyzing this film, the writer used library research as the method of research. Objective and sociology of literature approaches are used as the method of approach. As the result, the writer is able to observe what affects Mr. and Mrs. Carver's decision to cancel selling their house and decide to stay in their five floor apartment. Moreover, the film often represents certain issue and it highlights its perspective on the issue. Thus, the writer also emphasizes that through the film everyone can learn to gain the sense of awareness about particular phenomenon occurred within society.

Keywords: *The Society, Social Change, Collective Behavior, Modern Era*

1. INTRODUCTION

Film, as a product of a popular culture, is made by a filmmaker with some purposes. This paper focuses mainly only on the meaningful form of education in

filmmaking. This is presented in the form of depiction of society's life at a given time in order to give the viewers a better understanding about it.

According to Henry L. Tischler in *Introduction to Sociology*, society is a group of people who share common culture and same territory (2007:125). Everything is undergoing change as time goes by, including society. The change may happen in a large scale like technological change or in small change like people's attitude. The individuals are the main roles of the changing including their behaviors and attitudes. In the sociological context, the respond of people through act and behavior that is relatively spontaneous and relatively unstructured is classified in the form of collective behavior (Barkan, 2012).

A film by Richard Loncraine, *5 Flights Up* (2014) based on the Jill Ciment's novel, *Heroic Measure* (2009), reflects social change and collective behavior in the society. In the beginning of the movie, Mr. Alex Carver as the main character and the narrator of the film describes how the world he and his wife live now has changed from the first time they moved to Brooklyn. They live in the modern civilization.

He and his wife, Ruth, have been living in Brooklyn, New York as a married couple for over forty years with their ten-year old dog, Dorothy, in a five floor apartment which does not have an elevator. Therefore, they intend to sell it buy a new apartment where it has an elevator with the help of their real estate agent, Lily. However, the selling and buying process is getting stressful for them by the news that said there could be a terrorism act on the Williamsburg Bridge

located near their house. This news affects the selling and buying process because it changes and affects society's perspective. It is believed that the term perspective is used to indicate in how individuals perceive and evaluate their choices which consequently resulted as their behavior. Thus, society's perspective is what determined the result of the selling and buying process and society's behavior is in line with collective behavior theory.

Regarding the issue, the writer is interested in presenting social change and collective behavior in the type of rumor, mass hysteria and panic within society through *5 Flights Up* film while exploring how it affects Mr. and Mrs. Carver's decision to cancel their selling the house, and decide to stay in their five floor apartment. The writer used library research as data collection and the writer limits the discussion into two aspects. They are intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. In analyzing the intrinsic aspects such as narrative and cinematographic elements, the writer uses objective approach. While in analyzing the extrinsic aspects which illustrate the social change and collective behavior in the film *5 Flights Up* (2014), the writer uses sociology of literature approach by adapting the Henry Tischler's theory in *Introduction to Sociology* about social change. In addition, Steven Barkan's theory in *Sociology: Comprehensive Edition* book about collective behavior is put together as supporting points for the analysis.

2. MOVIE AND SOCIAL ISSUE

Movies watched at cinema, on television, are notably narratives. These narratives are often about characters going through experiences and how they go

about it. To a far extend, Kaul (2004) on *Representation of Social Issues on Films* also writes that “a movie usually refers to a motion picture for the masses whereas a film is something with more artistic and or educational appeal”.

Through film, the viewers could learn about a particular phenomenon. To add, Kaul (2014) states that a film often represents a certain issue and it highlights its perspective on the issues that it present, either in direct or indirect interpretation. Hence, films have great influence on the viewers’ way of thinking, decision making and even mood. Furthermore, films can also raise social awareness and effect change in its viewers if it is used responsibly. Jannet Cosbey states that in the education purpose, films can be taught to gain better understanding of society and its social issue (2010:3),

An analysis of cinema has been consequently related to the theories of narrative (Andrew, 1984:76). A film always contains a story. Thus, narrative elements can be applied in analyzing a film. The narrative elements discussed in this paper are character, setting, and conflict. These elements are also found in written literature.

According to Kennedy, a character is a person who lives in a story that is generated from imagination (2007:74). He classifies the character into round and flat characters. The second narrative element is a setting. The setting is used to identify time, and place of the story. The last narrative element is a conflict. The conflict is one of the important elements to make the story seem lively. There are two classifications of conflict, external conflict and internal conflict.

Exploring the cinematographic elements of a movie is important because the movie is the object of the study. The cinematographic elements can be divided into three aspects. Those aspects are camera distance, camera angle, and audio.

3. SOCIAL CHANGE AND COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

Basically every individual experiences changes in their life. People change, and so do society. The change that occurs in society is essentially a continuous process. It means that every society is in fact going to change. Tischler mentions that the acceptance from public and the use of an innovation is part of social change not the innovation itself (Tischler, 2007:479). There are major sources of social change that can make some changes occurred within society. The first one is population growth. The second source of social change is the infrastructure development. The last one is the technological innovation that produces advanced products such as telephone and internet. However, this advanced technology somehow has influenced the life style, way of living, and behavior of society.

The behavior and attitude of individuals are the main roles of a change. Barkan states that collective behavior is a response that has been done by certain people to influence other people and it is done spontaneously and unstructured towards a certain concern. Common forms of collective behavior discussed in this paper are rumor, mass hysteria and panic. Rumor and mass hysteria strongly held beliefs and perception that turn out to be false (Barkan, 2012:871).

4. THE NARRATIVE ELEMENTS IN RICHARD LONCRINE'S *5 FLIGHTS UP*

In the film the writer finds that there is one round character in the movie, Mr. Alex Carver and flat character is Mrs. Ruth Carver. The setting of the film takes place in New York in the modern time. At last, there are two types of conflict that can be analyzed in this film, Mr. Carver against himself, and Mr. Carver against environment.

5. SOURCES OF SOCIAL CHANGE DEPICTED IN THE *5 FLIGHTS UP* FILM

In analyzing what restructure the social changes that is depicted in the *5 Flights Up* film, Mr. Carver as the narrator gives contribution for it. Sources of social changes that are reflected in the movie are the population growth, the infrastructure development, technological innovation that produces smartphones and the internet.

This technological innovation is an important source of change that has transformed the way people live and work. It is seen in the movie, that people in the society nowadays seems unable to live without their smartphones. However, this innovation, smartphones makes people's life easier when the doctor use telephone to inform Dorothy's situation to this married-couple so they do not have to go there to check her condition. The internet is also another example of technological innovation. In the film, the internet has helped a lot in the selling process of their house. Not only via telephone can the buyer place sequential bids but also via email.

6. COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR DEPICTED IN THE *5 FLIGHTS UP* FILM

Collective behavior namely rumor, mass hysteria, and panics are reflected in the 5 *Flights Up*. Rumor is depicted when there is reported news that says there has been jackknifed on the Williamsburg Bridge and the driver fled from the area. The society keeps assuming that this is part of terrorism as they know that the driver as suspected is a Muslim.

Moreover, there is a mass hysteria among the society that sparks intense fear of danger. For example, another real estate agent, Miriam C. shows her concern for a danger by accusing the suspect that he may carry a bomb with him. The result is that the society becomes panic. Mr. Vincent, the owner of the new apartment, also curses the suspect. He gives his unpleasant comment that says to lock the suspect up or better to shoot him right away. His anger towards the suspect is part of a panic because he would lose some amount of money from selling his house under his expectation.

The people's attitude towards the issue makes it worse. Moreover, this issue is being exaggerated by mass media and society keeps consuming it. In the end, it all turns out to be false. The truth finally has been spoken. It is said that the suspect is only an innocent young man. From this explanation, it really depicts the society nowadays when they just believe in anything mass media tells and keep accusing without considering the truth.

At last, Mr. Carver becomes really sick of the people's behavior. So, he cancels both transactions of buying new house and selling his house. He decides

to still stay in his fifth floor apartment with his wife, because in there he already finds what he called as a home.

7. CONCLUSION

In *5 Flights Up*, it is clearly depicted how social change occurs within society's life in the neighborhood of the main character, Mr. Alex Carver in Brooklyn, New York. One of the sources of social change which is technological innovation of Smartphone is widely used. It is shown in the film that almost everyone in this modern era has their smartphones. It is not only the technology innovation that is changing but also the infrastructure development, the population growth, and the internet that has transformed the way people live and work.

In addition, the collective behavior is also depicted within the society in his neighborhood. These common forms of collective behavior are rumor, mass hysteria, and panic. Once there is news about an incident happened around this neighborhood which sparks rumor among the society and leads to mass hysteria and panic. Moreover, mass media exaggerates the issue and society keeps consuming it. In the end, it all turns out as untrue.

In contrast, Mr. Carver stands differently. He does not want to be part of that society. His belief, behavior, and life chance are not determined by it. As a result, he cancels his plan to sell his house and stays to live in his five floor apartment with his wife. He argues that no matter what in that five floor apartment, he has already found the real home and builds a good life with his

wife. All in all, through a film viewer can learn to gain the sense of awareness about particular phenomenon occurred within society.

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