

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The United States of America is a superpower country, both in the past and present. The United States receives this assumption because it has a huge impact on other countries. The United States has a significant lead in the most major indicators of national power (Beckley, 2019) due to its political system, economic style, and popular culture. A simple starting point for any attempt to describe popular culture is to declare that it is simply a culture that is generally favored or well-loved by a large number of people (Storey, 2018, p. 5). Pop culture is significant in American society because it gives us a distinct national culture; it helps to bridge our numerous differences and offers us some commonality in an otherwise diverse society (Los Angeles Public Library, 2014).

America's popular culture has many types, such as song, game, fashion, and film. Film is a form of American popular culture and it has numerous genres. Although genres are sometimes linked to the dominance of US film across the world, national variants of genres are also quite important and frequently have a greater global impact (Bondebjerg, 2015, p. 163). The dominance of American films across the world often inspires the Hollywood industry to represent American history as well. According to Hall, representation means using language to say something meaningful about, or to

represent, the world meaningfully to other people (Hall, 1997, p. 15). The representation of American history, especially social movements, in modern film is an interesting way to learn about history. History as a discipline involves our understanding of what nations and nationalism are, as well as the intellectual structure of nations themselves (Suny, 1998, p. 569).

Films and television programs, among other forms of media, provide a significant lens for examining the past and have been used to reveal harsh facts, critiques, and a wide range of social commentary (Bales, 2020, p. 5). Film is a medium to which everyone can relate, and historical film is frequently the most accessible means for people to interact with history (Jenkins, 2020, p. 5). History films influence how people view the past, whether they are fact-based or fictitious, realistic or spectacular (Metzger, 2018). Film may also be considered as a tool used by social movements to affect social and political change (Rastagh, 2012).

The social movements represented in American films show how America's impact on other countries, one of which is America's democratic political system. America is a democratic country that has several important democratic indicators: free and fair elections, freedom of expression, and judicial limits on executive authority (Miller & Quealy, 2017). In democratic countries, civil liberties are often seen as granted freedoms against unreasonable or unfair government intervention, such as interference with people's freedom of expression, right to bear weapons, or freedom of religion (Kollman, 2019, p. 109). Freedom of expression includes political participation between citizens.

Political participation is defined as actions taken by citizens to affect government conduct (Kollman, 2019, p. 375). As a democratic country, America allows the citizens to participate in politics especially social movements.

Social movements are one form of realization of the political participation of American citizens, especially among young people. Social movements, began to emerge during the Enlightenment era in the eighteenth century (Marti & Biglia, 2014). Meanwhile, social movements in America began to expand in the late 19th century (Gregory, n.d.) with the common intention of connecting the voice of the citizens to the authority of the government. Social movements influence the politics of today's democratic societies (Burcher, 2017). Social movements are disputing the role of political parties as the exclusive intermediary between citizens and governments (Burcher, 2017). Social movements can affect public opinion and policy by capitalizing on concerns about innovation and balance, as well as by adjusting tactics to the institutional background (Almenta & Polletta, 2019). Social movements may and have been implemented in numerous ways and at various levels to reshape society (Clark, 2012, p. 4).

Since social movements are important events in American political history, films are used as one of the media to depict those social movements. It is not a new phenomenon for the Hollywood industry to make historical-themed films as representations of social movements in America. There are many representations of social movements in America's films. *Selma (2014)* tells

about the struggle of Martin Luther King Jr. and his friends for 1965 voting rights. *Dolores* (2017) is an American documentary film about the struggle of an activist named Dolores Huerta to fight for racial and labor justice. *Whose Streets* (2017) is an American documentary about the Black Lives Matter movement based on the death of Michael Brown and the Ferguson uprising. The media may be seen as a channel for public opinion to shape regulations (Bouchra et al., 2020/2021, p. 13). The media's portrayal has been crucial for social movements in spreading messages and gaining support (Stover, 2013, p. 56).

One of the examples of an American social movement film is *The Trial of the Chicago 7* which was released in 2020. This film was released by Aaron Sorkin on the Netflix platform. Aaron Benjamin Sorkin was born on June 9, 1961, in New York, United States, is an American writer, producer, and director who brought keen insight and razor-sharp speech to films, television shows, and plays set in turbulent backstage worlds of politics, law, or entertainment. *The Trial of the Chicago 7*, which is based on historical events and revolves around a group of political activists, was a critical success, and Sorkin was nominated for an Oscar Award for his script.

In *The Trial of the Chicago 7*, the anti-Vietnam War protesters known as the Chicago 7 are depicted as fighting. The Chicago 7 is known before as the Chicago 8, which consists of eight individuals who serve as leaders of various social movements, including Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman as leaders of the Youth International Parties (Yippies), Tom Hayden and Rennie Davis as leaders

of the Student for Democratic Society (SDS), David Dellinger as the leader of the Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam (the MOBE), Bobby Seale as the leader of Black Panther, Lee Weiner, and John Froines, who were accused of conspiracy, riots, and crossing state lines with the aim of inciting unrest at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Their demonstrations against the government's announcement that troops would continue to be sent to Vietnam to support South Vietnam against communism:

"I have today ordered to Vietnam the Airmobile Division and certain other forces which will raise our fighting strength from 75,000 to 125,000 men almost immediately. This will make it necessary to increase our active fighting forces by raising the monthly draft call from 17,000 to 35,000." (Lyndon B. Johnson)

The Chicago 7 started a chain of events that ended in the establishment of the anti-Vietnam war protest movement as a key catalyst for change during a turbulent period in American history. These occurrences occurred as a result of a chain reaction of bad consequences of the involvement of the United States in the Vietnam War from 1955 to 1975.

Because of the riotous protests caused by the Chicago 7, American citizens had a variety of views on the anti-Vietnam War movement. The country seems to empathize with the cops more than the demonstrators (Roper, 2016). As a result of a Gallup poll taken in 1968, the great majority of Americans – three-quarters of them, in fact – had a negative view of the protesters, and only one in five had a favorable view (Patterson, 2023). As many as 56% approved of the police reaction to anti-war protests, while 31% did not (Roper, 2016). Despite the Chicago 7's trial for their mistakes in 1968 at the Democratic National

Convention, they suffered legal injustice; however, just 11% of the Americans who were watching concurred, and 81% disagreed with the claim that “the trial was rigged against the defendants and they didn't have a chance from the beginning.” (Roper, 2016).

Based on that public opinion, it is important to discuss the social movement film representation because it portrays certain social movements in the past with the intention of creating a different view of these social movements as part of historical events. Thus, the researcher is going to analyze the portrayal of the Chicago 7 protest movement in the film *The Trial of the Chicago 7 (2020)*. This research uses a descriptive-qualitative method to analyze the research questions. The researcher uses a sociological and semiotic approach as well. The data were collected using the documentation technique. This research aims to analyze the elements that influenced the formation of the anti-Vietnam War protest movement as well as the denotative and connotative meaning behind the portrayal of the movement.

B. Problem Formulation

1. What elements influenced the formation of the anti-Vietnam War protest movement in the film *The Trial of the Chicago 7 (2020)*?
2. What is the denotative and connotative meaning behind the portrayal of the anti-Vietnam War movement in the film *The Trial of the Chicago 7 (2020)*?

C. Objective of the Study

1. To analyze what elements influenced the formation of the anti-Vietnam War protest movement in the film *The Trial of the Chicago 7 (2020)*,
2. To analyze the denotative and connotative meaning behind the portrayal of the anti-Vietnam War movement in the film *The Trial of the Chicago 7 (2020)*.

D. Review of Related Studies

In the review of related studies, the researcher uses the Netflix film *The Trial of the Chicago 7 (2020)* by Aaron Sorkin to describe the anti-Vietnam War protest movement as a form of implementation of American citizen politics and to analyze the portrayal of a social movement in the past in a modern film.

The researcher searched the internet for articles that emphasized social movements, including the anti-Vietnam War protest movement, as well as the representation of denotative and connotative meaning in a modern film. The researcher attempted to discover many sources that were mentioned in articles, undergraduate theses, and dissertations as well.

The first research article on 2017 which was conducted by Earl, J., Maher, T.V., & Elliott, T. discussed *Youth, Activism, and Social Movement* which aims to review work on campus activism; young people's political socialization, their involvement in social movement organizations, their choice of tactics; and the context in which youth activism takes place. This research used a descriptive-qualitative method using the movement society theory proposed by David S. Meyer and Sidney Tarrow. This research found that the scholarship reviewed emphasizes the importance of understanding youth activism, not as a special case

of adult activism. Youth activism is influenced by various factors, such as institutionalized politics, the rise of movement societies and fan activism, and the use of Internet-based technologies. It is crucial for social movement studies to not consider youth activism as indistinguishable from adult activism, as youth face dilemmas and may develop new tactics online and off. The review also highlights the importance of situating efforts within relevant scholarship and developing a broader, more unified, and self-conscious literature on the topic. It is also important to consider intersectionality and the problems faced by young women and youth of color.

The second research is a dissertation on 2022 which was conducted by Bouchra, A., Nesrine, B., & Altaf, T. discussed about *The Impact of US Media on Anti-war Movement: The Case of Vietnam and Afghanistan* which aims to depicting the impact of the U.S. media on the two longest wars in U.S. history; the Vietnam and Afghanistan war. This study is qualitative research based on the descriptive, analytical and historical method. This research found that the media had a significant impact on public opinion, and influenced the course of the Vietnam and Afghanistan wars, ultimately leading to the United States' withdrawal from both countries.

Another previous research about social movement in modern film on 2017 which was conducted by Lott, Martha discussed *The Relationship Between the "Invisibility" of African American Women in the American Civil Right Movement of the 1950s and 1960s and Their Portrayal in Modern Film* which aims to show that the representation of African American women in modern civil

rights film is a result of the “invisibility” that they faced during the civil rights movement in America in the 1950s and 1960s. It will also show how modern film still portrays the civil rights movement as a male-led movement, ignoring the efforts of African American women. This research used a descriptive-qualitative Method to analyze 2 films using the triple constraint theory of racism, sexism, and classism proposed by Diane Nash. This research found that African American women's efforts during the movement have been misrepresented in modern films, largely due to their lack of recognition. The portrayal of African American women in films like *Selma* and *The Help* is criticized for being “pure Hollywood fiction” and diminishing their achievements. The lack of literature on these films highlights the need for more original research and a more accurate portrayal of African American women's roles in the movement.

Besides article about social movement, the researcher also uses previous research about the denotative and connotative meaning of a certain film on 2023 which was conducted by Lestari, Aulia Nur Fitri discussed *Decoding the Denotative and Connotative Elements in Sony Pictures Animation's Short Film "Hair Love" (2019)* which aims to examine the denotative elements in Sony Pictures Animation's *Hair Love* using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. The purpose of this study is to discuss and explain the nonverbal signs or symbols that appear in the film. This research used a descriptive-qualitative method, using the semiotic theory proposed by Roland Barthes. This research found that this study revealed the presence of 23 denotative and connotative elements in the

movie. Overall, this study contributes to the field of semiotics by analyzing the denotative elements in a contemporary animated film using Barthes' theory.

Denotative and connotative meanings in semiotic theory can also be used to analyze social criticism in film. Previous research on 2022 which was conducted by Fanani, Afif discussed *Representasi Kritik Sosial dalam Film The Trial of the Chicago 7 (2020) Karya Aaron Sorkin* which aims to describe the representation of social criticism in the film *The Trial of the Chicago 7 (2020)* by Aaron Sorkin. This research used a descriptive-qualitative method to analyze using the semiotic theory proposed by Roland Barthes. This research found that there are 13 scenes in the movie *The Trial of Chicago 7* that shows the existence of forms of social criticism in the film. Representation of social criticism that shows the social reality that occurs in society in the movie *The Trial of Chicago 7* includes society in the film *The Trial of Chicago 7* including: (1) Representation of social criticism addressed to the government (2) Representation of social criticism addressed to the court (3) Representation of social criticism that shows the discrimination of the black race (4) Representation of social criticism that shows the existence of sexual harassment.

Referring to those previous researches above, the researcher found some research gaps, such as:

1. The first research article conducted on 2017 entitled *Youth, Activism, and Social Movement* by Earl, J., Maher, T.V., & Elliott, T. emphasizes the importance of understanding youth activism and youth activism is influenced by various factors.

2. The research which were conducted on 2022 entitled *The Impact of US Media on Anti-war Movements: The Case of Vietnam and Afghanistan* by Bouchra, A., Nesrine, B., & Altaf, T. and on 2023 entitled *The Relationship Between the “Invisibility” of African American Women in the American Civil Right Movement of the 1950s and 1960s and Their Portrayal in Modern Film* by Lott, Martha discussed about the media’s important role. Both research emphasizes on the impact of media’s portrayal in shaping public perspective.
3. Previous research which were conducted by Lestari, Aulia Nur Fitri on 2023 and Fanani, Afif on 2022 discussed about the denotative and connotative meaning using the semiotic theory by Barthes to identify verbal and nonverbal signs that appear in certain films.

The researcher found that there are several previous studies that discussed about youth activism, social movements, and films representation. However, there are still few studies that discussed about the portrayal of the anti-Vietnam War protest movement in modern films. This research is different than other previous studies because it combines sociological and semiotic approach to analyze the portrayal of the anti-Vietnam War movement in the film *The Trial of the Chicago 7 (2020)*.

E. Research Methodology

In analyzing this research, the researcher uses several methods. The methods are divided into three categories: the source data, which covers primary data and secondary data; data collecting techniques; and data analyzing

techniques. The following are the research methods carried out by researchers in analyzing this research:

1. Data and Source of Data

- a. Main Data

In this research, the main data is based on scenes in the film *The Trial of the Chicago 7* by Aaron Sorkin, which was released in 2020 on the Netflix platform. The historical and political-themed film was released as a way of depicting the political participation of American citizens. The researcher watched the film as a primary data reference to analyze elements that influenced the formation of the anti-Vietnam War protest movement and the denotative as well as connotative meaning behind the portrayal of the anti-Vietnam War movement.

- b. Supporting Data

To help the researcher analyze the film *The Trial of the Chicago 7*, the researcher needs some supporting data. Secondary data is used to find out other perspectives on the research being conducted. There are several sources of supporting data used by the researcher, such as journals, books, articles, and even the internet, to analyze the research questions.

2. Data collecting technique

Data collecting techniques are the procedures used to collect and evaluate various types of data. This research uses a descriptive-qualitative method. Qualitative research may be found in a variety of social scientific fields (for example, sociology, anthropology, political science, or psychology) (Yin, 2016). In qualitative research, meaningful data may be gathered using four methods:

interviewing, observing, collecting and analyzing (materials), and feeling (Yin, 2016). This research was conducted with data in the form of films regarding the representation of the anti-Vietnam War movement in a modern film. The data collecting technique of this research was implemented with the observation method.

Some of the steps that the researcher takes are watching the film *The Trial of the Chicago 7 (2020)* many times to understand the plot, taking notes on several important scenes as main focus in the research in the film that match the research questions, taking screenshot of every important scenes that meet the criteria of research questions and theories used, and lastly assembling the data and the notes that has been taken in one file. The researcher also made observations at the Self Access Center (SAC) at Ahmad Dahlan University to study previous undergraduate theses as reference material in the writing of this research.

3. Data analyzing technique

Data analysis is the process of gathering, modeling, and evaluating data using different statistical and logical methodologies (Calzton, 2023). There are several steps in analyzing qualitative research: compiling, disassembling, reassembling (and arraying), interpreting, and concluding (Yin, 2016). This research takes four steps to analyze the representation of social movement in the film *The Trial of the Chicago 7 (2020)* - compiling, disassembling, reassembling, and concluding.

As this research is based on the descriptive method, the researcher will analyze using qualitative type research. Qualitative research is widely employed in the humanities and social sciences, including anthropology, sociology,

education, health sciences, history, and so on (Bhandari, 2020). To achieve the research objectives, this study will apply several steps. The first step is to collect data in the form of scenes in the film *The Trial of the Chicago 7*. Then the second step is analyze the first research question using political process theory by Doug McAdam. The next step is to analyze the second research question using semiotic theory by Roland Barthes. The last step is to draw conclusions on the research that has been done.

F. Presentation

This research is presented in four chapters. The first chapter consists of several sub-chapters, such as background of the study, problem formulation, objectives of the study, review on related studies, methods of research, and presentation. The second chapter consists of several sub-chapters, such as the theoretical approach, which consists of a sociological and semiotic approach, and the theoretical framework, which includes Doug McAdam's political process theory and Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. The third chapter is the analysis of the research questions, and the last chapter is the conclusion and recommendation.