

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

The definition of crime is widely complex according to what field defines it. The Oxford Dictionary defines crime as “disobedience act in society and punishable by the law”. As a social wrong, sociologist John Gillin (2014) defined crime as “an act that has been shown to be actually harmful to society, or that is believed to be socially harmful by a group of people that has the power to enforce its beliefs, and that places such act under the ban of positive penalties” (31). From these statements, it can be concluded that any harmful, violent and non-violent crime, to individual or group in society can be identified as a crime in sociological perspective. The way to achieve it also argued by Merton (1938) that crime is a possibility for individual to achieve economic success, and for those who has limited legitimate way to attain it, they might end up in illegitimate way .

There are always crime in society, as a phenomenon, which is also inseparable from literary works. John Scaggs (2005) had mentioned in *Crime Fiction* that “crime has nevertheless been the foundation for an entire genre of fiction for over one hundred and fifty years” (1). This social issue is caused by numerous factors from the variety of element, such as economic, poverty, mental disability, and so on. By exploring the phenomenon of crime or deviance founded in literature, I believe it will lead the readers to get a better understanding of social issues at the time the literary work was written.

Literary works reflect the social issues of its time. Moreover, *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck is one of literary works that reflects social problem during

Great Depression 1930s such as prostitution, violence, and murder. Some expert argues the social problem happened in this era is caused by economic or poverty factors, as Wilson found that “after an individual becomes unemployed, and if that individual is likely to stay unemployed for some time, the likelihood of them resorting to crime increases...” (qtd. in Marshall 2012). Furthermore, Crime Prevention Bureau (1932) revealed poverty and ill-health to be the greatest incentives to crime among the average person during the period .

Crime case in *Of Mice and Men* is being argued constructed by some causes. Devi and Saranya (2016) stated in their article entitled *Economic Crisis in the Novel Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck* that “George did what was best for himself and for Lennie, and he could not watch Lennie die miserably in pain, getting brutally killed by George” (53), it seems as a justification for George to kill someone. Moreover, the factor that makes Lennie commits crime in the novella have been studied in law school, as Blume, Johnson and Millor from Cornell Law School (2012) mentioned in their article titled *Convicting Lennie: Mental Retardation, Wrongful Convictions, and the Right to a Fair Trial* :

“if Lennie were arrested for a similar crime today, he would be at an extreme disadvantage. Once arrested, Lennie would (probably) be read his *Miranda* rights, but he almost certainly would not understand them or be able to clearly invoke his rights.” (967)

Both articles above are the examples of how crimes in *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck defined as controversial case which has been studied across academic field. It is because the realistic depiction of the scene, eye for the eye punishment, and the causation itself.

Furthermore, to identify crimes of the story in this research, it will be analysed by focusing on the causes and prevention of crime. The social expectations are believed as the causes of crime committed by white Americans, and the non-involvement of African American as the effect of it. There are three motives underlying this research:

Firstly, the crime cases in literary works bring certain social issues. By analysing the causes of the crime and deviance in literary works, it perhaps give the reader a better knowledge of how it happened, constructed and the way people avoid it.

Secondly, In this research, I intend to examine the response of social expectations during Great Depression as reflected in this novella and also how the involvement of African American toward the crime depicted. Based on those motives above, this research entitled **Crimes in *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck**

Thirdly, crime analysis in literature is still rarely done, especially in sociological approach. I hope this research can be a reference and contributed to further study in English Department, Andalas University.

1.2. Identification of the Problem

Some U.S history experts showed the causes of high crime rates during Great Depression era in America 1930s, and the outcome showed that economic factors plays limited role, in this case, it was contrast with prohibition and gangster are believed as main role (9). In order word, crime has a complex motives and at the same time also represents the social condition.

In literature, Steinbeck had reflected the different ideas and perspective about the fundamental causes, how crime emerged in society, and the involvement of people to the crime during this era which reflected through his famous literary work, *Of Mice and Men*. In regarding crime issues, white American had their dominant criminal image and reflected as people who pursued and depressed by social expectations. Moreover, African American is just as a spectator of the issues. Therefore, the analysis examined the factor of criminal acts of whites Americans and the motive that made African American not being involved to crime.

1.3.Scope of the Research

Crime is a complex phenomenon happened in society. It might involve multiple theories to identify its causation and prevention. Furthermore, I limit this research into two discussion. First, I focused on how crimes are constructed by social expectations reflected in the story. Second, I also analysed how African American did the preventive action to avoid crime and deviance act reflected in *Of Mice and Men*.

1.4.Research Question

This research answered the following question:

1. How does strain triggers the white Americans to commit crime as reflected in *Of Mice and Men*?
2. How does the non-involvement of African American to crime during Great Depression reflected in *Of Mice and Men*?

1.5.Objective of the Research

The purpose of this research is to identify the causes of crime committed by white Americans reflected in the novella and examine as it happens during Great Depression in U.S.A 1930s. Furthermore, this study also identifies the non-involvement factors of African American to crime as reflected in the story.

1.6.Review of Previous Studies

The first review to strengthen this research is an article by Alshiban (2012) from Al Imam University, Saudi Arabia entitled *Exploring Criminology in Literary Text: Robert Browning an - Example* . This article explored how to explore crime by using criminology theory in literary works.. He explored the poem by Robert Browning “The Laboratory” (1844) by using two discipline; criminology and literature. His analysis seems to challenge literary critics to broad their perspective. Furthermore, De River used criminal psychology to analyse the female sadistic topic of the poem. This research just discusses the female sadistic within the poem without its context. He explained the cases by the causation, which is jealousy, from every indicative act of the murderer. Lastly, Alshiban stated that “In the future, one hopes, literary criticism of crime pieces in literature will emerge as an active participant in the field of crime since poets such as Robert Browning certainly make this possible” (68). Although this article did not mentioned the any literary theory, which made a weak point of view, as the primary theory, it is be a references about how to analyses literary works by combining with outer theory.

The next article is by Scott Vollum and Carry D. Adkinson (2003) from College of Criminal Justice, Sam Houston State University, entitled *The Portrayal of Crime and Justice in the Comic Book Superheroes Mythos*. The analysis is using sociological approach and then the theory of criminology by Sutherland; the representation of the law, the breaking of the law, and the reaction to the breaking of law are considered. This article analyse the superheroes mythologies of the popular comic book. This article interpreted relation of crime produced and the role of superheroes in the comic to America society, law and crime. Superman represent as law obedience, and Batman as a law maker on his own. The article might support this research in the way to interpret crime in fiction works within its context.

The third is a thesis by Suwarsih (2012) from Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni, Universitas Semarang. Her thesis entitled *Kriminalitas Dalam Novel Kembang Kantil*. This thesis classifies the types of crime in the novel by applied criminology theory by W.A Bonger and the other supported theory of criminology. This thesis shows how to analysing crime in literary works by using sociological of literature by Ian Watt. It is can be a reference about the way to analyse crime in literary work, although the discussion of this research just on the surface, referring to much criminological perspective. The conclusion of this research is that crime is a result of social interaction and individuals. The tendency of the factors is occurred in economic aspect. Furthermore, this thesis found there are three kinds of crime in the novels; violence, property crime and white collar. The analysis of this thesis is focusing on the issue in the text.

The fourth review is a thesis by Maysam Bahaa Saleh (2013) from English Department, College of Arts, Iraq entitled *The Hero as a Victim of Bullying and Mobbing: A Critical Analysis of John Steinbeck's of Mice and Men* . He applied the psychological and sociological studies especially bullying circle by Olweus to analyses the effect of mobbing and bullying in the novella that generated some cases such murderer and violent verbally or psychically, and the position of victims in the novella. This article might help to acknowledge the reader about some causes of the crime that happened during Great Depression in the United States at the time the novella was written.

The last article is by Chen Lihua (2005) from Central China Normal University, China, entitled *A Marxist Perspective to John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men* . This article focused on the element of social protest and the theme that will be further developed in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Using Marxist perspective, this article concludes that the causes of the suffering experienced by the migrant worker are social system and the pressure of capitalist system. The reason behind the crime that happened in the novella is justified by George's decision to not make his friend torture by Carlson. As another article, this article still examines American dream from each character. The writer also mentioned the discrimination by White people on Afro-American, but not in crime discussion.

Based on reviews above, I conclude that analysing crime in literary work that supported by criminology theory, the root is from sociology, is seldom analysis for literary works. Thus, crime in *Of Mice and Men* is will get deeper analysis by using sociology theory by Robert K. Merton. Related to *Of Mice and Men* , there is not yet fundamental analysis of the unbalance depiction of crime in

the novella. Thus, crime in *Of Mice and Men* commonly argued by some researchers due to mental illness and then justified the execution. The justified argument is to saving Lennie from his misery.

1.7.Theoretical Framework

This research refers to several theory in order to get deeper analysis of crime in *Of Mice and Men* with its context. Therefore, it start from mimetic theory by Abrams, sociology of literature by Alan Swingewood, and then theory which really relevant to analyse crime, in this case, is strain theory by Robert K. Merton.

1.7.1 Mimetic Theory

Mimetic theory is one of primary literary theories which emphasizes the literary works as a presentation of reality. Since this theory come from word “mimesis” that Plato suggest “mimetic art is remote from reality” (168), In literature, Baktir states that “it considers the historical and etymological background of the form” (168). Thus,Literary works is a reflection of the real world, Abrams (1999) states that “traditional mimetic critics had claimed that literature imitates reality by representing in a verbal medium the setting, actions, utterances, and interactions of human being” (294). Its representation of real world might reflects certain social issues such as crime, of the time literary work was written, that can be analysed.

1.7.2 Sociology of Literature

In order to analyse the relationship between literary works and its context, social problem can be a point of the discussion. Hence, the sociology of literature

is the basic study using in this research to analyse the social problem such as crime in the novella with its context. Swingewood and Lawrenson (1972) states that “it is a task of the sociologist of literature to relate the experiences of writers imaginary character and situation to the historical climate which they derive” (13).

Furthermore, the analysis in the sociological approach in this research was divided into the context overview of this novella; Great Depression, and crime as the social issue that was analysed by using strain theory by Robert K. Merton.

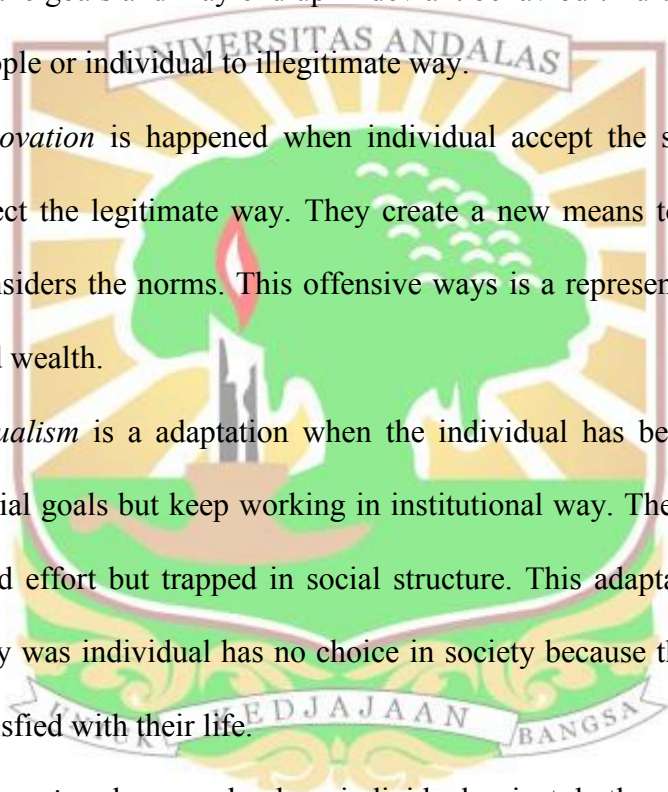
1.7.3 Strain Theory

Crimes in this research was examined by using one of theory which is relevant to crime, strain theory by Robert K. Merton. He is an American sociologist who coined theory that discussed the pressure causes the frustration or stress which puts by society on individual. This theory further developed by Robert Agnew (1992). To strengthen this approach in analysing crime, Reader and Goss (1959) in a dissertation entitled *Young People and Depression: A Sociological Perspective* by Emmar Bernes argues that “sociology did not, develop out of attempts to explore conditions of health and disease. Like psychology, it arose in an effort to describe human functioning and can contribute to medicine by means of studies, which relate specific social factor and process of particular issues” (2003:9). Based on that, sociology theory can be the best tools to examine crime in literary work toward sociology of literature.

Robert K. Merton (1938) in his article entitled *Social Structure and Anomie: American Sociological Reviews*, positioned that crime by strain, the difference between one’s economic aspirations and their actual means of

achieving those aspirations (194). He classifies the mode of social adaptation to strain into five types:

1. *Conformity* is an availability of someone to adjust themselves to the norms of society in order to achieve the goals, it based on what society value as a goals. They might give hard effort to attain the expectancies, optimize their ability. For those who lack of ability, they felt depressed by the goals and may end up in deviant behaviour. Furthermore, it lead people or individual to illegitimate way.
2. *Innovation* is happened when individual accept the social goals but reject the legitimate way. They create a new means to attain without considers the norms. This offensive ways is a representation of power and wealth.
3. *Ritualism* is a adaptation when the individual has been abandon the social goals but keep working in institutional way. They do not put an hard effort but trapped in social structure. This adaptation emphasize they was individual has no choice in society because they already feel satisfied with their life.
4. *Retreatism* happened when individual reject both social goals and institutional way. They were true alien in society who are not sharing common frames of goals or value. They are included in society but seems does not exist.
5. *Rebellion* is when individual creates or changes the social goals and its means with a new one based on their own version. They tried to put and replace the existed social order.



These adaptation to strain did are not directly explain criminal activity. These adaptations were the basic response to the strain. It will be clearly explained when the adaptation meet the certain strain. To that end, Agnew clarifies the characteristics of the strain could trigger the adaptations above, which lead to a criminal offence.

There are three characteristic of strain that tend to lead to criminal involvement. The first characteristic is the perceived in *magnitude* of the strain, which is influenced by a number of features, such as quantity, duration, recency, and centrality. (Agnew 2001)

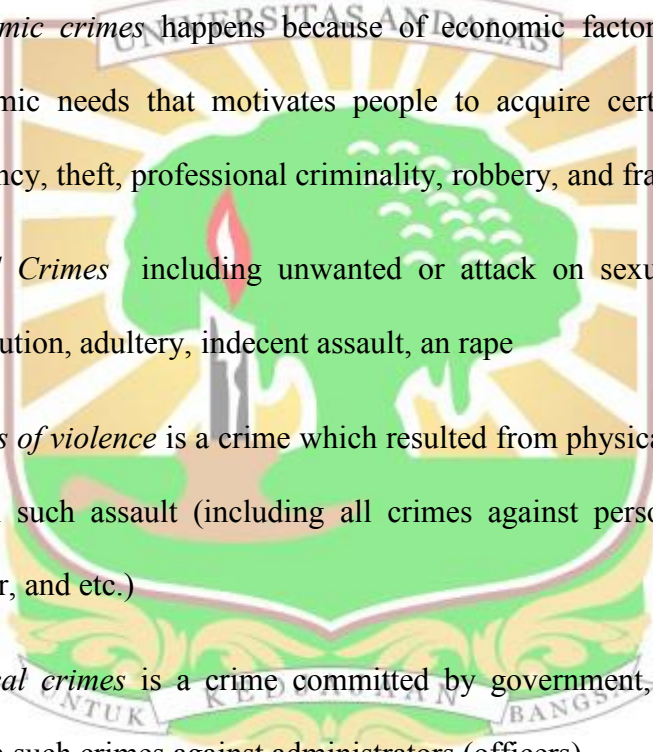
The second characteristic is strain seen as *unjust*, either infliction or being in breach by given society's norms and values of what constitutes justice, thereby increasing the possibility for individual with *low social control* to cope with the strain through criminal behaviour (Agnew, 2001). The last is *pressure or incentive for criminal coping*. it is a situation where criminals is influenced by peers group: reinforced and modelled.

In facing strains, Agnew point out how the individuals overcome their pressure. The fundamental of strains is emotion. *Negative Emotion*, experiencing one or more of the three characteristic of strain increase the possibility that a person will experience negative emotion. Negative emotion creates a need for correction, such escaping from the strain. In this discussion, I will analyse the strains and other use only on the things that really stood out, because the overlapping between adaptation may happened as the action of individuals.

Crime has a broad classification and definition according to what field they derived. Therefore, to identify types of crime, in this analysis I tend to referred to J.L Gillin's crime classification. .

1.7.4 Types of Crimes

Mr. Gillin in *Criminology and Penology* 1926 classified crimes into simple and universal categories :

- 
- a. *Economic crimes* happens because of economic factors such poverty, economic needs that motivates people to acquire certain things such Vagrancy, theft, professional criminality, robbery, and frauds
 - b. *Sexual Crimes* including unwanted or attack on sexual contact such prostitution, adultery, indecent assault, an rape
 - c. *Crimes of violence* is a crime which resulted from physical injuries to one person such assault (including all crimes against person such battery, murder, and etc.)
 - d. *Political crimes* is a crime committed by government, or the political system such crimes against administrators (officers)

In conclusion, the tension or strain in society affects the behaviour of society or individual that lead to crime, strains increase the tension of negative emotions like anger and frustration. These emotions create pressure for corrective action, and crime is one of the possible response. Otherwise, in emotion, people seeking an escapism for their depression. I use this theory to analyse how the strains can culminate in crime and the way people in the face of such tensions.

In this discussion, specifically I analysed the causes and effect of each crimes based on the significance adaptation that lead to crime; emotion, innovation, conformity, and rebellion, because not all of adaptation can be included. Each of these adaptations represented the causes of each crimes. furthermore, I put it sequentially start from non violent crime to violent ; prostitution, battery, and murder. The last sub-chapter is the non-involvement or *ritualism* of African American to crime.

1.8. Method of the Research

This study is basically a qualitative research, which all findings is written in the form of word and paragraph instead of the number. All of the results are aimed to give the depiction of the causes of crime and the preventive act of it. In conducting this research, three steps are used.

1. Collecting the Data

The primary data of this research is narrative from *Of Mice and Men*. The primary data is supported by secondary data taken from various literary books, article journal, reference of the theory, internet websites that are related to the crime during Great Depression in America 1930s and the research of the literary work.

2. Analyzing the Data

The second step is analyzing the data. In analyzing the data there are some steps are used. First, the writer reads the novella and the reverential method is used to identify causes of crime in historical context and crime reflected in the novella, and also how Steinbeck reflects the preventive act of African American of crime in the novella.

3. Presenting the Data

The last step is presenting the result of the research. The Qualitative method of this research is presented by descriptive method into word and paragraph. By using this method, I show the causes of crime during Great depression era in the United States 1930 reflected in this novella.

