TH E A M E R I C A N F A M I L Y V A L U E S  
IN L I T T L E M I S S S U N S H I N E M O V I E 
ADHI K E L V I A N T O S E P T A P R A D A N A
Septa.septa@gmail.com

Abstrak


Kata kunci : little miss sunshine – keluarga – nilai budaya keluarga Amerika

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

the writer is interested in analyzing a movie entitled Little Miss Sunshine which is directed by Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris. This film shows how an American family lives in society. Based on the argument, the writer wants to know more especially about the family values in America. Therefore the writer writes this thesis with the title THE AMERICAN FAMILY VALUES IN LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE MOVIE as a project of cultural studies.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purposes of this study are to know the social problems which are raised in the Little Miss Sunshine movie through the structural elements and the American Family Values, that is togetherness, stability, loyalty which are presented in Little Miss Sunshine movie.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

A scope of the study is important in a thesis. The aim is to make the discussion more focused and easier to understand. The scope of the study in this thesis is about the structural elements and how they are related to the American family values which are presented in Little Miss Sunshine movie.

METHOD OF THE STUDY

In obtaining the data and information that support this topic that will be discussed in the thesis, the writer uses two methods: research and approach methods.

Method of Research

Based on what is said by Semi (1993:7), method of research is a method used to find, develop and test the truth of knowledge empirically based on the fact and data. The writer uses the library research method to get the data through books that discus materials relating to the problem in the analysis. Then, the writer uses various sources of data such as, articles, websites, blogs, and essays to support the study of Little Miss Sunshine movie.
Method of Approach

Related to the scope of the thesis, the writer uses two methods of approach: the exponential and sociological in this thesis. According to Guerin “we designate this method as the exponential approach because the inclusiveness of the term suggest at once the several meanings of motif, image, symbol and archetype” (1992:197). The writer uses an exponential approach to make an analysis of narrative aspects such as theme, character, setting, plot, and also cinematography aspects in order to express the meaning and values in.

To analyze the extrinsic aspects, the writer uses sociological approach. Endraswara states that literature sociology focuses on human’s issues that is reflect of humans in a society while they are having socialization in a life. (2003:79). The extrinsic aspect contains the analysis of family values in America, that is stability, togetherness, and loyalty.

INSTRINSIC ASPECT

Himawan Pratista in his book Memahami Film argues that the instrinsic aspect of a film consists of two elements; narrative and cinematography elements. Narrative element analyzes the storyline of the film content that consists of theme, character, setting, and conflict. Meanwhile, the cinematography element analyzes the elements of the film consisting of Sound and Shot distance (2008:13)

Narrative Element

Theme

Theme is the central idea in a literary work. According to Meyer in The Bedford Introduction to Literature, “theme is the central idea or meaning of a story. It provides a unifying point around which the plot, character, setting, point of view, symbols and other elements of story are organized” (1990:96). It shows that theme is the idea to develop the story or a bone idea to give meanings to all events in the story through characterization, images, and actions.

Character

Character will be played by someone who is acting as the personality of certain characters. Characters perform anything related to the story event. According to Kennedy in Literature: An Introduction to Fiction Poetry, and Drama “a character is presumably an imagined person who inhabits a story” (1991:47).

There are two kinds of characters; these are a major and a minor character. A major character is human personalities that become familiar while a minor character is a more passive spectator or even a character that arrives late upon the scene and then tries to piece together what has happened (Kennedy, 1979:18).

Setting

Setting is the place, environment, or time of events that occurs in a literary work. It makes the reader or audience easily imagine that the action of story is closely related with the element of setting. Kennedy (1987:56) divides setting into three types: setting of place, setting of time, and sociocultural environment.

Setting of place is the place of the main object. “The Idea of setting includes the physical environment of a story; a house, a street, a city, a landscape, a region” (Kennedy, 1987:68). Thus, Setting of place indicates where the story happens.

Meanwhile, setting of time refers to time when the events occur. Kenned claims that besides places, setting may crucially involve the time of the story-hour, year, or century (1987:68). Thus, it relates to the time when the series of event occurs in a fiction or movie. Setting of time is not only years, months, or dates but also weathers, climates and periods.
Sociocultural environment setting shows the projection of the society where the characters exist. It embraces the situation of society, social classes, customs, accents, and lifestyles of the character (Kennedy, 1987:68).

Conflict

According to Chin there are two kinds of conflict; internal and external conflicts (2000:1). The internal conflict occurs dealing with an internal problem of a human being. For instance it is the result of conflict between two desires, beliefs, different options, expectations, or other problems (Chin, 2000:1). On the other hand, Chin defines external conflict as a struggle between a character and an outside force, such as another character, society, nature or fate (2000:1). This conflict takes place due to a clash between characters in a movie. It is a conflict that happens between a character with someone or something outside him.

Cinematography Elements

Shot Distance

According to Bordwell & Thompson, there are seven shot distances; extreme long shot, long shot, medium long shot, medium shot, medium close-up, close-up, and extreme close up (2008:191).

EXTRINSIC ASPECT

American Family

The family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. According to Murdock “The Family contains adults of both sexes, parents, relation and one or more children (own or adopted) that interact daily and support each other” (2004:166). A family is also the smallest group in the bigger society.

A family is the first place for children to learn before they enter the society. Hevi explains that “a family is the unit of interrelated persons with network of rights and obligations inherited by birth of learning, and regarded as both ‘right and desirable’” (2000:31).

According to Berns, “Family’s function can be seen from the healthy condition of the family itself. There are always economy, health, and social problem” (2001: 89). A family structures are categorized in to two forms; nuclear and extended family.

Nuclear Family

In general, a nuclear family consists of two persons that are connected by married and their biological or adopted children. Maintz in her book points out that; “A nuclear family consists of a husband, a wife and their children. Meanwhile, for the parents, a nuclear family is the family of procreation, which develops when one marries and has children. The significance of a nuclear family is the primary source institution for children which provides the basis for perpetuation of the society “(Maintz, 2012:1)

Nuclear family also live in the same residence and share the values, duties, and responsibilities of the family unit.

Extended Family

An extended family consists of a husband, a wife, a children and relatives. This type of family includes all close relatives such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. They live together and all share daily household duties. (Maintz, 2012:1)

In some ethnic groups, such as Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Italian Americans, each family member will have responsibility to support the family. Berns explains in his book Child, Family, School, Community Socialization and Support that the responsibility of a family is raising the children, allocating house resources and caring for family needs which now belong to all family members. (2001: 91)
Values of American Family

Lamanna and Riedmann argue that family values (familism) permeate American culture. These values, such as family togetherness, stability, and loyalty, focus on the family group as a whole (1988:5). So in other words togetherness, stability, and loyalty are parts of American family values.

Togetherness

According to Lamanna and Riedmann togetherness is the feeling of being close to another person emotionally and physically.

The emotion which cannot be definitive outside of its current sociological meaning, and the reality of such a term is not knowledge. It is well symbolized by the gesture of holding both hands up, slightly cupped with palms facing each other, and moving them together to create a circle. The other symbol is also when two arms hold each other at the wrist (1988:6)

As Lamanna points out “Many of us have an image of the ideal family relationship in which family members spend considerable time together and enjoy each other’s company. The time that individual family members spend away from one another at work, at school, or at play are secondary importance” (1988:5). Togetherness, in other words, means that parents and other family members should develop togetherness and make it a habit to do things in daily life.

Stability

Lamanna and Riedmann points out “On a more personal level the family is an important source of stability and we are disturbed when it is disrupted” (1988:5). Family stability is important because the positive effect of the family due to stability of family structure. Lamanna claims that the stability in a family also means the quality of being firm and steadfast in doing the functions of family (1988:5).

Brook claims that the stability of American family is showed by social, economic policies that support all family members, provide food, shelter, education, health care and protection for members (2009:1).

Loyalty

Burr and Mutchler argue “family loyalty refers to the feelings of mutual obligation, commitment, and closeness that exist among family members namely parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren, siblings” (1999:23). The closeness, commitment and obligation between the generations in a family are important in a loyalty. It also reminds each family members to take care of each other.

Lamanna and Riedmann explains that “The group most deserving of our loyalty, we believe, is our family. Most of us who are married today have vowed publicly to stay with partners as long as we live” (1988:8) In short, parents, children, and relatives should remain loyal to the family unit and together solve a problem.

Discussion

Intrinsic Aspect

Narrative Elements

Theme

A Little Miss Sunshine movie is a family-drama movie which tells us about an American family life. This movie shows a lot of conflicts from every family’s member. Thus, the conflicts make it easier for this film to be understood, especially about the American family values.

All of the scenes in this film picture how the American family’s habit and behaviour. We can also see in this film the relationship of the family members in an extended family. As an extended family, togetherness, stability, and loyalty are important besides the conflict which is experienced by each family’s member. Average tempo illustration music also
successfully supports the theme of the movie, since they bring the happy and fun effect to build up the mood.

The family conflict in general comes from internal and external. For example, internal family conflicts come when Richard’s family argue the transportation to go to California. They are not go to California by plane because the accommodation is very expensive and seed the family money. It is proven in dialogue below;

Besides, external conflict comes when Richard failed to promote his program to Stangrousman. The detailed explanation about the theme of this family drama will be explained in the dialogue below:

They solve and face the problem together, be loyal with the family and we can see that they always love each other. Finally, minute by minute, the members of the Hoover family are getting closer and closer to each other. (see pictures 4.1).

Character

In the Little Miss Sunshine movie, every character has his own characteristics to support this movie’s story line. There are six characters in this movie, who are involved on the story line. Every character has an important role to bring out the story. The characters are Richard, Sheryl, Frank, Dwayne, Olive and Edwin Grandpa.

Richard

Richard is the head of the Hoover family. He is confident, optimistic, and caring. It can be seen in picture 4.2, which is taken in medium close up shot. He looks confident when he talks in the class room. He tells everyone about the “refuse to lose” concept. He does not want to be a looser and always says “winner or loser”. In the dialogue Richard says:

In Picture 4.3 which is taken in medium close up shot, we can see how the emotion and expression of Richard as a caring person, when he hugs Olive.

In another hand, the dialogue above shows that Richard is an optimistic person. He does not want to lose and be a looser. One day, Richard meets the great motivator in the United States, his name is Stan Grosman. Richard tries to sell his theory about “9 steps” that he has.

However, his business is failed. Stangrousman, is reject the nine step program of Richard. Based on rejection of Stangrousman, the conflict on himself begin, he is very upset and depression. It is shows in the picture 4.3 in extreme long shot he is look disappointed when he drive his motorcycle and in the picture 4.4 which taken in medium shot he hold his emotions out. When the conflicts come to Richard, the music illustration tempo is very slow, it means that the Richard happen make the viewers feel what the Richard feel.

Sheryl

Sheryl is the wife of Richard Hoover. She is a career woman which can be proven from her suite (see picture 4.4 [1]). Although she is a career woman, Sheryl is also a housewife. She has to prepare dinner and clean the house. We can see her in pictures 4.4 [2] which is taken in medium long shot.

She has a simple mother that is look in her costume, she wears a t-shirt. She has two children; Dwayne and Olive. Sheryl is a mother who loves and supports her children. For example, she supports Dwayne to become a pilot in the US Air Force. The following is her answer to Dwayne’s request.

Pictures 4.5 which is taken in medium long shot and medium close up indicate that is a good mother of her children. She gives Dwayne permision to join flight school.

Moreover, Sheryl also supports Olive to join Little Miss Sunshine Competition in California. We can see in pictures 4.6, Sheryl and Richard have an argument. Richard dissagrees, if Olive goes to California by plane, because it will cost a lot of money.
Pictures 4.6 indicate the argument between Richard and Sheryl. At last, as seen in dialogue 6 she successfully persuades Richard to go to California together with all the family members by car. This situation shows how Sheryl supports Olive very much.

**Dwayne**

Dwayne is Olive’s brother. He is fifteen years old. He has a white skin, black hair, and skinny body. Joining the United States Forces Academy is Dwayne’s big dream. He is doing exercise in his room. The following is the dialogue between Sheryl and Frank about Dwayne who has stopped speaking.

The above dialogue suggests that Dwayne has taken a vow of silence before he really joins the United States Force Academy. It indicates that Dwayne has a struggle to be a pilot. He does not want to talk with anyone. Pictures 4.7 shows Dwayne’s situation.

As can be seen in picture 4.7 [1] which is taken in medium long shot, Dwayne looks ambitious and willful. He practices exercises everyday and he keeps his vow not to speak to anyone before his dream comes true. If he wants to communicate as seen in picture 4.7 [2] which is taken in medium shot, he writes his mind on a piece of paper.

**Olive**

Olive is the sister of Dwayne. Dancing is Olive’s hobby. She is a cute girl with blonde hair, and wears sunglasses. She is very excited when she knows she will go to California to compete in Little Miss Sunshine.

Her happiness is seen in pictures 4.8. They are taken in medium closeup so we can see how she feels. Olive is an optimistic girl. It is proven in the dialogue below.

Olive is confident to face the Little Miss Sunshine competition. She has practice every day with grandpa. He coaches Olive how to dance. They do not practice just at home. They practice anywhere when they have a chance.

In picture 4.9 which is taken in long shot, Grandpa and Olive practice dancing in the car repair garage workshop. This picture shows, that she insist on dancing practice and wants to be a winner in Little Miss Sunshine competition.

**Grandpa**

Grandpa is the oldest man of all family members (see Picture 4.9 [1]). He loves Olive very much and he teaches her how to dance for the Little Miss Sunshine Competition.

In the picture below, we can analyze that grandpa is a unique person. He looks more stylish than other grandpas. Picture 4.9 [2] indicates grandpa’s outfit; jeans, t-shirt, and a vest.

Besides, grandpa is a heroin addict. He always consumes heroin every day. Picture 4.9 [3] suggests that Grandpa takes heroin in the bathroom. He is getting old, but, he does not keep his health.

Grandpa is also crazy about women. He has a lot of experience about women and his “adventure”. This dialogue below shows that grandpa is a heroin and woman addict.

However, grandpa is also the father of Richard. When Richard is down in his business, Grandpa shows his role as a father. He is wise and protects his child. We can see in the dialogue below.

This dialogue shows Grandpa gives a motivation to Richard when he fails in his business. It suggests grandpa is a good person to restore the spirit of Richard.

**Frank**

Frank is Sheryl’s brother, and also Dwayne and Olive’s uncle. He is the preeminent of Proust scholar in the United States. Unfortunately, he tries to kill himself after his love is rejected by his friend. Frank is a gay and it can be shown in the dialogue below. In the beginning, he is in despair when he is in the hospital. We can see his desperate expression in pictures 4.10 which are taken in medium close up.

**Setting**

**Setting of time**
This story of the movie is set in 1998s. It can be proved in the picture below. There is no explicit time revealed in this movie. But there are clues that can be used as indications of the time setting. For example, when the movie begins, Olive watches a TV program in which Miss Kansas Tara Dawn Holland wins the contest of Miss America. According to http://anusha.com/taradawn.htm, the time of this event is 1997. So it can be assumed that the time setting is around 1998 because Olive is inspired by Miss Kansas, Tara Dawn Holland to join Little Miss Sunshine Competition.

Setting of Place
The setting of place Little Miss Sunshine Movie is along Alberquerque and California.

Extrinsic Elements
Family

Little Miss Sunshine movie tells us about an American extended family. In this movie, we can find all of the American family problems and the American family values in an extended family.

The Hoover family who lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico, stays under one roof. They meet, communicate, and socialize together. Picture 4.17[1] tells us that the Hoover Family consists of father, wife, two children, uncle, and grandfather. Pictures 4.17 are taken in medium long shot so that how the family members relate to one another can be seen clearly enough. They make a circle in the dining-table to discuss and solve the problems of the family such as the accident of Frank, Olive dance, ice cream, and etc.

In the dialogue above (see picture 4.17[1]), Richard asks Olive about Olive’s dancing practice. We can see how the family cares about the daily activity and the progress of Olive practice.

Olive cares about Frank’s accident and Frank decides to tell Olive about his suicide attempt. He suicide attempt is a Frank Conflict, he loves his student but he love another person. That is the way why the Frank Suicide attempt. Then, as can be seen in the dialogue below (see picture 4.14[3]) Richard, Sheryl, Olive and Grandpa argue on the disadvantages of ice cream.

In the dialogue above, the family argues about ice cream as Olive likes eating ice cream. Ice cream is a Intern Olive conflict, because Olive does not to be fat. To be a Miss America Olive must keep the weight of her body. However, all the discussion makes the family feel warm and close to each other. All the family member support Olive to eat ice cream except Richard. He disagree Olive eat her Ice crea. Besides, they support each other and give attention to the other family members. The Hoover family also shares their daily household chores.

As can be seen in the dialogue and pictures which are taken in medium close up and medium long shot above, Sheryl shares the daily household with Dwayne. Sheryl makes a salad and Dwayne takes a bucket of chicken in the car. Sheryl is a mother. She knows what she should do. The mother’s role in this movie is very important, because she always takes care of her family.

Togetherness
As mentioned in the previous chapter, togetherness is the closeness among the members of the family. This value requires that all members of the family do things together. Little Miss Sunshine movie has a lot of scenes where the family is doing things together. First, when the family have dinner in Hoover’s house. Dwayne and Frank are waiting for the other family members for dinner. It appears in picture 4.19[1] below. In picture 4.19 [2], which is taken in long shot above, all of the family members are present. It shows how the Hoover family always have dinner together. They eat together at the dinning-table. Togetherness is not only at the dinning-table. Remember, the Hoover family go to California by car together. On the way to California they discover that their car’s clutch is broken. It
forces the family to push-start the car whenever it is not parked on a hill. The following pictures 4.19 show how the family get a car problem and how they solve it.

In the restaurant, Richard knows that the clutch is broken. Then, they have taken their car to the garage to be repaired. But, they cannot fix the car because the spare part is not available here. Finally, Grandpa, Dwayne, Sheryl, Olive, Frank, Richard push starts the car. According to the scenes above, we can indicate the Hoover family togetherness. They push together, and help the other family member s and they continue their journey.

In their journey, the Hoover family is very sad, because grandpa dies. They feel deeply sad about the loss of grandpa. However, they keep their plan to get to Olive's pageant on time. Richard, reminds them to honor his father. Grandpa wants to see Olive’s performance. Finally, they choose to smuggle the body into their car, and the road trip continues. As can be seen in picture 4.21[2] which is taken in long shot, the Hoover family do not leave grandpa in the hospital alone. They keep going while grandpa is dead. This shows that the Hoover family will face all the problems together, even though grandpa is dead. In the several scenes above, we can conclude that the Hoover family emphasises togetherness in the family.

Stability

Stability, in the previous chapter, is defined as the balance of the family’s function. Every member in the family has to know the duty of each member. They should keep healthy in economy, social condition and education. In the Little Miss Sunshine movie, the economic stability can be seen in the Richard Hoover Scene. Richard, as a father, will do his best to be a successful motivator. In the picture 4.22[1] which is taken in long shot, he struggles to gain money. Richard tells his theory in the class. He does not want to be a loser although the theories are not yet successful.

In the same time, Richard believes that his theory is going to be a success by Stan Grousman. He meets Stan Grousman (a famous motivator) and he promotes his theory to Stan Grousman. He wants his theory to be sold in the form of book, DVD, and etc.

This situation in dialogue 19 is apparent by analyzing the conversation between Richard and Frank. Richard believes that his theory will be successful and generate his income. He is a responsible person as family father in economic stability. Besides, we can see that Richard is willful to make a deal with Stan Grousman in order to change his family life. Finally, the deal with Stan Grousman is cancelled. It is shown in picture 4.22[2] which is taken in long shot: Richard and Stan talk in a hotel. Richard looks so sad and upset. He is so disappointed when Stan cancels his deal. Despite, Richard keeps as strong as he can in any situation. Moreover, Richard is a father too. It can be described that Richard will do anything for his family by looking at the picture 4.17[3] below. In these pictures, which is taken in medium long shot, he warms and makes a good relationship with each family members at the dining table.

However, the Hoover family is not a rich family. Sheryl as a mother knows that her family is the low middle class. Therefore, she works in the supermarket. Sheryl helps her husband, Richard, to earn some money.

Pictures 4.23 [1] and [2] above presents the two different roles of Sheryl, picture 4.23[1], Sheryl wears uniform. It proves that Sheryl is a career woman. Sheryl is a woman who keeps the stability of her family In picture 4.23[2], Sheryl wears a t-shirt and she does house work. It shows that she is a housewife. Sheryl knows how to solve the economic problem in her family. She provides food for her family and handles all of the housework. Even though Sheryl is tired, she keeps doing her responsibility as a mother. Richard and Sheryl love their children. They support Dwayne and Olive. Both of them support Dwayne to join the United States Air Force Academy. They also support Olive who is going to compete in “Little Miss Sunshine” in California. In the dialogue above, we can see how Richard and
Sheryl support Olive and Dwayne’s dreams. This situation can be called the stability of social life and education. Another fact about stability emerges when the Hoover Family is in the “Little Miss Sunshine” competition. The family shows social stability in each member. In picture 4.24 [1] and [2], which are taken in long shot, surprisingly, Olive shows bad dance performance. However, the Hoover family stands up and cheers her on. A pageant official orders the host to remove Olive from the stage but Richard butts in and begins dancing next to his daughter to support her.

One by one, Olive's family takes the stage and joyfully finishes the number of dance routine with her. According to the scene above, we can analyze that the Hoover family always support their children till the end. Although they do shameful behaviour, the family shows happy expressions (see picture 4.18 [3]) when they are on the stage.

The Hoover family proves to keep the stability of family, in the several scenes above. It means that the Hoover family has a quality of being firm and steady in doing the functions of family.

**Loyalty**

Mutual obligation and commitment are shown in the “Little Miss Sunshine” movie. It is proven when Olive asks Grandpa. She feels worried about the competition on the next day. We can see that the duty of family members is supporting and taking care of each other. In the dialogue above, it can be seen that Grandpa is very close to Olive. Pictures 4.25 [1] and [2] which are in medium close up suggests Grandpa is giving motivation to Olive about tomorrow when Little Miss Sunshine Competition begins. Besides, he coaches Olive to dance and he supports Olive to be a good person. When Olive is terrified about the next day, Grandpa keeps cheering her up. The loyalty is apparent in the conversation between Olive and Grandpa. Grandpa really wants to see Olive’s performance in Little Miss Sunshine Competition. However, in the midway, the family loses Grandpa. Grandfather is an important part of the family life. Grandpa coaches Olive’s dance performance. Although Grandpa has passed away, they Hoover family still continues to realize Grandpa’s dream. Grandpa wants to see Olive performance in “Little Miss Sunshine”. It is shown in the scenes below

In the scenes above, we can see the loyalty of the Hoover family. They not leave Grandpa alone in the hospital. They take Grandpa’s body to the garage. In this scene, we can see how much loyalty the Hoover family has when one of the family members dies. After grandpa dies, the loyalty of Hoover family does not stop close there. When Dwayne knows that he is color-blind, he is very desperate, upset and disappointed (see picture 4.27 [1] which is in medium close up)

After he knows that he is a color blind, Dwayne starts to talk again. He is very angry, because he is disappointed with his family. As seen in picture 4.27 [2] which is taken in long shot, he does not wants to continue in the journey. However, after a long conversation Olive hugs Dwayne. Finally, Dwayne goes to California together. In dialogue 28 Dwayne feels sorry for his bad behaviour to his family. This conversation above shows how Dwayne cares about his family. Although Dwayne is upset and depressed in the beginning, he keeps showing his loyalty to his family. Loyalty reminds each family member to take care of each other.

**Conclusion**

Family is part of the society. It consists of some people who have different types of character staying under one roof. Every character has different characteristics and with these differences, each character interacts with another one. From the interactions, family values can be seen.

As the final result, it can be said that “Little Miss Sunshine” movie an American family values. In this film all the members support each other to help and solve the problem together, despite the fact that the family members are in conflict with one another. Moreover, the Hoover family keeps togetherness in the family and knows how to make stability in their
family. In this film we can also see how the family members are loyal to another one. As the final result, the writer finds that there are three main family values in this movie; togetherness, stability, and loyalty. Togetherness in this film is visualize that parents, Grandfather, Uncle, and Child should develop togetherness and make it a habit to do things in daily life. This Stability will be find in Richard family support all family members, provide food, shelter, education, health care and protection for members. Loyalty comes in the closeness, commitment and obligation between the generations in a family. Without three main values in the American Family its impossible that the family can realize their dreams together.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


