

**IMPACTS OF SOCIAL CLASSES DISTINCTION EXPERIENCED BY
RACHEL CHU AS THE MAIN CHARACTER PORTRAYED IN KEVIN
KWAN'S "CRAZY RICH ASIANS" NOVEL (2013)
FINAL PROJECT**

**Presented as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement
to Obtain the *Sarjana Sastra* Degree in English Literature**



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Trimarah, S.Sos., M.Si.

STATEMENT OF WORK'S ORIGINALITY

Hereby, I honestly declare that the undergraduate thesis I wrote does not contain the work of part of the works of other people, except those which were cited in the quotations and the references, as a scientific paper should. If my statement is not valid in the future, I absolutely agree to accept an academic sanction in the form of revocation of my paper and my degree obtained from the paper.

Semarang, 30 November 2023



MOTTO

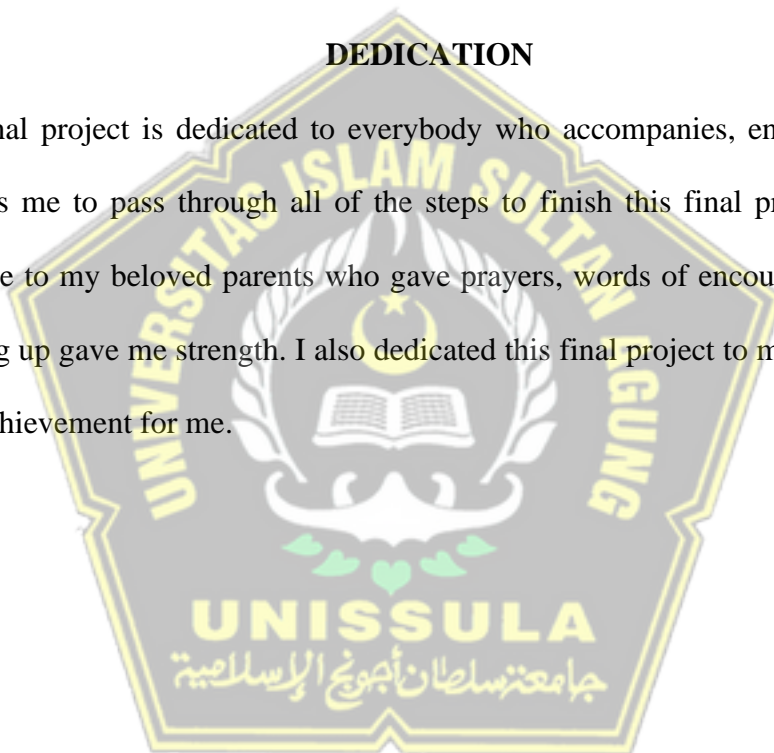
فإن مع العسر إن مع العسر

“So, truly where there is hardship there is also ease. Truly with hardship comes ease.”

(Al Quran Surah Sharh)

DEDICATION

This final project is dedicated to everybody who accompanies, encourages, and supports me to pass through all of the steps to finish this final project. Special gratitude to my beloved parents who gave prayers, words of encouragement, and cheering up gave me strength. I also dedicated this final project to myself, this is a huge achievement for me.



ABSTRACT

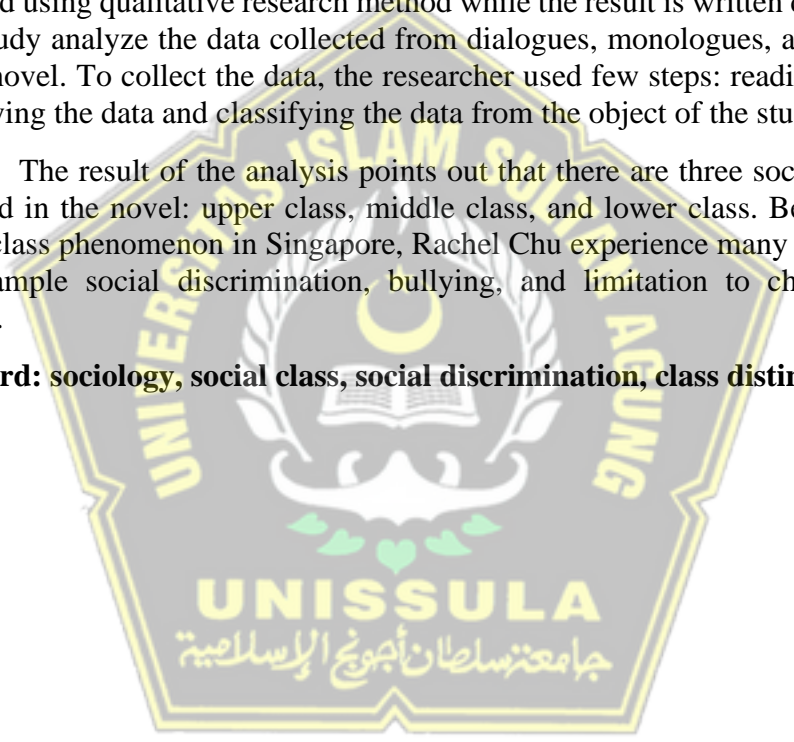
Wahidah, Fadhilatul. 30801900017. “Impacts of Social Classes Distinction Experienced by Rachel Chu as the Main Character Portrayed in Kevin Kwan’s “Crazy Rich Asians” Novel (2013).” English Literature Study Program Faculty of Language and Communication Science. Sultan Agung Islamic University. Advisor: Diyah Fitri Wulandari, S.S., M.Hum.

This study points out the social class and hierarchy in the novel as depicted in the novel and how it impacts the main character of the novel namely Rachel Chu.

This study used theory of social class by Tan Ern Ser and the analysis is acquired using qualitative research method while the result is written descriptively. This study analyze the data collected from dialogues, monologues, and narratives in the novel. To collect the data, the researcher used few steps: reading the novel, identifying the data and classifying the data from the object of the study.

The result of the analysis points out that there are three social classes as depicted in the novel: upper class, middle class, and lower class. Because of the social class phenomenon in Singapore, Rachel Chu experience many disadvantage for example social discrimination, bullying, and limitation to choose marital partner.

Keyword: sociology, social class, social discrimination, class distinction



INTISARI

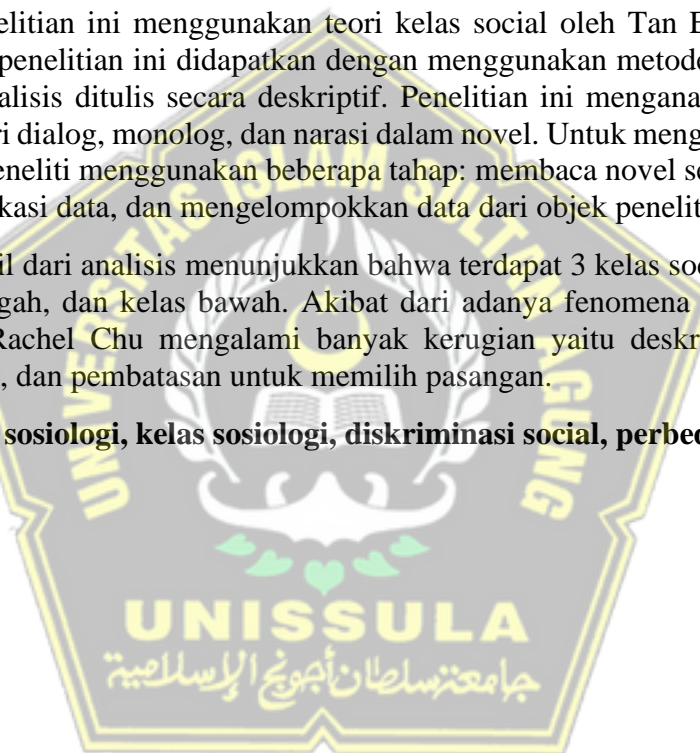
Wahidah, Fadhilatul. 30801900017. “Impacts of Social Classes Distinction Experienced by Rachel Chu as the Main Character Portrayed in Kevin Kwan’s “Crazy Rich Asians” Novel (2013).” Program Studi Sastra Inggris Fakultas Bahasa dan Ilmu Komunikasi, Universitas Islam Sultan Agung. Pembimbing: Diyah Fitri Wulandari, S.S., M.Hum.

Penelitian ini menunjukkan fenomena kelas sosial dan hirarki seperti yang digambarkan dalam novel dan bagaimana hal tersebut mempengaruhi tokoh utama dalam novel bernama Rachel Chu.

Penelitian ini menggunakan teori kelas social oleh Tan Ern Ser. Bahan analisis dari penelitian ini didapatkan dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif dan hasil dari analisis ditulis secara deskriptif. Penelitian ini menganalisis data yang diperoleh dari dialog, monolog, dan narasi dalam novel. Untuk mengumpulkan data penelitian, peneliti menggunakan beberapa tahap: membaca novel secara berulang, mengidentifikasi data, dan mengelompokkan data dari objek penelitian.

Hasil dari analisis menunjukkan bahwa terdapat 3 kelas social: kelas atas, kelas menengah, dan kelas bawah. Akibat dari adanya fenomena kelas social di Singapura, Rachel Chu mengalami banyak kerugian yaitu deskriminasi social, perundungan, dan pembatasan untuk memilih pasangan.

Kata kunci: sosiologi, kelas sosiologi, diskriminasi social, perbedaan social



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First of all, highest gratitude to the Almighty, Allah SWT who has always given me incredible blessing and strength to complete this final project. Second, Shalawat and Salam are always conveyed to our prophet Muhammad SAW who saved us from the darkness and guided us to the right path named Islam.

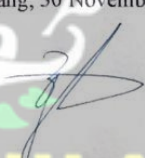
Moreover, I realize this final project would never have been completed without the help, guidance, and support of several parties involved. Therefore, through this opportunity, I would like to express gratitude and appreciation to:

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9. Everyone who might not be able to mention one by one for all their prayers and supports to finish this final project.

This final project is way far from perfection. However, I hope that this study can be useful and become any of a help for readers, especially for those working on their final project.

Semarang, 30 November 2023


Fadhilatul Wahidah

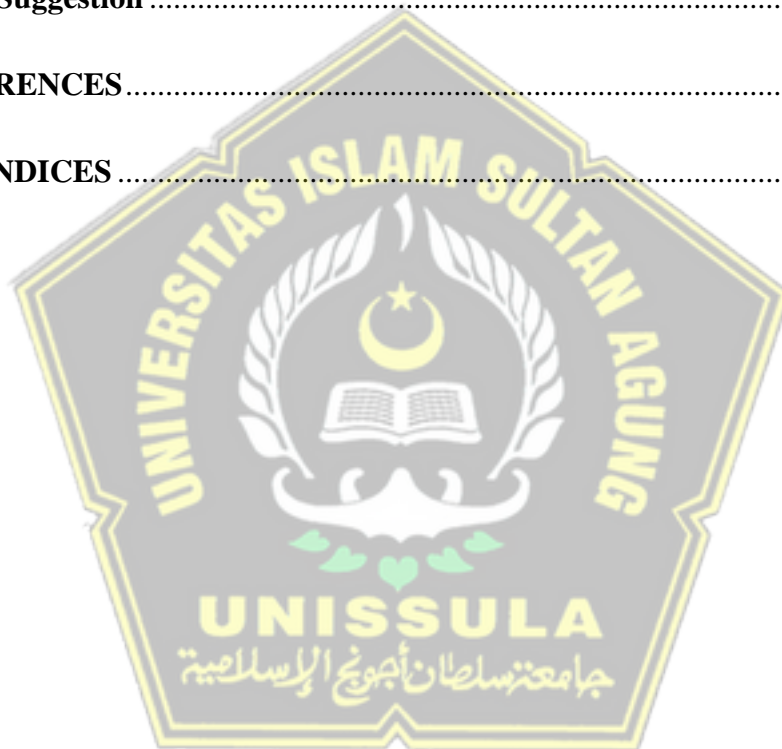
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This Chapter consists of the information of the study that includes the background of the study, problem formulation, limitation of the study, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and organization of the study.

A. Background of the study

Human is social being in which his behavioral relations or activities are mostly involving other men (Tucker 89) and then it constructs the society. A lot of interactions and phenomenon in many aspects occurs within the society such as psychological, economical, cultural, and many more (Sukmawati 3). This phenomenon happens in society to distinguish one individual to another and it is called social stratification.

Social stratification groups individuals in society according to how rich the person is, based on how much income they make, what education level they have, and whom they interact with in daily basis (Weinland 2). In his book about social class, Peter Saunders stated that the concept of stratification has been adapted to refer to the different 'layer' or strata of social groups which are thought to be arranged, one on top of the other, in various human societies (Peter 1).

The grouped individual is then named as class. Giddens proposed the term "class" as a group of people who stand in a certain level of socioeconomic level and in which they can gain a livelihood from (Anthony 210). General classification of society are upper class, middle class, and lower

class in which the upper class stands at the highest level on social hierarchy. In short, people use social class to determine whether someone is in the same class or not.

The concept of social class may also affect how an individual behaves in society and how they perceive their own capacity (Warren 2). For example, individual from high social class often feels more superior than the other class and it results in a higher confidence. This feeling of personal satisfaction can also lead to stronger confidence to perform well in daily basis (Warren 2). The issue about social class is when it is obviously result in many problems within society and often can impact particular individual from lower economic level or social class. The effect of social class is also often harm individual from lower socioeconomic status where being from a lower class often correlated with prejudice against ethnic minorities and immigrants (Warren 3).

Topic of social classes have been widely discussed in any literary criticism and student thesis because it pictures how people in community acknowledge the classification of people in real life. For example, an undergraduate thesis written by Putri (2021) entitled *Social class stratification of the main characters in Stephanie Meyer's The Host* discussed social stratification as a social phenomenon in reality that depicted in a literary work where there is conflict between characters caused by the classification of society using power and economic parameter. The result of the study highlight that unequal distribution of wealth and ownership of

economic resources has caused the lower class to be limited in term of having basic human rights.

Not only causing limitation in opportunity, social class also result in social discrimination because people in certain social level tend to feel more superior and limit their interaction with those who are not in social level. This topic is also been studied by Amaliyah (2016) in her research entitled *The Social Discrimination Represented in J.K Rowling's Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince and Harry potter and the Deathly Hallows*. This study pointed the undermining purpose of social discrimination which is assumed to be the upper class effort to remain in their position in social hierarchy and also to gain more power.

The issue of social class and how it impacts the inferior can also be seen in a novel by Kevin Kwan entitled *Crazy Rich Asians*. *Crazy Rich Asians* novel clearly portray how apparent the existence of the upper class and middle class through the character of Rachel and Nick's Family. This study will also discuss how social class can be a hassle for the inferior depicted through the Rachel character in the novel. This study aims to highlight the importance of preserving social level or social status in society and how it impacts the inferior, which in this research is Rachel Chu. The result of this study will depict the struggle of Rachel Chu being discriminated and treated badly because she is Nick's girlfriend with her middle class background despite being highly educated and respected person. Moreover, this study will

provide information regarding the social class and its impact that might be helpful for the upcoming research in this topic in literature.

Therefore, the study entitles this Research Method with “IMPACTS OF SOCIAL CLASSES DISTINCTION EXPERIENCED BY RACHEL CHU AS THE MAIN CHARACTER PORTRAYED IN KEVIN KWAN’S “*CRAZY RICH ASIANS*” NOVEL”

B. Problem Formulation

According to the background of the study, this study formulates the statement of problems below:

1. What are the social classes reflected in the novel *Crazy Rich Asians*?
2. How social class distinction impacts Rachel Chu as reflected in the *Crazy Rich Asians* Novel?

C. Limitation of the study

To limit this study in analyzing non-relevant topic, this study only analyze the content of *Crazy Rich Asians* novel and related sources. This study focuses in social class and the negative impacts the main character Rachel Chu as depicted from *Crazy Rich Asians* novel.

D. Objective of the Study

Based on the formulation of the problems above, objectives of the research are as follows :

1. To describe type of social classes as shown by the character in the *Crazy Rich Asians* novel.

2. To analyze how social class distinction affects and disadvantaged Rachel Chu's life as pictured in the *Crazy Rich Asians* Novel.

E. Significance of the Study

This study aims to make contribution to the literary analysis and to give insight to the student and public in general regarding the content of the novel. This study also aims to help those who also analyze literature work with topic in social class and distinction. Hopefully, this study can help people who to undertaking the social class and to propose ideas on how to undertaking the social distinction in daily basis.

F. Organization of the Study

This study is divided into three chapters. Chapter I follows with the introduction that consist of the Background of the Study, Problem Formulation, Limitation of the Study, Objectives of the Study, Significance of the Study, and Organization of the Study. Chapter II consist of the synopsis of the novel and the related literature that is used in analyzing the content of the novel. Chapter III consists of the research method that include the types of the research, data organizing, and analyzing the data. Chapter IV presents the analysis of the data acquired from the novel. Chapter V consists of the conclusion of the study and suggestion to support further study in literature.

CHAPTER II

REVIEWS OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter is a review of related literature, it contains synopsis of *Crazy Rich Asians* novel and Theory of Social Class.

A. Synopsis of *Crazy Rich Asians* Novel

Crazy rich Asians novel is a novel about an immigrant couple from Chinese and Singapore that stays in New York named Rachel Chu and Nicholas Young. Rachel is a smart and independent woman whose mother stays in another city and work as a realtor and earn enough money for a living. Her mother knew Rachel and Nick's relationship because Nick have ever come to her house for dinner together. Nicholas Young come from a wealthy family, his parents live in a big house and his grandmother owns a private castle, hidden from the outside world. His closest cousin named Astrid come from wealthier family and her parents owns so many properties.

Rachel and Nick have been in a happy relationship without Rachel knowing about Nick's family background and how much fortune he has. One time, Nicholas invites Rachel to come with him to Singapore to attend his best friend's wedding, also for a holiday because Nick wants to show Rachel a city where he grew up. At first, Rachel hesitates because she barely knows his best friend. Also, Rachel is nervous because he will eventually meet Nick's family in Singapore. The news that Nick will bring a girl home spreads

rapidly until it finally reaches Nick's family and they don't seem happy about it.

When Nick and Rachel arrive at Singapore, his best friend, Colin Khoo and his fiancé greet them at the airport. They spend time together around Singapore and eat dinner at the local market. Rachel seems to blend in well with Colin Khoo and his fiancé, Araminta. Rachel instantly become close with them and she even gets invited at Araminta's bachelorette party while Nick's will go to Colin Khoo's bachelorette party.

At the bachelorette party, Fortunately, Rachel meets Sophia who is kind to her and sometimes she hangs out with Araminta too. But she gets bullied and mistreated by Araminta's friends when she is alone. Rachel is bullied because she is in a relationship with the rich Nicholas Young and accused that she only wants his money while in fact she has no idea how rich Nick's family is. People often talk bad about her and even once put a slaughtered raw fish into her bag. However, Rachel endures all of that mistreatment and tell nothing to Nick. Rachel and Araminta are the only people who kind to her and does not bully her.

When Nick's mother, Eleanor, heard about Nick and Rachel's relationship, she looks as many information as she could about Rachel and her family background. The more she finds out, the more unhappy she is. Eleanor does all she could to separate Rachel from Nick. Nick tells his mother that she wants to get married to Rachel. Eleanor is against that and try to talk

him out. However, Nick is not listening his mother because he is so in love with Rachel. Nick and Eleanor have a heat arguments and Nick become mad to his mother.

Rachel is badly treated by people around her, expect Nick, Colin, Araminta, and Astrid. In all social event, people would talk and gossiping about her because of her economic status and accuse her as a gold digger. Eleanor insists that Rachel is not good for Nick and against their relationship. When finally Rachel tell Nick about it, Nick is mad to them. He wants to comfort Rachel and asks her to leave Singapore, go for a holiday to Malaysia where it will be the two of them. Away from Nick's family who always brag about wealth, properties, and money. In Malaysia, Nick will also propose to Rachel to marry him. However, Nick's mother ruins his plan by coming to Malaysia as well with his grandmother and bring a shocking news about Rachel's father that he is a killer. Rachel is shocked because she is told that his father is dead. She feels betrayed by her mother and become mad. Rachel decided to break up with Nicholas Young because she will not be able to handle the pressure of being his wife with very different social status.

B. Related Theory

B.1. Social Class

Society is not constructed by homogeneous individuals. Each individual come from different background that makes the society stratified. Without noticing, human being practices a social classification naturally in a daily basis. The concept of class in society

distinguished by an individual's power, wealth, occupation, authority, and fortune (Romadhoni 5). Thus, social class refer to the group of individual with the same level of status, for example economic status. The concept of social class is considered important because it deals with relation between social class background that determines an individual's life chances (Thompson 1).

According to the survey report done by Tarn Ern Ser in 2011, social classes are distinguished using several parameters as follows: household income, occupation, success factors, and political participation. Using these parameters, it can be perceived that society is categorized into three level which are the upper, middle, and lower class:

a. Upper Class

The upper class is considered superior in society because they position in the highest level in social hierarchy. They usually owns properties that located in the heart of city and go to an elite school because the government are prepared them to run the country (A Koh 205). People from the upper class also maintain closed and exclusive social activity such as exclusive gathering or clubs with the other people from the upper clas. This exclusivity extends to living in a select city or neighborhoods where they are isolated and protected from their social class inferior (Shirley A. Hill 55). Not only maintaining exclusive and closed association, people from the upper

class is also known of being rich for many generations and their wealth can be inherited to the next generation to come (Natasha 14). They use branded name product and socialize in expensive clubs with people with the same class because luxury products are considered the exclusive privilege of the elite and use it as a sign of distinction and an affirmation of their status (Dion and Borraz 1). Since the people of upper class only socialize within their class, they mostly are friends and intermarried with each other which lead to maintaining a distinctive life style and exclusive groups that sets them apart from the rest of the population (Shirley A. Hill 54). That is why the people is also hard to accept other people who are not from the same social class as a family because they feel that they are more powerful (Nasution 7). Social class has been a major factor in marital partner choice in cultures around the world (McDowell 2).

b. Middle Class

Individual classified in middle class is considered the working class because the earn just enough money for a living from their job (A Koh 199). Middle class consisted of educated people who do not have wealth that last for generations (Nasution et al 7) but they earn money from their professional occupation for example lawyer, doctor, etc (Natasha 13). People from the middle class also do not come from a well known family that have big influences in the society. Middle class people are often have a steady well-paying job,

not a grand but enough to fulfill their daily needs or to run a small business to help their economy (Banarjee and Duflo 16).

c. Lower Class

Lower class stands in the lowest position in the social hierarchy. People from lower class are dominating the social space and occupying subaltern position in the division of labor and having low levels of economic problem, poverty, and unemployment. Study stated that lower class are twice and five times more likely to be unemployed than people from other classes; upper and middle class (Dubois 3). Not only that, members from lower class also often exposed to a problem from other dimension of social life such as housing, education, health, and well being (Dubois 3). Because they do not have enough sources to have a well-paid job, people from the lower class often work on a farm, construction site, shop or a truck with a short-term contracts without insurance or job security. They also have to work overtime and often move from one place to another to look for a job which make it hard for them to learn a deep and professional skills to get a better job (Banarjee and Duflo 10). Their short-term job does not offer an insurance or other benefits such as pension, health insurance, or retirement benefits which force the lower class people to bear the consequences themselves if unfortunate events happen for example sick, work accident, and many more.

B.2. The Impacts of Social Class

The impact of social class for each class is different, it can be positive and negative impact depending on which class an individual is categorized. The positive impact is more likely on the upper social class's side, for example in education. It is easier for people who come from upper level of social class to get an access to the best education facilities in their country. In turn, these students will gain an excellent knowledge and these elite schools will provide core talent that are expected to run the country by the government (A Koh 205). Being a member of upper class can also affect their behavior. Most people from upper class will feel that they are more powerful than the other class and have better sense of control, influence, and conduct that can make them a good leader to run the country (Mills 1).

Moreover, the stratified society will result in inequality and lack of opportunity for middle to lower class in housing, education, health facilities, and even can impact in an individual's well-being. Because of the inequality, people who feel superior is hard to accept and involve people other than their class in social activities (Nasution et al 7), resulting in social exclusivity and social class based discrimination. Social class discrimination is often happen in society and can lead to a negative effects for the inferior class on their mental health (Wu et al 2). Even some studies stated that perceived social class discrimination is highly interconnected with symptoms of depression and anxiety

among individuals from socioeconomically disadvantaged families (Wu et al 2).

Not only discrimination, one of the worst impacts of social class is bullying. It is not always happen in silence and often encouraged by the complex relationship between individual involving certain group or community (Liu et al 13). Being bullied is defined as a deliberate, repeated or long term exposure to negative acts performed by a person or group of persons regarded as having higher social status than the victim (Pernielle et al 1). Bullying can also be performed by individual from a wide range of age, from childhood to adulthood. In addition, several studies found that bully-victims are also more likely to come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, including low maternal education, maternal unemployment (Tippet and Wolke 1) and even family background (Liu et al 13).

Another impact of social class is the limitation to choose a partner. Although it is not impossible, people from high social status face limitation in looking for a wife or husband other than from their own social class because social class influences how couples and families define themselves, their values and expectations, and the ways they organize their daily lives (McDowell et al 2). Social class shapes familial and interpersonal relationships and is considered an important variable in marital satisfaction. That is why people from upper social class often take this class status into serious consideration

when it comes to choosing a life partner. Furthermore, social class has traditionally been a major factor in mate choice in cultures around the world (McDowell et al 2).



CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter explains how the research is conducted to solve the problem discussed in this study. This chapter consists of three sub-chapters that includes; types of the research, data organizing, and analyzing the data.

A. Types of Research

This study uses qualitative research method to solve the problem. The data acquired from the novel and presented in this study are in a form of sentences and words without numerical data. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials such as case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, historical, interactional, and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individual's lives (Denzin and Lincoln 2). This type of research aims to acquire meanings, to make sense of, and to interpret meanings to understand behavior, perceptions, and motivations of the subject of the study (Royadi 86).

B. Data Organizing

B.1. Data Collecting Method

This section explains the steps used in organizing the data acquired from the novel:

B.1.1. Reading the Novel

To acquire the data, the first step is to read the novel multiple times to fully understand what happens in the story. The novel, *Crazy Rich Asians*, has been read intensely and repeatedly, aiming to understand the contents of the novel and to search for the data to be analyzed.

B.1.2. Identifying the Data

Data identification is required to decide which part of the novel that best corresponds with the reference used in this study. Data that are identified are mostly dialogues and narratives. The selected data will be marked so it will be easier to classify the data.

B.1.3. Classifying the Data

In this step, the identified data are organized and separated into categories according to the problem formulation, it could make the data used more organized and easier to understand so that the comparison between the data could be seen clearly. The identified data are separated according to which problem formulation it answered.

B.1.4. Inventorying the Data

The classified data then put into an inventory. In this step, all the data needed to conduct this research are put into a table. This table consists of the data are than called Appendix.

B.2. Types of the Data

To conduct this study, there are two types of data that are used:

1. Primary data, are the data that is directly collected from the first source or the first hand that is related to the object of the study. These data are acquired from the *Crazy Rich Asians* novel in a form of dialogues and narratives.
2. Secondary data, are the data that acquired from other scientific writing or paper including scientific journals, websites, previous papers and even books.

C. Analyzing the Data

The final step in this research is Analyzing the data. In this step, all the data are analyzed and then presented into this study in a written form. The data analyzed in this study revolves around social class and its impacts as depicted in the *Crazy Rich Asians* novel.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter describes the findings and discussion and is divided into two sub chapter; types of social class depicted in the novel, and how social class distinction impacts Rachel Chu as reflected in *Crazy Rich Asians* novel.

A. Types of Social Class reflected in *Crazy Rich Asians* novel.

Class in society is divided into several level and it distinguish people based on their economic and social status. Using these parameters, class arranged individuals in with whom they socialize and interact with in a community (Weinland 2), for example: person with great educational background have privilege to get a job with a good salary, which make them to interact with people with the same educational level. Another example, people with a great fortune and wealth often attend an exclusive event with other wealthy people which will limit their interaction to within their social level only.

Phenomenon of social class distinction in society is quite apparent because each class have their own characteristics and behavior. In the *Crazy Rich Asians* novel, the social classes are well described and depicted in the novel as explained below:

1. Upper Class Society

Quoted from Shirley A. Hill (55), upper class constitutes a closed society of people who rarely venture beyond their own class in forming

friendships and associations. That exclusivity extends to living in select cities and neighborhoods where they are isolated (and protected) from their social class inferiors. How the upper behave Shirley A. Hill stated can also be seen from the novel quote below:

“Don’t you know my husband’s family by now? They would rather die than appear in print,” Eleanor said.

“What, have they become too grand to be seen mingling with other Singaporeans?” Nadine said indignantly.

“Aiyah, Nadine, there’s a difference between being grand and being discreet,” Daisy commented, knowing full well that families like the Leongs and the Youngs guarded their privacy to the point of obsession. (Kwan 27)

The quotation above shows that Eleanor’s husband’s family maintain a private lifestyle and prevent their family and wealth to be exposed to the public for a variety of reasons. Some people value their privacy for personal and security reasons. Wealthy family also curtail interact with other classes because they only want their environment to be only for equal people. Furthermore, people from upper class will only socialize with people within their class to establish an exclusive society.

The dialogue that also describe social class behavior is seen as follow:

Eleanor flipped open the lid of the chest eagerly and began methodically taking out the stacked black velvet trays. One of her favorite parts of Thursday Bible study was looking at Carol's latest acquisitions. Soon the bed was lined with trays containing a blinding array of jewels. "What intricate crosses— I didn't realize they did such good setting work in Burma!" (Kwan 28).

When people want to become high class community, they must use branded name product and goes to expensive club to do interaction or relationship with people in the same class (Utama 6). From the quote of the novel, it is implied that Eleanor is a member of an exclusive Bible study which consist of rich people that she knows well and in the end of the study, one of them will display a collection of luxury jewels that they get from abroad. Based on Utama, it can be seen that Eleanor displays the usual activity of people from upper class.

Not only maintaining interaction with people with high social status in certain club and party, people from upper class also love to wear high end brand to show where they stand in a social pyramid. It is seen from the quote of the novel below:

The hostess laughed, admiring the delicate Grecian folds of Astrid's buttercupyellow gown. "Wait a minute ... is this an

original Madame Grès?” Nathalie asked, realizing that she had seen a similar dress at the Musée Galliera.

“From her early period,” Astrid replied, almost embarrassed to have been found out.

“But of course. My goodness, Astrid, you’ve outdone yourself once again. How on earth did you get your hands on an early Grès?”

Nathalie asked in awe. Recovering herself, she whispered, “I hope you don’t mind, but I have put you next to Grégoire. (Kwan 41)

According to Dion and Borraz (1), luxury draws on social stratification and is considered the exclusive privilege of the elite, who use it as a sign of distinction and an affirmation of their status. From the quote of the novel above, it can be implied that Astrid who comes from the upper class always wears a luxury the dress is. Based on the reference, luxury brands are often used by and as privilege of the upper class who can purchase it. Luxury stuff is also used to distinguish whether a person is come from upper class or not.

Similar example is also depicted in the quote below:

Astrid walked back to her car in the parking garage of the mall. She unlocked the door, got in, and placed the black-and-cream-colored parchment shopping bag subtly embossed with STPHEN

CHIA JEWELS on the passenger seat beside her. She sat in the airless vehicle, which was getting more stifling by the second. She could feel her heart pounding so quickly. She had just bought a three hundred and fifty thousand dollars diamond ring she didn't much care for, a twenty-eight thousand dollars bracelet she quite liked, and a seven hundred and eighty-four thousand dollars pair of earrings that made her look like Pocahontas. For the first time in weeks, she felt bloody fantastic (Kwan 110).

From the quote above, it is seen that Astrid always buys luxury brands to maintain her lifestyle as an upper class. She bought many expensive stuffs in one go with a single payment although she does not really care about how it looks. She only cares that the price of stuffs is expensive and will add a value of her glammers look when she wears them. According to Dion and Borraz, luxury brands are kind of privilege of the elite because it is only them who can buy them which can set them apart from the rest of the society.

Regarding that luxury brands as a class distinguisher can also be seen in a quote of the novel below:

“Well. I criticize you when you're wearing something that looks so cheap. It's a disgrace to me. It's a disgrace to your children.” Fiona shook her head in exasperation. “You don't have any idea what looks cheap, Eddie. Like that shiny tux you're wearing. That

looks cheap. Especially when I can see the safety pins holding your pants on.” (Kwan 217)

From the quote of the novel above, it is seen that people from the upper class really care about how they looks, that is why they need luxury branded stuffs for example clothes to show that they are wealthy. People from upper class use a luxury clothing brands when they attend a social event to show that they are elite family and feel assured of their appearance as upper class people. When they look like wearing a cheap stuff, they feel ashamed and it can wound their pride. It is seen from the quote of the novel how important luxury brands is for them.

Not only using their privilege and buy luxury brands, being an upper class is also maintaining wealth so it can be inherited for generations. A wealthy upper class people is a group of families, whose members are descendants of successful individuals (elite members) of one, two, three or more generations ago. These families are at the top of the social class hierarchy; they are brought up together, are friend, and are intermarried one with another; and finally, they maintain a distinctive style of life and a kind of primary group solidarity which sets them apart from the rest of the population. (Shirley A. Hill 54)

The quote above is very well implemented in the quote of the novel below to depict how is the life of the upper class:

“Oh? Who is her family?” Marie-Hélène asked in astonishment.

“The Leongs are a Chinese family from Singapore.”

“Ah yes, I’ve heard that the Chinese are getting quite rich these days. In fact, I read that there are now more millionaires in Asia than in all Europe. Who would have ever imagined?”

“No, no, I’m afraid you don’t quite understand. Astrid’s people have been wealthy for generations. Her father is one of Laurent’s biggest clients,” Isabelle whispered.

“My dear, are you giving away all my secrets again?” Comte Laurent de L’Herme-Pierre remarked as he rejoined his wife in the receiving line. (Kwan 42).

In Singapore and in many other countries, people in the upper class usually came from and inherited their parent’s wealth who have been rich from the previous generations. It can be seen from the quote of the novel that Astrid’s family is an elite family who have always been rich for many generations. The reference also stated that people from upper class usually socialize with people in the same class. They always interact with each other in the daily life, networking in a business, and being linked in another certain ways.

Another example of how the upper class maintain their wealth for generation is also can be seen from the quote as follow:

And that was the other, more essential detail about Astrid: she was born into the uppermost echelon of Asian wealth— a

secretive, rarefied circle of families virtually unknown to outsiders who possessed immeasurably vast fortunes. For starters, her father hailed from the Penang Leongs, a venerable Straits Chinese* family that held a monopoly over the palm oil industry. But adding even more oomph, her mother was the eldest daughter of Sir James Young and the even more imperial Shang Su Yi. Astrid's aunt Catherine had married a minor Thai prince. Another was married to the renowned Hong Kong cardiologist Malcolm Cheng (Kwan 44).

It is seen from the quote that Astrid's family maintain an exclusive and private lifestyle that can part them from other social class in society. They own a massive palm oil that can add to their wealth. People from upper class usually have a rich parents or family member. They also married people in the same class to maintain their wealth and social status, resulting in a wealth that can last for generations.

Choosing an equal partner is important to maintain or even level up wealth. That is why people from the upper class is quite strict in choosing their marital partner. According to Shirley A Hill (61), Historically, one of the key characteristics of affluent families has been their role in choosing the marital partners of their children, largely as a strategy for maintaining and perpetuating wealth. It was not unheard of for marriages to be arranged by parents, but in most cases, parental

influence was limited to making sure their children associated only with those from the “right” families.

It is clearly depicted in a quote of the novel below:

“Married off? Does that mean it was an arranged marriage?”

“Yes, very much so, plotted by my grandfather T’sien Tsai Tay and Nick’s great-grandfather Shang Loong Ma. Good thing they actually liked each other. But it was quite a masterstroke, because it strategically bound together the T’siens, the Shangs, and the Youngs.”

“What for?” Rachel asked.

“Oh come on, Rachel, don’t play the naif with me. For the money, of course. It joined together three family fortune and kept everything neatly locked up.” (Kwan 157).

It is seen from the quote of the novel that Nick’s grandparents were married off because both of them come from wealthy family. Based on the reference, people from the rich family often intermarried within their class to maintain wealth, social status, and even joining wealth.

About these phenomenon can be seen through the quote of the novel as follow:

“AH-LA-MAAAK! Colin Khoo is Khoo Teck Fong’s grandson!

He comes from one of the reeee-chest families in the world! And

Araminta Lee— she’s the supa- model daughter of Peter Lee, one of China’s reeee- chest men, and Annabel Lee, the luxury hotel queen. This is like royal weddeeng!” Neena gushed (Kwan 122)

The reference stated that people from upper class often intermarried with people in the same class who have the same economic privilege. They do so because they want to maintain their social status and wealth. It is seen from the quote of the novel that Colin Khoo who came from rich family, is getting married with Araminta Lee who is the daughter of rich family as well. Intermarried within the same social status is important to maintain their social position and is not a rare phenomenon.

2. Middle Class Society

In the novel also describes people from social classes other than the upper class as well. It mostly describes the background of Rachel Chu that has been raised by an immigrant single mother that works so hard to put foods on the table for her since childhood, making her mother a middle class woman that most of her income come from her job, not an inherited fortune. Nothing seems more middle class than the fact of having a steady well paying job. While there are many petty entrepreneurs among the middle class, most of them do not seem to be capitalists in waiting. They run business, but for the most part only

because they are still relatively poor and every little bit helps. (Banarjee and Duflo 16)

It is seen from the quote as follow:

“Guess who just closed the deal on the big house on Laurel Glen Drive?” Kerry Chu boasted excitedly in Mandarin as soon as she picked up the phone.

“Wow, Mom, congratulations! Isn’t that your third sale this month?” Rachel asked.

“Yes! I broke last year’s office record! You see, I knew I made the right decision to join Mimi Shen at the Los Altos office,” Kerry said with satisfaction. (Kwan 33)

Based on Banarjee and Duflo that middle class people is not as poor as the lower class because they have a steady well-paying job. It is seen from the quote of the novel that Rachel’s mother earn money as a realtor that can provide a steady salary and she is satisfied with that. Her income is mainly based on her job salary and not from the wealth that has been inherited by her parents. She live off of her job salary for food, paying rent, and fulfilling daily basic needs.

3. Lower Class Society

Rachel’s mothers struggle as a lower class is also depicted in the novel. As an immigrant single mother, she often migrates from place

to place, taking young Rachel with her and look for a job to earn money. Lower class refer to a social level which most likely to suffer economically. They switch jobs often because they do not have specific skills to have stable job. According to Banarjee and Duflo (10). Casual workers work on a farm, a construction site, a truck or a shop, on short term contracts with no job security. The hours worked by the poor often fluctuate tremendously over time with the availability of jobs, and the poor frequently migrate temporarily to find a job. This makes it harder for them to acquire occupation specific skills. In addition, these jobs do not come with health or retirement benefits, which adds to the risk the poor have to bear.

It is seen from the quote below:

Back when she was child, it seemed like every year or so her mother would answer a classified ad in World Journal, the Chinese- American newspaper, and off they would go to a new job in some random Chinese restaurant in some random town.

Images of all those tiny boarding- house rooms and makeshift beds in cities like East Lansing, Phoenix, and Tallahassee flashed through her head. (Kwan 63).

In line with Banarjee and Duflo, people who come from the lower class often work in a shop and for a short-term period. They also often migrate to one to another place to work. It can be seen from the quote

of the novel that Rachel's mother worked at many Chinese restaurants that make them to move to other cities frequently. It is a harsh job and it does not provide benefits such as health, on job injury compensation, or pension.

Another example is also shown in the quote below:

“You can't expect other families to be like us. I was so young when I had you —nineteen — we were able to be like sisters. Don't be so hard on Nick. Sad to say, but I was never very close to my parents either. In China, there was no time to be close— my mother and father worked from morning till night, seven days a week, and I was at school all the time.” (Kwan 63).

The reference stated that the lower class often work over time to earn money and it can be seen from the quote of the novel that Rachel's grandparents worked for their daughter almost every day in a week without rest. This quote shows that people from lower class struggle working a hard job to fulfill their needs. They do not have the same privilege as the people from middle and upper class who can work comfortably and having no hard time in their workplace.

B. The Impacts of Social Class on Main Character 'Rachel Chu' in *Crazy Rich Asians* novel

The existence of social class in society have caused several impacts to the lower class. Although there are positive and negative impacts of the

phenomenon of social class distinction, this study only present the negative impacts that are found in the novel. Because of class distinction, opportunity in any aspects of life have been limited to only those with a privilege and result in inequality. Uneven distribution of opportunity will also result in superiority and social class based discrimination (Nasution et al 7). According to Wu et al (2), social class discrimination often resulted in negative effects for the inferior in term of their mental health.

As an individual who come from a middle class background, Rachel Chu often get bullied and treated badly by people from upper class because she dated Nick who comes from wealthy family. Being bullied is defined as a deliberate, repeated or long term exposure to negative acts performed by a person or group of persons regarded as having higher social status than the victim (Due, Pernille et al 1). In addition, several studies found that bully victims are also more likely to come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, including low maternal education and maternal unemployment (Tippet and Wolke 1). It can be seen from the quote of the novel below:

As Rachel was trying on the white blouse in the dressing room, she overheard two girls in the next dressing room chatting away.

“Did you see what she was wearing? Where did she get that cheap looking tunic top— Mango?”

“How can you expect her to have any style? Think she gets it from reading American Vogue? Hahaha.”

“Actually, Francesca says that she’s not even ABC— she was born in Mainland China!”

“I knew it! She’s got that same desperate look that all my servants have.”

Rachel realized with a start that the girls were talking about her. Shaken, she rushed out of the dressing room, almost colliding into Araminta.

“Are you okay?” Araminta asked.

Rachel quickly recovered. “Yes, yes, just trying not to get caught up in the panic, that’s all.” (199)

Due to a sense of superiority, people with high socioeconomic status often look down on lower socioeconomic individuals. As stated on the quote of the novel, Rachel experiences a verbal bullying when she goes to Araminta’s bachelorette party where all of the people there comes from a wealthy family. It is seen from the quote of the novel that the people are gossiping and talking bad thing about her because she does not come from a rich family which result in Rachel feeling panic.

Another example of bullying quoted from the novel is depicted in the quote as follow:

She turned on the lamp by the table and opened the front flap of her bag. She screamed, jerking backward in horror and knocking over the table lamp.

Her bag was filled with a large fish that had been badly mutilated, blood seeping out from its gills. Violently scrawled on the vanity mirror above the chair in fish blood were the words “CATCH THIS, YOU GOLD-DIGGING CUNT!” (Kwan 227)

According to Rezapour et al, bullying behaviors divided several categories; physical (including hitting, pushing, and kicking), verbal bullying (covers name calling, teasing in a hurtful way), relational or social (social exclusion), and cyber bullying that usually done through the internet. It is often repeated by certain people to the same victim as regarded as having higher social status than the victim. The quote above depicted a time when Rachel try to have a good time at the bachelorette party although she does not get along with the people there because of class distinction, and the people there do bad thing to Rachel by putting a chopped raw fish into her bag and found out that there is a curse in the mirror that written for her. This result in a panic and horror for Rachel. According to Wu et al, because of the bad treatment Rachel is having a bad anxiety and panic attack as a result of social class discrimination and bullying.

Being a middle class individual, raised by a single hard working mother, and at the same time a girlfriend of Nick who came from upper class

has caused not only a social class discrimination but also limit her freedom to love and make a family with the person she loved. According to Nasution (7), social class has made one person different with other people in term of level and where they stand on the social hierarchy, resulting in superiority that make certain people cannot accept others to enter their family. In addition, social class in one of the most crucial determinants to choose marital partner and is strongly suggested to consider it thoroughly. It has been a major factor in mate choice in cultures around the world (McDowell 2). That is why people from upper class often marry with the same social status to reach a marital satisfaction and protect their wealth.

This phenomenon is depicted from the novel as quoted below:

Eleanor was seething inside, but she tried to speak in a measured voice. "I'm sure Rachel is a nice girl, but she can never be your wife."

"And why is that?" Nick leaned back in his chair, amused by the absurdity of his mother's words.

"She is just not suitable for you, Nicky. She does not come from the right background."

"Nobody is ever going to come from 'the right background' in your eyes," Nick scoffed. (Kwan 364).

Nick has always been raised and live among his wealthy big families since he was just a baby. His family does not expect him to be in a serious relationship

with a girl who come from socioeconomic status very far below them and planning to marry her. It is seen from the quote of the novel that Nick's mother is against the idea of Nick marrying Rachel Chu because she thinks she is not on the same social level as them. According to Nasution, social class become a crucial factor in choosing a partner in marriage. People from upper class usually feels superior and only accept people within their class to be family. Nick's mother cannot accept Rachel to enter her family as Nick's wife because Rachel is only a middle class woman. She does so because she wants to keep her family away from any disgrace.

One more example of this issue is quoted as follow:

Eleanor shock her head and continued in a graver tone, "Nicky, you don't understand. She will never be accepted. And I'm not talking about your dad and me— I'm talking about your dear Ah Ma and the rest of the family. Take it from me— even though I have been married to your father for thirty-four years, I am still considered an outsider. I am a Sung— I came from a respectable family, a rich family, but in their eyes I was never good enough. Do you want to see Rachel suffer like that? Look at how they have frozen out that Kitty Pong girl!" (Kwan 365).

Nick's mother tries so hard to convince Nick not to marry Rachel. People from upper class is strict in term of choosing marital partner and it usually always been arranged by the family. The family insist Nick to split

with Rachel and marry a woman from the same socioeconomic status. Nick's mother stressed that if he marries Rachel, she will never be accepted by the whole family. Rachel comes from middle class family, and even if she marries Nick, she will be considered as an outsider forever because upper class family only accept those from the same social status.

Another example of the consequences of being in a relationship with people from a different level is also depicted by the quote as follow:

“it is one thing to be polite to your guest, but I can assure you that if they really thought she had any chance of being your wife, they would not be so nice.”

“That's nonsense.”

“No, Nicky, that is a fact,” Eleanor snapped. “Ah Ma will never allow you to marry Rachel, no matter how accomplished she is.

Come on, Nicky, you know this! It's been told to you a thousand times since you were a little boy. You are a Young.” (Kwan 365)

Because of social class distinction, Rachel will not be able to marry Nick and accepted by the whole of Nick's family. Rachel is a smart and educated woman full with so many achievements. However, because of she comes from a middle class, she cannot get the freedom to choose marital partner as she wishes. Nick loves Rachel but his family, who come from upper class, will never accept Rachel and being nice to her even if she was Nick's wife.

Aligned with Nasution's statement, this shows that upper class people who feel superior cannot accept other people from lower class to enter their family.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This chapter consist of conclusion of this study based on the result of the analysis in chapter four and followed by suggestion.

A. Conclusion

The conclusion of the problems in this study is based on the analysis in the chapter four. This study analyzes social hierarchy and how it affects the main character of the *Crazy Rich Asians* novel using the theory of Singaporean sociologist namely Tan Ern Ser. Sociologist Tarn Ern Ser stated that there are three levels of social class categorized by family wealth, power, income, and education; the upper class, middle class, and lower class. The social distinction has oppressed the inferior and result in many disadvantages for example inequality, uneven distribution of economic and educational opportunity, and social discrimination.

The analysis portrays that there is an apparent social class distinction in Singapore that classified the society into three categories: upper class, middle class, and lower class. The novel shows that social classification is based on the structural and generational wealth, power and influences, and behaviors. The phenomenon of social classification depicted in the novel has resulted in disadvantages experienced by the main character, Rachel Chu. Because of she comes from a middle class and is in relationship with an individual from the upper class, Rachel experienced social discrimination which is verbal bullying, unpleasant treatment, and social exclusion. She also experienced

limitation in choosing marital partner because the upper class people refuse to take a lower class individual into their family.

B. Suggestion

This study has result in a few suggestion for the readers that can be done to support further analysis in literature.

The first, further study of Crazy Rich Asian novel can be done by highlighting the story of another in the novel using the same hypothesis. The novel also clearly described other supporting character, Astrid's husband, that experienced the discrimination because of social class distinction. Instead of the main character, analyzing supporting character can also add more variations because not like Rachel, he managed to married Astrid despite the class stratification.

Secondly, the social class distinction in the novel can also be analyzed using Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony. This theory can be used to point out that the ruling class maintains its power by creating a dominant culture includes values, beliefs, and norms that support the interest of the ruling class while suppressing alternatives culture and ideologies.

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