

**THE AMERICAN DREAM**  
**IN CLINT EASTWOOD'S *FLAGS OF OUR FATHER*:**  
**A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH**



**RESEACH PAPER**

Written as a Partial Fulfillment of Requirement for  
Achieving Bachelor Degree in English Department

by

**DWI SULISTIYONO AGUNG. W.**

**A.320 040 013**

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT**  
**SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION**  
**MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA**

2008

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of the Study

The American Dream is a subjective term usually implying a successful and satisfying life. The “American Dream” can be interpreted in many ways. It is also different according to each individual. The “American Dream” has been changed from time to time. The standard of American Dream usually consist of ideas such as equality, freedom, individuality, independence, and prosperity. In general, the term can be called as the pursuit of happiness.

The term was first used by James Truslow Adams in his book *The Epic of America* which was written in 1931. He states:

“The American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is difficult dream for European upper classes interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth position.” (Truslow, 1931:214 - 215).

The term appears and gets popular in American as the great effect of war such as Civil War, World War I and World War II. These caused vast changes in virtually every aspect of American live. Great Depression, poverty, ethnic, friction, crimes, slum areas, high unemployment, immigrant and population problems are some issues that dominate American life in the first half and second half of twentieth century. At the

time American people struggle to survive from the hard condition. They try to reach a proper life in standard of American life in post war era. The standard of American life is called the American Dream.

The idea of the American Dream has dominated American literature since the founding of America. The American Dream is what American people see as their experience of life and hope to make their lives better. Many people have their own idea of what the American Dream is. Also, American writers in the past and present have different views about the American Dream. There are many books, plays and other forms of literature which have defined, explored or denounced the American Dream. Some more well known examples are: *Horatio Alger's books*, *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller and *The Rocking Horse Winner* by D.H. Lawrence.

Clint Eastwood as one famous directors in post war era that gives respect to condition of United States in post war era by directing his literary work in central theme of American Dream. He was born in San Francisco, California on May 31, 1930. *Flags of Our Father* is one his greatest movie that adopted the theme of American Dream.

*Flags of Our Father* is a film directed by Clint Eastwood and written by William Broyles Jr. and Paul Haggis, based on the book by James Bradley with Ron Powers. This film takes about 02.42.00 duration. It's the life stories of the six men who raised the flag at the battle of Iwo Jima which was a turning point of World War II.

The film opens with interlocking scenes from past and present, showing the battle underway and being remembered, with voice over's from survivors. All the major themes are being introduced, although researcher will discover that only later. Then, after a tense prelude at sea, it focuses on the initial American landing, which was just too quiet; no Japanese fire was encountered and the troops advanced inland easily. Suddenly the troops were being ambushed by concealed enemy positions. There were over 2,000 dead on the first day and the majority of them were Americans.

There were five Marines and one Navy Corpsman photographed raising the U.S. flag on Mt. Suribachi by Joe Rosenthal on February 23, 1945. "*Flags of Our Fathers*" is the story of three of the six surviving servicemen, John "Doc" Bradley (Ryan Phillippe), Pvt. Rene Gagnon (Jesse Bradford), and Pvt. Ira Hayes (Adam Beach), who fought in the battle to take Iwo Jima. It was one of the most bloody battles of the war and the picture became one of the most famous pictures of the entire war and it took another month to take this island. Three of the marines were killed in action and the other three servicemen were taken out of the battle and flown home. These men were used to help sell war bonds. It also shows the effect that the memories of war would have on these veterans for the rest of their lives.

The marines lost one third of their whole World War II combat deaths during this battle and almost all of the 22,000 Japanese died, some by their own hands. The film depicts what the true motive was in bringing the three remaining servicemen home. The Government was in difficult situation because they had run out of lenders for the war effort and their funds were drying up rather quickly. The Rosenthal picture that was taken on Iwo Jima sparked the public opinion of the war effort and the money that those men raised turned the financial tide.

Other reasons that make the film interesting are that from the beginning up to ending, Clint Eastwood illustrates clearly the situation and the changes of America in post war era in every aspect of American people such as in social, political, economic, cultural, religious and science technology aspects.

Based on some consideration above, the writer is interested in observing his work. Then, the present writer derives the title “*THE AMERICAN DREAM IN CLINT EASTWOOD FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS: A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH*”

## **B. Literary Review**

Although Eastwood is a famous director in post war era, as long as the writer knows, there are no researches that have been conducted in Surakarta scope to study the Film. There are some of research paper that used sociological approach as the method in analyzing the film as follows:

The Influence Of American Society in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* : A Sociological approach by Daning Zuliani: Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta (2006). In this research she made conclusions that a literary work involves the response of the author toward the social reality where she or he lives in. she creates a solid relation between herself, author's idea in creating the story is inspired by her social reality that becomes her pattern that can be used by author in order to make her ideal society.

The Influence of English Society on Bram Stoker's *Dracula*: A Sociological approach by Andy Sukmawan: Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta (2005). In this research he made conclusions that sociological analysis show the upper class of the social structure in English society has dominated and exploited. The classes bellow them Bram Stoker's criticism is his rationality to restructure the society and to build his ideal society.

## **C. Limitation of the Study**

The limitation of this study is how the American Dream is reflected in Clint Eastwood *Flags of Our Father* viewed from sociological perspective.

#### **D. Problem of the Study**

The problem of the study: How is American Dream portrayed in Clint Eastwood *Flags of our Father*?

#### **E. Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are:

1. To analyze the film in terms of its structural elements.
2. To analyze the film based on the Sociological approach.

#### **F. Benefit of the Study**

The study benefits in two ways: theoretical benefit and practical benefit.

##### **1. Theoretical Benefit**

The research is expected to contribute the development of knowledge, particularly the study in Clint Eastwood *Flags of our Father* especially about American Dream in literary work.

##### **2. Practical Benefit**

In this research, the researcher wants to give some contribution development of literary study. In addition, it would help researcher that want to examine in Clint Eastwood *Flags of our Father* literary work.

## **G. Research Method**

The research method of this research is broken down into four aspects: (1) Type of the Research, (2) Type of the Data source, (3) Technique of the Data Collection, and (4) Technique of the Data Analysis.

### **1. Type of the Research**

The type of this study is qualitative of research because it is subjective research and trussed at values. It is defined as research procedure producing the descriptive data in written text or oral from human and behavior that could be observed. In analyzing data, the writer applies sociological aspect of American society in post war era (1945 – 1968); which is reflected in *Flags of Our Father*.

### **2. Type of the Data and the Data Source**

#### **a. Type of the Data**

Type of data is document based of the film entitled *Flags of Our Father* by Clint Eastwood.

#### **b. Data Source**

The data source used in the research can be categorized into two sources of data. They are primary data and secondary data sources.

##### **1) Primary Data Source**

The primary data source is the text *Flags of Our Father* by Clint Eastwood.

## **2) Secondary Data Source**

The secondary data source is other source related to the primary data such as information about the author's biography, websites about the film, comments, essay and other sources that supporting the analysis of the film.

## **3. Technique of the Data Collection**

The technique of collecting data in this study is documentation. The data from both primary and secondary source are collected and recorded in a sort of document as evidence. The techniques of collecting data are:

- a. Reading the work several times, until the writer get adequate data.
- b. Reading some other resources related to the film.
- c. Giving mark to particular part, which are considered important for the analysis.
- d. Taking notes on the important part both primary and secondary data source.
- e. Classifying the data into group or categories.

## **4. Technique of the Data Analysis**

In this research, the technique of data analysis is descriptive analysis. The researcher tries to describe the structural elements of the film and sociological analysis. The collected data will be interpreted and analyzed in detail through sociological approach. In this case is by

showing the American dream in Clint Eastwood *Flags of our Father* viewed by sociological approach.

## **H. Research Paper Organization**

In order to make the research paper is easier to follow, the research paper is organized into six chapters, as followings:

Chapter I is introduction, covering the Background of the study, the problem of the study, limitation of the study, the benefit of the study, review of the literary study, research method and thesis organization.

Chapter II covers sociological approach containing notion of sociology, the aspect of sociological approach, structural analysis, and theoretical application.

Chapter III includes the social background with the all aspect reality of the American Society in mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Chapter IV includes the structural analysis of the film describing characters and characterizations, setting, point of review, plot, theme, and style of the film and a brief discussion.

Chapter V presents the sociological analysis deal with the problems of the film.

Chapter VI Closing consists of conclusion and suggestion.