POLITICAL CONSPIRACY IN DAN BROWN’S

DECEPTION POINT (2001): A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH

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POLITICAL CONSPIRACY IN DAN BROWN’S
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ABSTRACT

The problem of this study is how political conspiracy reflected in Dan Brown’s Deception Point novel. The objective of this study is to analyze the novel based on the structural elements and to analyze the novel based on the sociological approach. This study belongs to qualitative method. In this method, there are two types of data source, namely primary and secondary data source. The primary data source is the novel itself, meanwhile the secondary data sources are other materials related to the study. Both data are collected through library research and analyzed by descriptive analysis. Based on the analysis the researcher draws the following conclusions. First, there is a close relationship between the novel, Deception Point, and American social realities in the late twentieth century. Then, America’s social realities give contributions to create this story.

Keywords: Political conspiracy, Deception Point, Sociological Approach.

A. INTRODUCTION

Sociology deals with human beings in society. Swingewood and Laurensen (1972: 11), write that sociology is “essentially the scientific, objective study of man in society, the study of social institutions and of social processes”. Sociology studies the real life, where as literature is created based on social phenomena. Literature is a work of art which expresses of human life and the conflicts on society especially concern with law, religion, norms, economic, and politic. The sociology of literature is a study of literature based on sociological perspective that is described by the author in his or her literary work, to understand the social phenomena at that time.

Political conspiracy is in a political sense that conspiracy refers to a group of persons united in the goal of usurping or overthrowing an established political power (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_conspiracy). According to Ramsay
(2006: 20), conspiracy is “normal politics carried out by normal means, to include international relations and politics in which secret diplomacy and secret intelligence play major roles”. The essence of conspiracy theory is “the belief that an organization made up of individuals or groups was or is acting covertly to achieve some malevolent end” (Barkun, 2003: 3).

Political conspiracy becomes the concern not only of politicians but also authors. Among other authors who gives concerns in political conspiracy is Dan Brown, as reflected in one of his works, *Deception Point*.

*Deception Point* novel tells about a 2001 techno-thriller novel by Dan Brown. The plot concerns a meteorite found within the Arctic Circle that may provide proof of extraterrestrial life. It is about conspiracy when the mysterious figure makes fake meteorite case to defend the existence of NASA from under controlled by military. In every country, election is very important chance. Politician will do everything to make people choose them.

The story begins when NASA’s new Polar Orbiting Density Scanner (PODS) has found an extremely dense spot in the Milne Ice Shelf. That shocking scientific discovery as proof of extraterrestrial life is something that NASA needs in the light of recent failures. The President sends four leading civilian scientists (Michael Tolland, Corky Marlinson, Norah Mangor, and Wailee Ming) to the Arctic to verify the meteorite’s authenticity, and also Intelligence Analyst Rachel who works for the NRO (National Reconnaissance Office), Senator Sexton’s daughter.

The scan shows Ming’s body in the water and a column of frozen sea ice beneath the meteorite where it was drilled up into the glacier. Upon discovering this, the four are attacked by the Delta Force team, leaving Mangor dead. Aboard Tolland’s ship, Rachel sends a fax message to her father asking for help. Rachel is surprised to see Pickering the commander of the Delta Force squad and attacked them, but they manage to get off of the ship. Then Senator Sexton reads the fax message to the public to incriminating the President and NASA. But, Gabrielle changes the envelopes to be their scandalous data. It is securing Herney a second term as President.
By the end of the story, Michael and Rachel have developed a romantic relationship (http://www.infoplease.com).

There are some of public responses from pro side. First, it has very interesting book tidiness. Second, there is energy imagined in the novel so readers conceiving the situation in the story plot. Third, the readers are amazing about Brown’s ability to makes story braid. (http://www.nanangnews.blogspot.com). In the other side, this novel also has some critics from the readers. First, it is about his accuracy of the fact that is to shocking common people. Second, there is not one paragraph that is close to some acceptable literary decency. Third, like the previous books it is too much like a Hollywood script (http://www.goodreads.com). However, it is a best seller novel with 81 million copies sold worldwide and has been translated into more than forty languages.

There are four reasons why the writer is interested in studying this novel. The first reason is caused this novel has interesting plots. It is an easy to read, and his style is a rocket-fast thriller. So, when the readers read it, this novel is always interesting in the fast plot and guessing the end of the story.

The second reason is giving a lot of interesting facts. Here are some secret organizations in this story which are not much known by public. Brown states that the Delta Force, the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), and the Space Frontier Foundation are real organizations. Also all technologies described in this novel exist. It can be imagined how great this novel.

The third reason is giving interesting settings. Here are some settings in this novel. Brown tries to figure out detail of White House. Besides the settings take place in the Milne Ice Shelf in Arctic, Navy submarine USS Charlotte, Air Force One, and so on which exist. It is so interesting with great details to imagine those places.

The last reason is political conspiracy that becomes main issue of the novel is reflected well. It is one of interesting aspects to be studied. In this novel, Brown writes about conspiracy as background in the United States election. This novel tells the existence of political conspiracy.
The problem statement of the study is how political conspiracy is reflected in *Deception Point* novel written by Dan Brown. Based on the problems above, the writer formulates the objective of the study in the following. First, to analyze Dan Brown’s *Deception Point* novel based on its structural elements of the novel. Second, to analyze Dan Brown’s *Deception Point* novel based on a sociological approach.

The first research was conducted by Sinta Nur Khasanah (*UMS*, 2011) entitled *Conflict of Interest Between Individual and State in Dan Brown’s Deception Point (2001): A Sociological Approach*. Her research aims are to find how conflict of individual and state is reflected in Dan Brown’s *Deception Point* by correlating its structural element and social historical background of United States of America in 20th and 21st century. The results of her study show that: first, Brown’s *Deception Point* reflects social condition occurred in United States of America. Second, Brown’s *Deception Point* depicts conspiracy. Third, Brown’s *Deception Point* is criticism toward unbalanced situation and condition that can be found in character’s characterization, narration and dialogue.

The second research was conducted by Mahfut Efendi (*UMS*, 2010) entitled *The Political Conspiracy in Bryan Singer’s Valkyrie Movie (2008): A Sociological Approach*. His research aim is to show the political conspiracy in Valkyrie movie by using a sociological approach. The study comes to the following conclusions. First, based on the structural analysis of each elements, it shows that the character and characterization, casting, plot, setting, point of view, theme, *mise en scene*, cinematography, sound and editing are related to each other and form the unity into good quality of a movie. Second, based on the sociological analysis, there is close relation between the movie production and the social reality underlying it such as the global issues of conspiracy in a government.

The similarity of the study is from the data source of study on *Deception Point* novel. Then second is the focus on political conspiracy issue. The difference between the first previous study and the writer’s research is in
the focus. The writer focuses on political conspiracy aspect and the effects of that. Then, the writer focuses on political conspiracy in Dan Brown’s *Deception Point*.

**B. RESEARCH METHOD**

The primary data source of the study is the *Deception Point* novel written by Dan Brown in 2001. The secondary data sources are books and other sources that support the analysis. The technique of data collection is library research, the steps are: a) reading the novel repeatedly to get deep understanding, b) determining the character that will be analyzed, c) reading some related books to find out the theory, data, and information required, d) taking notes of important parts in both primary data and secondary data, e) classifying and determining the relevant data, f) arranging, researching, and developing the selected material into a good unity toward the topic of the study. The technique used in analyzing the data is descriptive analysis. It concerns with the structural elements of the novel and the sociological approach.

**C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the analysis to *Deception Point* novel, there is relation between this novel with American society where the novel appeared. The novel reflects the reality in society in the late twentieth century. Those realities in society are as follows.

1. **Social Aspect**

   Social condition in America in the late twentieth century is reflected in *Deception Point* which can be studied from the social structure, social status, and social relation.

   In social structure, Brown puts Rachel Sexton as a reflection of the upper-middle class who enjoys high job with comfortable personal income. Her appearance shows that she is from the high class of American society. She works in the NRO and has a relationship with the upper class
people. Although the job is difficult and requires long hours, the position is a badge of honor for her. She has received post-secondary degrees and belongs to the white collar professions.

Beside her, Brown creates Zachary Herney, Senator Sexton, and William Pickering in upper class which is prestigious and influential in the nation’s institutions. They are honorable man. Setting of them is in important functionary places, such as NRO’s secret office (p. 11), Wallops Island (p. 22), Air Force One (p. 23), White House (p. 287), Philip A. Hart Senate Office Building (p. 131), and FDR Memorial (p. 404).

Brown also puts civilian scientists such as Michael Tolland, Corky Marlinson, Norah Mangor, Wailee Ming and also Gabrielle Ashe in the lower-middle class. Their style is normal, but not as fascinating as upper class. They are college education who usually suffer from lack of secure job and also receive improper income. The setting is near Pasadena (p. 185) and Los Angeles (p. 145).

In social status, William Pickering represents an honorable man and has high social status. The lower-middle social status is described in Gabrielle Ashe’s character. But, there is no lower social status in this story. The upper society lives in luxury places such as Westbrooke Place Luxury Apartments (p. 235).

In social relation, it is believed in this novel that marriage is important for women. The belief is related to the women’s age. Women’s role is a wife and mother. Rachel Sexton is a character that is mature in age to get married. Besides, the social condition in America also inspires Brown to criticize that condition through the plot of the story. Brown describes the inharmonious relationship between Rachel Sexton and her father, Senator Sedgewick Sexton.

2. Economic Aspect

Brown himself mostly does not show the economic condition of American in the late of twentieth century, he would rather show the
comparison of economy between poor people and government of America, which spends much money to keep NASA’s existence.

The above statement awakens the American that NASA is just an option—not a national program. It becomes a hot news until President’s staffs ask to reduce NASA’s funding. Besides, there are not enough teachers to teach for low the economical class while high economical classes get it easily. Senator Sexton himself used to be bankrupt to fulfill his blind ambition. He as high economic class must face reality that to become a candidate of President of United States needs much money, out of his capability.

3. **Political Aspect**

Mostly, Brown criticizes political reality from the existence of high classes’ more than low classes. At that time, Zachary Herney as a President of United States faces the finding of NASA that can be shocking the world. However, conspiracy still becomes a major issue in America at that time since a mysterious figure behind this case. There still exists the blurring of public opinion. American government tends to keep quit while there is a splashy phenomenon in society. Cause of managing NASA needs high-cost maintenance with high expectation. So, they do anything to keep themselves seen as a successful organization. Besides, this story also reflects the relation between nation and citizen. People feel worry if their future is not guaranteed by the elected President. They do not want to pay high tax, just for unimportant government budget.

4. **Scientific and Technological Aspect**

In the late twentieth century, America has high technology. This condition has inspired Brown to reflect the American latest science and technology in this novel. All technologies described in *Deception Point* exist and they can be interesting facts which support the story.

There are sophisticated NASA’s program which is shown the American capability about space such as EOS (Earth Observation System), its satellite PODS (Polar Orbiting Density Scanner), and INSPIRE
(Interactive NASA Space Physics Ionosphere Radio Experiment). Some of them are classified into secrecy technologies. This futuristic weaponry people can have different expression. For the normal weapon which is commonly well-known, people assume that is ordinary military weapons such as, helicopters in the city skies. For extraordinary weapon or secret weapon people still cannot identify the weapon as the newest one because it is also purposely concealed by intelligence.

5. Cultural Aspect

The cultural condition in America in the late twentieth century influences Brown to create the characters. They are divided into three aspects; mental, social, and physical.

Mentally, there is a value for loving mother. A mother has big role to her children’s development. It is shown by Rachel Sexton who loves her mother more than her father, because her father has no role in her life. The norm to respect parents must be kept by people. Though, parent’s attitude sometimes is not good. It shows when Rachel Sexton still respects her father, though she has problems with him and her father has bad attitude. The cultural acculturation brought by immigrant to America such as Dr. Wailee Ming who has stayed in Los Angeles and also clan of American like Lawrence Ekstrom.

Socially, thanksgiving has become a traditional American holiday which evolved from the will of English pilgrims to “give thanks” for their welfare (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/culture_of_the_United_States). It becomes habit in American families to celebrate it with family’s togetherness. It is shown by Rachel Sexton’s family that they will try to be together in Thanksgiving Day though they are very busy. Besides, to get freedom and out of her father bad influence, Rachel chooses to be independent with her hard work.

Physically, there is modern architecture era. It begins in famous and expensive building such as the Senator Sexton’s office. The fashion is influenced by trending mode at that time. It is shown by Rachel Sexton
who follows the latest mode. Traditional American cuisine uses ingredients such as turkey, white-tailed deer venison, potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn, and squash. It is shown when Thanksgiving Day, Katherine Sexton cooks turkey as traditional dish in that celebration.

6. Religious Aspect

*Deception Point* merely talks about other aspects in life rather than religious aspect. But it emerges some clues that Christian as the religion used in American at that time like Senator Sexton with all his lies and frauds but he acts as if a religious man.

Based on the sociological analysis above, it is obvious for the researcher to state that structural elements of this novel are appropriate with the core of the study using sociological approach. Brown’s *Deception Point* discusses the American society in the late twentieth century. Brown sees that occupation is important to American society. The social background of American society in the late twentieth century gives influences to Brown’s *Deception Point*.

The economic condition of American in the late twentieth century is also one of the influential factors to Brown in making literary work. There is low economical class which is encumbered by high tax, while their children do not get enough teachers in their schools. Besides, the high economical classes hold power and give NASA much funding.

Brown sees that it is the great issue to become a President of America. Behind the election rule, there is such kind of scandal to defeat his enemy between Democrats and Republican parties. It can be legal campaign, illegal campaign, black campaign, illegal financing, until conspiracy.

Science and technology are also interesting for Brown to write this story based on the existence of all technologies which he describes. American development of science and technology emerges amazing progresses, but mostly they never correct the misconception in public. Culturally, in the twentieth century many immigrants come to America and there are American clans. Most American family lifestyles are broken home families which a
father cannot become a perfect figure to lead his family. Although most Americans are Christian but some of them do not obey their religion commands and become hyppocratic.

Based on the analysis above, the researcher concludes that this novel is the reflection of the society of American in the late twentieth century, and the appropriate theory for this research is sociology of literature.

D. CONCLUSIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

After analyzing Deception Point novel using a sociological approach, finally the writer draws the following conclusions as follow. There is a close relationship between the novel, Deception Point, and American social realities in the late twentieth century.

American social realities give contributions to create this story. The social class in America contributes to characters, characterizations, and setting of places. The economic aspect also contributes to the characters and characterizations. The political reality gives contribution to the plot of the novel. Scientific and technological give contribution to character and characterization, plot, and theme. Cultural reality gives contribution to character and characterization. Meanwhile religious reality gives the contribution to the character and characterization.

This research paper hopefully can contribute to English teaching process, especially to the readers. It can be used to understand literary works mainly fiction from a sociological perspective which relates to the society in the late twentieth century. It can also be used to enrich student’s vocabulary lesson by using the novel as reading material.

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