



THE SOCIAL CLASSES IN “*THE GREAT GATSBY*” MOVIE

A FINAL PROJECT
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement
For S-1 Degree in American Studies
In English Department, Faculty of Humanities
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PRONOUNCEMENT

I states truthfully that this project entitled *The Social Classes in The Great Gatsby Movie* is compiled by me without taking the results from other research in S-1, S-2, and S-3 degree and in diploma of any university. In addition, I ascertain that I do not take the material from other publications or someone's work except for the references mentioned in bibliography.

Semarang, September 2019

Bella Marsela

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 family who
always support me whenever I am and
whatever I do and my friends who
always helped and colored my life.*

APPROVAL

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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, September 2019

Bella Marsela

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ABSTRAK

Kelas sosial adalah sekelompok orang yang memiliki komponen yang sama dari peluang hidup mereka. Komponen-komponen ini diwakili oleh kondisi ekonomi seperti kepemilikan properti atau tarif gaji. Film *The Great Gatsby* menggambarkan tentang perbedaan – perbedaan kelas sosial di Amerika. Kelas sosial terbagi dalam beberapa bagian yaitu kelas atas, kelas menengah, kelas pekerja dan kelas terakhir sekaligus kelas terendah yaitu kelas rendah. Film ini juga menunjukkan adanya mobilitas sosial yang ditunjukkan melalui jalan hidup Gatsby. Teori yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini menggunakan teori dari Weber dan penelitian ini juga menggunakan metode penelitian perpustakaan. Hasil dari penelitian ini menyatakan bahwa 4 dari kelas sosial terbukti ada di dalam film *The Great Gatsby*, dan film ini juga menunjukkan adanya mobilitas sosial.

Kata kunci: *The Great Gatsby, Kelas sosial, Mobilitas sosial*

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Based on the book titled Gale Researcher Guide for: Social Class in the United States stated Most American adults understand what is meant by the term social class, though they may not agree about how many social classes there are or which factors determine membership in a particular class. Furthermore, they may not place themselves in the social class that more objective measures would suggest. In the United States, there continues to be a widespread belief in social mobility-that is, that individuals can rise above their original social class (the one they were born into) to a higher social class by working hard. Actual data reveal, however, that upward social mobility is relatively infrequent in the United States and that poverty is common in the United States and in other places around the world. (Shehan, 2018)

Social class is a group of people who have common casual components of their life chances. These components are represented by the economic condition such as their property owning or their rates in wages (Weber, 1976). And there are differences in social class in America which is mainly determined by economic factors which can be shown from the movie titled *The Great Gatsby*.

The Great Gatsby movie is adapted from a novel entitled *The Great Gatsby*. This movie reflects life in America in 1920. This movie is directed by Baz Luhrmann. This movie is about Jay Gatsby who lives in West Egg and Daisy Buchanan who lives in East Egg. West Egg is an area of rich people, mostly

populated by newly rich people who tend to show their spectacular wealth. And East Egg is the opposite area of West Egg.

From the Gatsby's way of life, we can see if there is a social mobility in this movie. Because at the past Gatsby was a poor child but at the end he can show to the people that he can become a successful and respected man. In this paper also want to describe social classes in *The Great Gatsby* movie and want to examine social mobility in *The Great Gatsby* movie. And the theory that will be used in this paper is Weber Theory of social class.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

1. To describe social classes in *The Great Gatsby*.
2. To examine social mobility in *The Great Gatsby*.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Social Class

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss the definition of social stratification and social classes. Melvin Tumin stated that social stratification is an arrangement of any social group or society into a hierarchy of positions that are unequal with regard to power, property, social evaluation and psychic gratification (Tumin, 1967).

Davis and Moore argue that social stratification is important or useful for society itself. The point of their argument is that privilege, power, and prestige or so-called the reward must be put in a certain position in the society. This is intended to motivate people to do things they are good at to achieve a certain level of social stratification. They see social stratification as something positive. It is something to trigger people to be a better version of them in order to get a better version of life. (Moore, 1945)

On the contrary, Boughey (Reimer, 2001) sees social stratification as something negative. He argues that in many societies there is a tendency to make a social inequality where they make some people be the superior ones and others as the subordinates. In this research, it is clear that the higher class of society is doing the same to the lower class of society.

Social stratification itself consists of several social classes. As Weber stated, social class is a group of people who have common casual components of

their life chances. These components are represented by the economic condition such as their property owning or their rates in wages (Weber, 1976).

This research will be using Weber theory is about the classification of social class. As it is stated in a book titled *Sociology: Understanding and Changing The Social World Comprehensive Edition*

Sociologist Max Weber... also had much to say about class systems of stratification. Such systems, he wrote, are based on three dimensions of stratification: class (which we will call wealth), power, and prestige. Wealth is the total value of an individual or family, including income, stocks, bonds, real estate, and other assets; power is the ability to influence others to do your bidding, even if they do not want to; and prestige refers to the status and esteem people hold in the eyes of others.” (E.Barkan, 2011)

2.2. Social Class According to Max Weber

Max Weber (E.Barkan, 2011) stated that there are 3 things in classifying someone’s social stratification. Those things are power, wealth and prestige. This theory will be used in this research in classifying the social classes in *The Great Gatsby* movie by Baz Luhrmann. Based on the book titled *Sociology: Understanding and Changing the Social World Comprehensive Edition* there are four social class:

1. The first social class is the upper-class society. However, upper-class society is still divided into 2 groups. Those groups are upper-upper class and lower-upper class. Upper-upper class consists of people who own the “old” money which has been inherited from one generation to generation. While the Lower-Upper Class consists of people with “new” money which they get through their own hard work or lucky investment. Basically, they

have a similar lifestyle but they could not enjoy the privilege of such an upper-upper class could.

2. The second class is the middle class. People who are classified into the middle class are people who typically live in the suburban area and work as bankers, lawyers, financial advisers, and other occupation among those. By looking at their jobs, most of them are very often have a college degree.
3. The third class is the working class. They are people who work as blue-collar workers such as factory worker, construction or restaurant serving or any other jobs which belong to the less skilled position.
4. The last class is the lower class. Many people from this social class are lack high school degrees and many of them are unemployed or employed only for the semi-skilled or unskilled job.

RESEARCH METHOD

Method of research applied in this project is library research. Library research involves the step-by-step process used to gather information in order to write a paper, create a presentation, or complete a project (Rasmuson, 2018). In collecting the data for this study, the author watched the movie *The Great Gatsby* thoroughly. In analyzing the movie, the writer uses two kinds of data, they are the primary and secondary data.

The primary data which consist of quotes from the dialogue and screenshots of the scene is taken from the movie entitled *The Great Gatsby* directed by Baz Luhrmann. Primary data are used to analyze the issue. Furthermore, these data work as proof which supports the analysis of the writer.

Moreover, the secondary data are taken from journals and books related to the theory and the movie as the object of the study. In analyzing the social stratification aspect shown in the movie, the writer uses theory from Max Weber in his book titled *Sociology: Understanding and Changing The Social World Comprehensive Edition*. In addition to that, another book used in this project is *Sociology: Comprehensive Edition* which is written by Barkan.

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, we shall discuss what social classes are represented in this movie. To begin the discussion we shall know what social classes described in the movie *The Great Gatsby*. Steven E. Barkan stated that there are several classes in social stratification. Those are the upper class, middle class, working class and lower class (E.Barkan, 2011). And the writer will explain which character belongs to the social class.

4.1 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.

4.1.1 Upper-Upper Class

In this movie, there are 2 characters that belong to this group. Those people are Tom and Daisy Buchannan. They are husband and wife. It can be seen in this dialogue which is said by Nick.

NICK She lived across the bay in old money, East Egg. Her husband was heir to one of America's wealthiest families. His name was Tom Buchanan. (05:30 – 05:43)



Picture 1

(The Great Gatsby, 05:36)

From the dialogue, it is clear that Tom comes from a wealthy family and he is old money. He lives luxuriously from his born and it is different from Gatsby who came from a poor family. We will discuss Gatsby later also in this chapter.



Picture 2

(The Great Gatsby, 05:54)

The picture above shows that Tom Buchanan also went to Yale. It is shown from dialogue which is said by Nick.

NICK When we were at Yale together, ... (05:54)

It is also another proof that he is old money. Not everyone can get into Yale since this university is really expensive. It is one of the Ivy League colleges in America. As written in the book "The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America. Yale University Press", in a ... managerial society, the proper college degree became the main criterion for potential elite status... it was during the [1920s] that certain institutions of high prestige, such as Harvard, Yale and Princeton (and Stanford on the West Coast) became all-important as upper-class-ascribing institutions.. (Baltzell, 1964).

4.1.2 Lower-Upper Class

The character from this movie that belongs to the Lower-Upper class society is Jay Gatsby. He is presumably as rich as Tom and Daisy Buchannan, however, Gatsby's social background is different from Tom and Daisy. Jay Gatsby lives in West Egg. His mansion is located next to Nick Carraway's house. Nick Carraway describes the difference between the West Egg and East Egg, they are just as luxurious but the houses on East Egg are for the people of old money. It can be seen in this dialogue which is said by Nick across the bay in old moneyed, East Egg. (05:30)

The reason Gatsby belongs to the new money society is that he once was poor. He came from a poor family. His parents were only farmers yet he has a big dream since he was a kid. He wants to be rich and so he went to make his dream comes true. It can be seen in this dialogue which is said by Nick His parents were

dirt-poor farmers from North Dakota but he ever accepted them as his parents at all. (1:08:17)



Picture 3

(The Great Gatsby, 1:08:17)

In the process after the war, he built a business with Meyer Wolfshiem which becomes a huge success and makes his dream come true. He finally is a rich person and made it into the Upper-Class society.

4.2 Middle-Class

The middle-class people are those who work as bankers, lawyer or any other such occupation and lives in the suburban area. In this movie, Nick Carraway is the representation of the middle class. The reason behind this statement is that he works as a banker. It can be seen in this dialogue which is said by Nick to get started I bought a dozen volumes on credit, banking and investment, all new to me. (04:24).



Picture 4

(The Great Gatsby, 04:24)

Another reason that shows that Nick is in middle-class is his home in the West Egg. Although Nick lives in upper-class society, his house is far different from the surrounding houses. It can be seen in this dialogue which is said by Nick I lived at West Egg, in a forgotten groundskeeper's cottage squeezed among the mansions of the newly rich. (04:18)



Picture 5

(The Great Gatsby, 04:18)

4.3 Working-Class

People in the working-class are people who work as blue-collar workers such as factory work, construction or restaurant serving or any other jobs which belong to the less skilled position. The character from the movie *The Great Gatsby* who is the representation of this social class is George Wilson and Myrtle Wilson. George Wilson work as the owner of a garage “GEORGE B. WILSON. Cars Bought and Sold”.

The situation in the movie show of his garage was awful, the interior was unprosperous and bare, there is only one car in there and it is in a bad condition that is a Ford that was covered with dust and it makes the garage looks like not making much money either. The reason they do not categorize into the lower class is that George Wilson at least manages to run a business even though his job is a less skilled one.

4.4 Lower Class

The last one is the lower class. Many people from this social class do not have a secondary school degree and many of them are unemployed or employed only for the semi-skilled or unskilled job. However, in this movie, there is no character that fits in this social class category.

It is clear that Tom comes from a wealthy family and he is old money. He has been living in a luxury from he was born and it is different from Gatsby who came from a poor family. This different background of family triggers a conflict between Tom and Gatsby. Tom does not want to associate with Gatsby because he is a new money person. Tom somehow feels that he is more superior to Gatsby

since as old money he feels he is better than Gatsby. The upper class in social stratification would be more superior towards the lower class. The upper-class people would feel they somehow are better than the lower ones. The upper-class people basically have more money, power, and prestige than others.

The conflict between Tom and Gatsby starts at the time when Gatsby confesses his love affair with Daisy. Tom is trying to humiliate Gatsby by “testing” Gatsby about his education background. Gatsby once says that he went to Oxford University but the truth is he did not. It is shown in the dialogue between Tom and Gatsby in scene 1:35:39 where Gatsby is having a hard time to cover up his lie.

GATSBY I said I went there, didn't I?
TOM I heard you, but I'd like to know when
GATSBY It was in nineteen-nineteen, I only stayed five months.
That's why I can't exactly call myself an Oxford man
NARRATOR Tom glanced around to see if we mirrored his unbelief. But
we were all looking at Gatsby.
GATSBY You see it was an opportunity they gave to some of us
officers who fought in the war. (01:35:39).

High-class universities represent someone's social class. This university is not for everyone. Sometimes being smart is not enough, you have to be able to pay the tuition which is quite expensive. But from that dialogue, we can see that for the upper-class people they have the privilege to go to any of those good and expensive universities.

4.5 Social Mobility

In this movie, there is social mobility obtained from Jay Gatsby's way of life. From several sources, it can be concluded that social mobility is a movement from top to bottom or vice versa in socio-economic life that can change a person's status in society. It can be said in this movie there is social mobility because Jay Gatsby can change his life from poor to rich so he can also change his social status in society. In the past, Jay Gatsby came from a poor family where his parents were farmers. But he has a dream to become rich. He tried his best to achieve his dreams.

Initially, he was only a soldier who left Daisy to go to war, but for some reason, Jay did not return home after the war was over. Apparently, he met Dan Cody who almost died because his boat was almost sunk. From there Gatsby was taught how to dress, behave and talk like an upper-class person. After Dan Cody died Gatsby returned to poverty, but because of his ambition to become rich Gatsby rose again and joined the business of Meyer Wolfshiem. And from this business, Gatsby finally became rich and was able to change his social status, at the first Gatsby was only a poor child who was not respected at all but because of his enthusiasm and ambition, he was finally able to change his social status to become rich and respected.

CONCLUSION

The Great Gatsby is one of the movies that show the strength of social class in the era. The social classes in this movie are shown through the dialogue and the storyline of this movie. Social class divided into 5 types there are upper – upper class, lower – upper class, middle class, working class, and lower class. From this movie, it can be concluded that 4 of the social classes are proven. There are upper – upper class, lower – upper class, middle class and working class. There is no lower class in this movie because there are no characters or parts in this movie which show that there are people who fit into the lower class category. In this movie also shows that there is a social mobility. It is proven by Gatsby's life story that he was only a poor person but eventually he could become a successful man.

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