

**THE PORTRAYAL OF THE FIGHTERS' AMERICAN DREAM AS SEEN IN THE  
DOCUMENTARY VIDEOS OF AMERICAN 'MMA' SPORTS**

**UNDERGRADUATE THESIS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

American MMA sport has been well-known over the world, mainly in its famous fighters. Actually, some of them have dreams, familiarly called American dream. This undergraduate thesis describes the values of American Dreams for the fighters. This research focuses on analyzing the value of the American dream depicted from the stories or journeys of several MMA fighters in America to achieve their dreams and the development of sport documentary films in the past few years. Therefore, this research has two main objectives to describe the American Dream of MMA's fighters and to analyze the portrayal of the fighters' American Dream in video documentaries of American MMA sports.

The research was under the qualitative method majoring an interdisipliner approach of American Studies. The primary data were documentary videos of American MMA Sports. Meanwhile, the secondary data were from books, article, and online source. These data were analyzed by the American Studies approach both social and culture, focusing an American Dream Theory and Theory of Popular Culture. The researcher watched the documentary videos several times by taking soome notes from dialogues and monologues. Then those keyword along with the citation were used for the source of data in analyzing.

The result of this research finds that American MMA sports as the part of popular culture because they are easily found in everywhere, give satisfaction, make the profit for promotion, and reflect American society of entertainment. Also, the second result finds that the fighters of MMA also have American Dream as follows life, liberty pursuit of happiness, individual freedom of self reliance, equality of opportunity, and material wealth along with hardwork.

Keywords: *American Dream, Popular Culture, MMA Sport, Documentary Videos*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Sport is a form of activity that involves the body and is usually competitive in nature which aims to improve one's physical skills and abilities while providing entertainment for the spectators or the doer of the sport itself (Australasian Sport Information Network, 2021). Not only preparing physically, sports must involve mentally and in the game there are procedures or rules. Sports can be done individually or in teams, in a sports competition there are winners and losers. In social life, sport can be a human self-expression. Some sports that involve physical ability as a big controller in game results, namely football, basketball, MMA, and others.

Several sports that emphasize physicality and attacks above are very popular with many people, especially back in the days of Ancient Greece, in 648 BC they created a martial sport called Pankration ("all powers") at the Olympics

where two fighters combined wrestling, boxing, and street fighting. They are prohibited from striking and biting, a match is declared over if one fighter loses by K.O or points from the judges. At that time pankration became famous in the Ancient Olympics, but in 393 BC the Roman official, Theodosius I, banned the holding of the Olympic Championships because of this pankration (Stenius, M., 2014).

Even though pankration was no longer popular, a fighting sport emerged in Brazil called vale tudo ("anything goes") in 1925. Vale Tudo was introduced by Carlos and Helio Gracie, who started to set up brazilian jujitsu martial arts courses in Rio de Janeiro. In the 20th century, MMA (Mixed Martial Arts) is growing rapidly, especially in the Northern United States. An organization called UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) from Las Vegas changes this fight program not only in terms of tournaments by the various skills of the fighters, but also shows it in terms of

business, brand and content in various media around the world. Royce Gracie (son of Helio Gracie) became the first fighter to win all 3 matches in the first UFC event held in Denver, Colorado, which could be called “UFC 1” (Stenius, M.,2014).

In this study, the researcher tried to explain the sport of MMA’s as a part of popular culture and analyzing the portrayal of the MMA fighters American dream as the object of the study because UFC as a world popular promotor is a fighting show accompanied by entertainment. There are many challenges they have to deal, one common problem is struggling to build a statement to attracting the fans about journey of the match or made good/bad personality of the fighters. Hence the researcher wants to get in a deep review how is the sport of MMA being a part of popular culture in America and what is actually for the fighters’ dreams with the values of American dream in this study.

This research will formulated and focus on how is the sport of MMA being a

part of popular culture in America and how are the portrayal of the fighters’ American Dream values as reflected in America MMA sport documentaries videos of American MMA sports. Therefore, the researcher will explain the popular culture and analyze the american dream values of American MMA sports.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

The researcher implemented in minimum two theories which from different disciplines, Those categorized key words were analyzed by using the theory of Popular Culture that used to represent the existence with development of Sport especially MMA documentary movie and the theory of American Dream represent the journey to reach fighters succeed, to answer the questions of the research. In this case, the researcher uses a descriptively qualitative method supported by an American studies approach of an interdisciplinary study. The last, the researcher makes a conclusion based on the data collected from this research.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### A. MMA sport as part of Popular Culture

1. Popular Culture is create feeling of satisfaction and happy feeling



The satisfaction of American popular culture is temporary. It means that they can feel happy or sad, it depends on situational and conditional. Like in the picture, they are happy because their fighter of MMA won the fighting. They can express their winning by sounding 'yell ...yell' and mention the fighter name. Popular culture remains as it is today because it is enjoyed by the masses. An important ingredient to be enjoyed is that it gives satisfaction to people (Dukut, 2018). In the excitement of an MMA fight, crowds of fans or spectators support each other's idol fighters who are competing with MMA skills and techniques in the octagon.

The audience will get satisfaction if the fight is not boring, whether they lose or win if the fight is very fierce it will make the audience satisfied and happy.

2. Popular Culture is is easy to obtain because it is available and can be found anywhere



Advertising is a marketing strategy for every company to promote a product or work. The purpose of advertising is to make consumers interested in making purchases and advertising is also to inform everyone that it not only markets its products but also builds a good image of the company. In picture 3.1.2, an advertisement from the world's largest MMA sports promoter, UFC, promotes its event on a billboard in New York Times Square where many pedestrians and tourists can see it.

The way they provide information and persuade consumers to buy tickets to the UFC event in Times Square is a way of selling advertising at a different level. It can be said that they must have promoted the event on various social media and TV, plus the big Times Square billboard. Advertisements from MMA sports can be found anywhere, which makes it easy for consumers to watch their events.

3. Popular Culture is reflection of a society

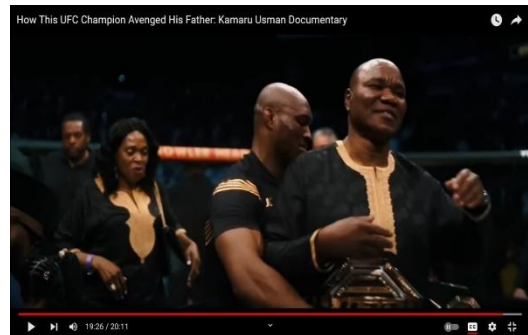


Respect is everything in various aspects, one of which is in MMA Sport competitions. Giving high five, shaking hands, or even a hug to an opponent after a fight seems to be praised to our society. Apart from that, in MMA competitions it is often seen that fighters thank God after

winning or losing a match. It's a natural inclination in human beings. A reflection of the MMA sports community, even though in a few minutes they try to beat each other, they still exist respect each other, are ethical, appreciate a martial arts culture and also uphold sportsmanship in sports.

## B. American Dream Values

### 1. The Pursuit of Happiness



This scene, where an MMA fighter from Nigeria named, Kamaru Usman, defended his championship title for the 6th time after defeating a fighter from the United States, Colby Covington, in 2021. The researcher found that Kamaru Usman successfully sought his final joy after he wanted to invited his father to watch him compete.

Kamaru Usman is an immigrant from Africa who moved to America when he was

8 years old. At that time he was living his life as a new student at an American school, being treated racistly by his friends. But he devoted all his emotions to diligently practicing wrestling at school. Meanwhile, his father worked as a pharmacist and ran an ambulance business company in Dallas. Then bad things came when his father, Muhammed Usman, was taken into custody on charges of multiple false claim frauds committed by his ambulance company then he was sentenced to 180 months in prison.

After the match with Colby, Usman was invited to the famous and well-known podcast belonging to Joe Rogan, a podcaster and host from the UFC. Usman said that his father was innocent and felt he had been cheated because of an agreement with an external firm that handled billing for his ambulance business. From the podcast, a lawyer named Gray Tesh tried to help Usman file an appeal to court aimed at reducing his father's prison term.

With the help of then president Donald Trump, Muhammed Usman was finally free

after spending 11 years in prison. A happy feeling came to Kamaru Usman and his family, his efforts to become an MMA athlete and UFC welterweight champion did not escape his father's blessing. In the end, he was able to fulfill his wish to bring his father to see him compete and win and put him on the championship belt.

## 2. Individual Freedom and Self Reliance



In this scene, the researcher sees the efforts of Charles Oliveira to maintain their liberty and freedom from his internal disease since he was a child. Long before he knew Brazilian jiu-jitsu and MMA, little Charles grew up and developed differently like other normal children. When he was 10 years old, Charles was told by a doctor that he would not live like other normal people. "Every time the season changes, he always

feels many illnesses attacking his entire body." After being checked by a doctor, he experienced arthritis and a heart murmur.

The doctor also said that if he could no longer play football, after that he would have to be hospitalized for 2 years. Charles' parents worked in 2 places, after finishing work they returned to the hospital to accompany Charles and did not even go home for 1 month. Several days passed, Charles met his uncle, Paulo, and he was invited to practice Brazilian jiu jitsu. During practice, Charles felt no pain and he felt that "This is what I want".

This scene proof that while Charles practicing Brazilian jiu-jitsu gives him freedom after all that ill problem he passed. His uncle was convinced that one day Charles would become a champion and would provide happiness and freedom for his family while living in a slum like a Favela.

### 3. Material Wealth and Hardwork



The researcher found that Conor McGregor had received his first salary as a UFC athlete and also a bonus for his good performance in the octagon. In the press conference after the match, he seemed like he couldn't believe that he would get this much money and couldn't believe it would happen to him. Because before he entered the UFC and started his career as an amateur MMA athlete, Conor still borrowed money from social welfare agencies. In this scene relate because Conor McGregor's "hard work" finally gets "material gain" as the value of the American Dream.



#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The researcher draws conclusion in this chapter after discussing and analyzing in the previous chapters. From the discussion of chapters 1 to chapter 3, and specifically the problem formulation which is divided into two, namely What is the American Dream of the Fighters and How the portrayal of it in MMA Documentaries Video.

In this research, it appears that the researcher focuses on the values of the American Dream which was born from immigrants who came to America to achieve new dreams and hopes and to achieve a worthy life goal, liberty and pursuit of happiness. The American Dream means that every person from any background has the right to choose how he or she lives in a country with the freedom to express opinions clearly without any pressure from other parties.

Based on the data that the researcher analyzed, screen captures, and movies or video footage containing the values of the American Dream and the motivation in the struggles of several main characters. There are some data that are analyzed, namely MMA Documentary Films and Videos from three UFC fighters. From this data, researcher takes the values of the American Dream such as Life, Liberty, Pursuit of

Happiness, Individual Freedom, Equality, and Material Gain. Those taken by screen captures then the researcher explains all and adds the title also time when the data was captured.

What is explained above provides several reasons why the researcher chose Documentary Videos of American MMA Sport in this undergraduate thesis to be analyzed because some of the data presented is a true story of the main character to create happiness in his personal and family life and also make the community they come from proud. also America. Researchers chose data from three UFC fighters as the main characters in their documentary, including Conor Mcgregor, Charles Oliveira, and Kamaru Usman. The research bring any gaining for moral motivation of going popularity and wealth through hard work and dream. By having dream, everyone has any motivate to personal his or her goal. And he or she must believe to be self reliance for bringing about the dream.

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