SOCIAL DISPARITY REFLECTED IN JANE AUSTEN’S MANSFIELD PARK (1814):
A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The research is aimed to know the social disparity in Jane Austen’s Mansfield Park novel by using Sociological Perspective. Therefore, the study analyzes the novel in terms of it is structural elements and based on the sociological perspective. This research belongs to descriptive qualitative study. In this method, the writer uses two data sources; they are primary data and secondary data source. The primary data source is the Mansfield Park novel, meanwhile the secondary data sources are sources of literature and sociology and websites related to this study. The writer collects the data from both primary and secondary data sources in a sort of document evidence. There is a close relation between this novel and the social reality of England in the early nineteenth century. Mansfield Park shows that the lives of the upper class were filled with luxurious, stands in sharp contrast with the lives of the lower class are shabby and uneducated.

Key words: Social Disparity, Mansfield Park, Sociological Perspective
A. Introduction

*Mansfield Park* is one of the romance novels by Jane Austen, a female writer from England. In this novel Austen makes an overview of the social disparity that occurred in English society in the early nineteenth century. This novel was first published by Thomas Egerton on May 4, 1814 and the second edition of this novel was published by John Murray in 1816. In *Mansfield Park* novel contains 424 pages (48 chapters).

Based on the writer’s observation, *Mansfield Park* was analyzed by Jeanine M Grenberg (2007). In her journal entitle *Courageous Humility in Jane Austen's Mansfield Park*. She focused to analyzed courageous humility in *Mansfield Park* using Kantian point of view about social virtue. Second, the journal came from Michael Karaunos (2004), entitle *Ordination and Revolution in Mansfield Park*. He focused to analyzed ordination and revolution that reflected in the characters of *Mansfield Park* with using modes of revolt’s theory by Edmund Burke. Third, the researcher’s observation was already done by Anna Lott (2006), she focused to analyzed STANGGING A LESSON: *The Theatricals and Proper Conduct in Mansfield Park*. Fourth, the journal came from George E Boulukos (2006), entitle *The Politics of Silence: Mansfield Park and the Amelioration of Slavery*. He tries to interpreting silence and slavery that reflected in *Mansfield Park* novel. Fifth, the researcher’s observation was already done by Anna Mae Duane (2001), entitle *Confusions of Guilt and Complications of Evil: Hysteria and The High Price of Love at Mansfield Park*. She wants to explore how Austen manipulates the narrative disjunctions caused by bestowing a happy ending on an enfeebled martyr-figure. Jeanine M Grenberg and the other researchers above left an opportunity for other researchers to study the novel. Different from the researchers above, here the writer tries to conduct the study on the social disparity that reflected in the *Mansfield Park* novel by using sociological perspective.
The main discussion of this study is social disparity. Social disparity in the social sciences is also known as social inequality, social equality or social stratification. According to Saunders (1990: 2) that the study of social stratification is the study of how these different grouping or strata relate to one another.

According Crossman in her website *Sociology of Social Inequality* (2012), there are two main ways measuring the social inequality: inequality of conditions, and the inequality of opportunity. Inequality of conditions refers to the condition of inequality economic income, wealth and material. Meanwhile, the inequality of opportunity refers to the "life chances" of uneven across individuals. This is reflected in measuring such as education level, health status, and treatment by the criminal justice system.

Some scholars support the theory of social disparity or social inequality. Farley (in Devine and Waters, 2004: 4) stated that in America race is the social inequality that generates significant interest, but with the differences of race in America, it can make American culture increase and has important differences. Other statement also delivered by Pettinger (2011) in his website *Pros and Cons of Inequality*, there may be a gap between highest and lowest earners. But, the lowest earners are still better off than without the entrepreneur.

Some proponents do not agree with the practice of social disparity or social inequality. According to Devine ( in Devine and Waters, 2004: 196-197), in Britain, inequality in social class between the upper class and the lower class caused the people of the lower classes to feel ostracized and underestimated because they were never getting the same rights in their lives. Other statement also delivered by Butler and Watt (2007: 119), social inequality leads to the exclusion of certain groups who are considered to have a low income.
Social disparity is not just a concern for the scholars above, but it is also a concern for the writers in literature. One of them is Jane Austen, so that she realized her ideas about social disparity through her work to criticize the social disparity that to be the case in the life of English society then Austen was made "Mansfield Park" novel. So, it makes the writer interested to analyze social disparity that reflected in this novel.

B. Research Method

This study belongs to qualitative method (Marvasti, 2004: 7) because it does not need a statistic to explore the facts. In this method, there are two types of data source, namely primary and secondary data source. The primary data source is "Mansfield Park" novel by Jane Austen, meanwhile the secondary data sources are other materials support to the study. Both data are collected through library research. (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 3)

In collecting data, the writer will take some steps as follow; reading the novel repeatedly, taking notes of important parts both primary and secondary data, arranging the data into several groups based on its theoretical category, selecting particular parts considered important and relevant for analysis, and drawing conclusion and formulate its pedagogical suggestion.

In analyzing the data, the writer applies a descriptive approach (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 3). The steps taken by the writer in analyzing the data are as follows: the first is analyzing the data based on its structural elements. The focus will be paid on the structural analysis of the novel. The second step is analyzing the data based on sociological perspective. Focus will be paid on the meaning of social disparity.

C. Research Findings and Discussion

The social disparity analysis of the study is presented in this session. Here, the writer would like to divide this session into two parts; they are findings and discussion.
1. Findings

In this part consists of two major points; they are social disparity in Mansfield Park novel and social disparity in the reality. The writer tries to explore the relationship between two major points in this part.

a. Social Disparity in Mansfield Park novel

There are social disparities that reflected in Mansfield Park novel by Jane Austen, especially in economic, education, appearance, lifestyle, and politic. The first in economic, the novel portrayed the social disparity between the Bertram’s family who is rich with luxurious house and the Price’s family who is poor with a small house and messy.

The second is about education, the disparity exists between Fanny Price and Miss Bertrams because they are get a different education facilities. Miss Bertrams who are rich easily get into a good school and they are have a vast knowledge, whereas Fanny who is poor only able to be in regular school with her narrow knowledge.

The third is in appearance, the Bertram's family who comes from the upper class. They are always looks good in dressing, polite in their words, and always looks elegant, graceful and handsome. It contrasts to Price's family who is always looks shabby in the way they are dressing. They are always using the rude words and yelling. Their bad economic conditions, makes the Price’s family ignoring their appearance.

The fourth is in lifestyle, the Bertram's family has a high lifestyle, they like a horseback riding in a warm weather, sometimes they also make dance party in their home just to socialize with their colleagues and close relatives. In speaking, they are always using a soft and polite language, respectful to each other, and looks dignified. Meanwhile the Price’s family just spending their time at home with reading a newspaper, taking care
of home and the children. They are only interesting in the cruise because their house is close to the shipyard.

The last is in politic, William Price who comes from a poor family. He is never promoted during his work as a Marine, and finally he can be promoted because he gets help from Henry who has uncle who served as admiral. It is proved that class and social status is influence the opportunity in employment.

It is caused by the habits of the people who always judge a person from the amount of wealth and property. So it is resulting in a lot of gaps between the behavior of the upper class and the lower class, because the upper class is always get everything easily with their wealth and high social status. Meanwhile, the lower class is always in the low social status so that they only have a small chance to earn a decent living.

The impact of social disparity causes the lower classes have a low self-confidence, because they always feel underestimated, insulted, and they are never considered for in the society. In addition, there will be a discord in the society because of the social jealousy between any groups with each other.

To resolve the social disparity problems, there should be awareness of the upper class to do not always underestimate the lower class. People of the upper class should be able to do not judge people of their wealth but they should appraise the people because of their attitude. So, the lower class will has the same opportunity to do things and do not to feel excluded from their society.

b. Social Disparity in Reality

In English society itself, there are much cases caused by the social disparity that exist in the life of English society. The system is based on occupation, income, and ownership of wealth. These things often affect the education, employment and mental health.
Throughout today’s society, the level of education that an individual acquired has a large impact on the amount of employment opportunities, job security, and wages that are attained. According to Hyland in her website *Social Inequality Increases in Britain* (2000), in education, the most children who came from poor families only get a low education and they are difficult to continue their study into college. Other statement about social disparity in education also delivered by Kent in her article *Social Inequality Proved to Impact Educational Performance in UK* (2011), If pupils from families that are struggling with unemployment, bad housing and poor health, the ability of schools to close the gap with more affluent children is going to be limited. The increase in competition between schools has not helped to narrow the gap between the educational experiences of rich and poor. Worsening poverty and deprivation will mean that a good quality education will be the exclusive province of the rich and better off sections of the middle class. There is no equality in education in getting the facility or the opportunity to pursue higher education for all people. Schools in low wealth states and districts a lot of things especially hard hit, with inadequate instructional materials, little technology, unsafe buildings, and less-qualified teachers.

In employment, laborer has failed to bridge the inequality gap and Britain remains a deeply unequal society after almost 13 years. Social class still determines life chances and "deep-seated and systematic differences" remain between social classes. (Cassidy: 2010). There are a lot of demos performed by the laborers in England about the existence of caste discrimination, because it makes the laborers always demeaned and underestimated in their work environment. (Neiyyar: 2013)
The last in mental health and health services, Murali and Oyebode in their article *Poverty, Social Inequality and Mental Health* (2004) stated that the income inequality produces psychosocial stress, which leads to deteriorating health and higher mortality over time. Those who live in deprived communities, where there is under-investment in the social and physical infrastructure, experience poor health, resulting in higher mortality for those of lower socio-economic class. Other statement about health services comes from Cassidy (2010), poor people just getting limited access to health care and slow response to health services. It makes poor people who are sick always ignored by the hospital.

In *Mansfield Park* novel, Austen shows her critique about social disparity with get into Edmund’s character which has a different paradigm with the other upper class. The first is proved when his sisters underestimate Fanny, because she comes from a poor family. Edmund who is not concerned about the wealth and social status, then treated Fanny well in Mansfield like his own sister. The second is proved, his debate with Mary about job as a pastor. Mary considers that the pastor will not have a decent life, but Edmund has a different perspective and assume that the pastor is a noble job. Although, Edmund derives from the upper class, according him the social class and social status of everyone is the same. This is just a satire from Austen for the upper class who always distinguished the people according the social class and social status.

2. Discussion

The content and form of literary work is closely related to the society in which literary work appears (Zeerafa in Burns and Burns, 1973: 35). The story in the *Mansfield Park* novel reflects the condition of English society. Thus the readers can see the condition at that time
by understanding the story of the novel. Based on the structural analysis it is clear that in *Mansfield Park* novel, Austen raises the issue about social disparity as her satire for the English society.

And from the novel, the writer finds many social disparity especially in economic, education, appearance, lifestyle and politic. It is caused by the habits of the people who always judge a person from the amount of wealth and property. This problem has an impact in society, for example; there will be a discord in the society because of the social jealousy between any groups with others.

In the social reality, social disparity also becomes a serious problem in English society. There are a lot of cases caused by the social disparity that exist in the life of English society, especially in the education, employment, and mental health. Until this time, the social disparity problem cannot be resolved. This proves that the problems that exist in the novel also happened in the reality.

To resolve the social disparity problems, there should be awareness of the upper class to do not always underestimate the lower class. Moreover this problem needs a concern from the government to overcome this problem by performing equalization in every facility for their society, so there are no differences in treatment between the upper class and the lower class.

In each of her works, Jane Austen always describes the habits of her surrounding society imaginatively. In this story the upper class with the wealth and the spacious house which is compared to the lower class that have low income with a shabby appearance. The existence of this novel is to criticize the paradigm of upper class that always concerned about class and social status in their socially.

**D. Conclusion**

In the early nineteenth century in English society, social disparity is easy to exist because the society very concerned about their social status and their social class. It makes Austen as the writer criticize the paradigm
of English society with described their habits in her works. Austen is one of those who oppose the existence of social disparity in society, because it causes the differences among groups and it can create a discord and social jealousies in society. The writer can find the criticism about the society of Jane Austen in the article entitled *Jane Austen's Criticism on the Society*. The criticism of Austen is her complacent acceptance of the class structure of her society, its values, and its mores. One response to this charge is to find implicit social criticism in her novels. Austen was torn between her perception of the cruelties and corruptions of her society and her strong emotional attachments to family and friends, she expressed her criticisms of society in ways that were not necessarily conscious. (Cypher: 2009)

Therefore, in this novel Austen creates one different character that has the same mindset with her about the social disparity. In this novel, the character is always ignored the class and social status in his life. So, he is always well-behaved and polite to everyone, even though he was from the upper class.
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