

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

In this world, there is a country that almost controls all aspects of prosperity, namely America. For a long time, America has been known to be a country entirely of capital compared to other countries. America has tremendous power in various fields, including economics, military, technology, and culture (Joseph Nye, 2016).

America has often been nicknamed the *Dream Country*. This nickname emerged because America offers many opportunities for everyone who is serious about being there. America provides opportunities for everyone worldwide to get the prosperity they dream of, regardless of race, ethnicity, and background, so many people from other countries flock.

America offers many opportunities, a concept emerged called the *American Dream*. The *American Dream* is a dream of equality, justice, and democracy for the entire nation rather than a pursuit of personal wealth (Diamond, 2018). *American Dream* has many definitions, and the meaning will differ for each person. Still, it can be interpreted as everyone's hopes or aspirations to achieve prosperity in America.

America is often called *a government entirely of immigrants* because many people from other countries come to America. According to data from the *Pew Research Center*, in 2018, around 44.8 million immigrants came to America and made up 13.7% of the total population in America. This percentage shows that the

number of immigrants in America has increased almost three times compared to 1970, namely 4.8%. Immigrants have come to America since the beginning of the country's history.

In the 17th century, Europeans arrived in northern America for new lands and better economic opportunities. In the 19th century, many European immigrants came to America, especially from Ireland, Germany, and Italy. In the 20th century, immigrants began arriving from various countries, including Asia, Africa, and Latin America. From these countries of origin, Asian immigrants make up 25% of the entire foreign-born population in America. These Asian immigrants come from several countries, such as the Philippines, China, India, Vietnam and Korea. After upheaval at home, most Asian immigrants wanted to improve their economic situation or obtain a better education to improve their future lives (Min, 2011b). Therefore, immigrants have built a social life and played an essential role in the history and development of America.

However, not all immigrants have the same fate and experiences in America. Some immigrants enter the country as highly educated, wealthy, and fluent in English, but others do not (Ashe & Wilson, 2019). Immigrants who are highly educated, wealthy, and fluent in English tend to have a more significant opportunity to achieve prosperity in America, so they have a greater chance of getting good jobs, higher education, and increasing economic income. Meanwhile, other immigrants who do not have higher education, are poor, and are not even fluent in English tend to have fewer opportunities and, therefore, often experience economic difficulties and social discrimination.

Even though the *American Dream* is considered a promising opportunity, it turns out that many people fail to make it happen. Representations of the *American Dream* are also frequently depicted in literary works. The *American Dream* ideology is also usually inserted in literary works to convey it, one of which is through films (Meraviglia & Nurhayati, 2020). A film is a work of art displayed through media to share information or messages with many people so that a letter from the filmmaker is conveyed.

One film that represents the *American Dream* is *Minari*. *Minari* is a drama film released in 2020 and directed by Lee Isaac Chung. *Minari* depicts the story of a South Korean immigrant family who recently moved from California to rural Arkansas around the 1980s, looking for new opportunities. They moved to the village because they dreamed of building a Korean vegetable plantation on fertile land for a better life. As the film progresses, the Korean immigrant family faces many challenges in achieving the *American Dream*, which in the film is depicted as complicated and not easy to achieve. Immigrant families have to face various difficulties, such as adapting to a new culture, hostile weather, and business competition.

In addition to this story, in the same time frame, according to the *Online Migration Information Source Journal*, the Korean immigrant population grew significantly in 1980 to 290,000 from only 11,000 in 1960 after the American Immigration Act of 1965 removed all immigration restrictions. In addition, this increase was also fueled by military, economic, and political ties between the United States and South Korea. Therefore, the researcher chose the film *Minari* as

the object of research because this film strongly depicts the reality of Korean immigrants who migrated to America, especially in that year, to achieve their dreams.

According to IMDB (Internet Movie Data Base) sources, the film *Minari* has 122 awards and 245 nominations. Some are Best Foreign Language Film in the Dallas-Fort Worth Film Critics Association Awards 2021, Best Motion Picture - Foreign Language in the Golden Globes USA 2021, and Best Ensemble Cast Nomination in the Boston Society of Film Critics Awards 2020. The film also has an audience rating of 7.7/10. This indicates that *Minari's* film is quite attractive to the audience because it is very realistic in describing the situation of immigrants in America, as evidenced by one of the user reviews on IMDB, which said it is *a real immigrant story*. Therefore, researchers are interested in uncovering how *Minari's* film represents the *American Dream* as the reality of immigrants in America.

Sociological approach and psychological approach are applied in this study. The sociological approach using Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory can provide insight into the socio-cultural values that can help Korean immigrant achieve the *American Dream*. This theory analyze the cultural values of American society as described in the book *American Ways: A Guide for Foreigners in America* (2002) by Gary Althen, namely individualism, freedom, competition, privacy, equality, informality; future, change, and progress; humanity; time; achievement, action, work, and materialism; as well as directness and firmness, as a way for immigrants to succeed in America. The psychological approach using

the Hierarchy of Needs Theory by Abraham Maslow can help readers understand the *American Dream* because readers can see how self-perception, motivation, struggle, and psychological conditions affect individual efforts to achieve the *American Dream*. The two approaches are relevant and interrelated in revealing how Korean immigrant family tries to achieve the *American Dream* in the film *Minari*.

The researcher chooses the topic of the *American Dream* in the film *Minari* because it can provide deeper insight into how the *American Dream* can influence a person's life, especially immigrants who move to America. In the film *Minari*, the *American Dream* is depicted in the context of migration, the character's experiences as a minority, and the struggle to succeed amidst various existing conflicts. This can allow analysis of the emerging symbols, narratives, and attitudes of the characters that emerge so that America's social and cultural reality can be revealed. The researcher hope that the development of American studies can deepen understanding of the *American Dream* to open insights into equality, justice, and opportunity for all individuals, regardless of social, economic, or ethnic background.

B. Problem Formulation

Based on the research background, the Researcher formulates the problem in the form of a research question as follows:

1. How are the representations of the *American Dream* in the film *Minari*?
2. What are the motivations of Korean immigrant family in achieving the *American Dream* in the film *Minari*?

C. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To analyze the representations of the *American Dream* in the film *Minari*.
2. To reveal the motivations of Korean immigrant family in achieving the *American Dream* in the film *Minari*.

D. Review of the Related Studies

There are four studies related to this research, namely, *Evolution of the "American Dream" as a Value System and its Representation in Hollywood Films* (Yuliana Melkumyan, Seda Mkrtychyan, 2023), *Failure in Gaining the American Dream in Sam Shepard's Curse of the Starving Class* (Irwan Sumarsono, Rindrah Kartiningsih, Nise Samudra Sasanti, Raden Roro Dyah Woroharsi Parnaningroem, 2023), *Lois Zamperini's American Dreams as Reflected in the Film Unbroken* (Masruriati Khairiah, 2020), and *The Representation of Identity Crisis in Minari: A Critical Discourse Analysis* (Ignatius Indra Kristianto, Aprilia Kristiana Wahyuni 2022).

The first is *the Evolution of the "American Dream" as a Value System and its Representation in Hollywood Films* (Yuliana Melkumyan, Seda Mkrtychyan, 2023). In this research, researchers analyzed the representation of instrumental values of the *American Dream* in Hollywood films (2018-2021) with family, political, social, and other themes. In their research, researchers believe that Hollywood films have become a propaganda tool to spread the concept of the *American Dream* and influence local and foreign citizens. Therefore, researchers are interested in discussing this matter. The Researchers assume that although

these films convey the same values as the *American Dream*, many also show differences from the *American Dream*. From this analysis, researchers argue that hard work is not always possible to achieve the *American Dream*. This can be seen from the existing social disparities and the different challenges for each person. This research has in common with the researcher's research that they both discuss the values of the *American Dream*. The difference is that the researcher focuses more on the contradiction between the *American Dream* and the social reality in America depicted in Hollywood films. In contrast, this research is more about revealing how the *American Dream* emerges from the motivations that exist within individuals.

The second is *Failure to Get the American Dream in The Curse of the Hungry Class by Sam Shepard's Curse of the Starving Class* (Irwan Sumarsono, Rindrah Kartiningsih, Nise Samudra Sasanti, Raden Roro Dyah Woroharsi Parnaningroem, 2023). Based on the research, researchers focus on understanding the challenges and difficulties in achieving the *American Dream*. Researchers review the failure of an American family to achieve the *American Dream*, focusing on the causes and impacts they experienced. Researchers obtained this data from the Sam Shepard drama *Curse of the Starving Class*. This research uses Marx's theory of class struggle to analyze how Dream's character is influenced and limited by his social class. This research also uses the concept of the *American Dream*, which has three components: a more prosperous, better, and fuller life. Overall, there are striking similarities: both discuss the value of the *American Dream* contained in the movie. However, what is different is that this

research focuses on Karl Max's theory which discusses the needs of social classes to achieve status equality and the *American Dream*. While the researcher's research uses the theory of cultural dimensions and Maslow's hierarchy of needs to discuss the *American Dream*.

The third is *Lois Zamperini's American Dream, as Reflected in the Film Unbroken* (Masruriati Khairiah, 2020). Using the film *Unbroken* as the primary data source, the researcher focused his research on the *American Dream* and analyzed the motivational role played by the main character, Louis Zamperini, to survive as a Japanese prisoner as depicted in the film. After obtaining the data, the researchers analyzed it using a psychological study approach focused on Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory, which describes motivation based on physiological needs, security, love, self-esteem, and self-needs. Researchers also use the concept of the *American Dream*, which explains the dream of a good life, freedom, and happiness. As a result, the researcher concluded that the main character had motivations that supported him in achieving his dream of returning to America and held on to the hope that one day he would be free to pursue his dreams and rebuild his life. Overall, this research has similarities, namely that they both use Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory to examine the motivation for succeeds in achieving the *American Dream*. The difference is in the research object where this research uses the film *Unbroken*, which depicts an individual's struggle only, while the researcher's research uses the film *Minari*, which depicts the struggle of a family or group.

The last one is *The Representation of Identity Crisis in Minari: A Critical Discourse Analysis* (Ignatius Indra Kristianto, Aprilia Kristiana Wahyuni, 2022). Using critical discourse analysis, researchers examine the representation of identity crisis in *Minari*, an American film depicting the lives of Korean immigrants in America. Researchers also use identity crisis theory to describe the conditions of immigrants at that time, which shows the differences between Korean culture and Eastern culture in America. Researchers recommend comprehensive research to examine the juxtaposition of cultural signs in the film *Minari* using a semiotic approach, the results of which can be useful for people who want to live or study in a new country. What this research has in common with this research is that they both use the film *Minari* as the object of study. The difference is that this research discusses the condition of immigrants who are experiencing an identity crisis due to the move of immigrants to America use Identity Crisis Theory. In contrast, the researcher uses the Hierarchy of Needs Theory to examine how motivations influence every person in achieving succeed.

E. Method of Research

1. Data and Source of Data

This research uses primary and secondary data sources to obtain information. This preliminary data is obtained from every scene in the film *Minari* (2020), which depicts the journey of a Korean immigrant family to achieve the *American Dream*. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from journals and articles relevant to this research.

2. Technique of Collecting Data

The method used to obtain data in this research is the qualitative method. The qualitative method means getting non-numerical data and collecting data from various existing sources. John W. Creswell (2014) defines qualitative methods as a research approach that focuses on interpreting the meaning given by the people involved in the phenomenon. A qualitative approach is also described by Parkinson and Drislane (2011) as "a method that utilizes participant observation or case studies that produce narrative and descriptive accounts of a setting or practice." Therefore, based on these expert opinions, qualitative methods are suitable for this research.

3. Technique of Analyzing Data

The method and technique used by the researcher to analyze the data are reading and analyzing the theories used to formulate the problems arising from this research topic. The analyses of the representation of the *American Dream* found in *Minari's* film use Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory. This theory is used to analyze and understand cultural differences between countries. The theory identifies several key factors that influence how people and groups behave within their culture. Some comparisons of the cultural dimensions theory are Individualism vs Collectivism, Power Distance, Masculinity vs Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-term vs Short-term Orientation, and Indulgence vs Restraint. Some of these comparisons analyze and understand American cultural values identified by Gary Althen in his book "American Ways: A Guide for Foreigners in the United States". These values include individualism, freedom, competition, privacy, equality, informality; future, change, and progress;

humanity; time; achievement, action, work, and materialism; and directness and assertiveness. In the context of the movie *Minari*, the Korean immigrant family uses these values as a guide to adjust from their previous Korean cultural values. Furthermore, the researcher uses Hierarchy Theories by Abraham Maslow to reveal that the motivations of immigrant families to achieve the *American Dream* are based on the five hierarchies of human needs: physiological, security, love, self-esteem, and self-actualization.

F. Presentation

This thesis consist of 4 chapters, each of which explain different information. The first chapter is the introduction, which contains the background, problem formulation, research object, research scope, review of previous research, data and data sources, data collection methods and techniques, data analysis methods, theoretical approaches, and presentation.

The second chapter contains the theoretical approach and framework. The third chapter focuses on analysis. And finally, the fourth chapter contains conclusions and suggestions. After that, the bibliography and appendices are attached at the very end.