

# AMERICAN DREAM IN THE FILM *MINARI*: REPRESENTATION OF KOREAN IMMIGRANT FAMILY IN AMERICA

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## ABSTRACT

This research is entitled *American dream in film Minari: Representation of Korean Immigrant Family in America*. This research is based on the social inequality that still occurs in this world, including in America. This research aims to analyze the value of *American dream* represented in *Minari* film. It also aims to understand the motivation that drives the characters in *Minari* to pursue their dreams in America.

The researcher use a qualitative approach technique to obtain data. The researcher use *Minari's* film as the main source and related journals or articles as the secondary data. In analyzing the data, researchers use two approaches, namely the sociological approach and the psychological approach. The researcher use Hofstede's cultural dimension theory and Abaraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Hofstede's cultural dimension theory analyzes the social value of American culture as the value used to achieve the *American dream*, while the hierarchy of needs theory analyzes the motivation to achieve the *American dream*.

Based on this analysis, Korean immigrant families achieve the *American dream* by reflecting the American cultural values they fulfill, namely individualism, freedom, competition, privacy, equality, informality; future, change, and progress; humanity; time; achievement, action, work, and materialism; and directness and assertiveness. Motivation to achieve the *American dream* is also revealed through Maslow's five Hierarchies of Needs, physiological needs including income and home; security needs including financial stability, family health, and security concerns; love needs including relationships within the family; self-esteem needs including recognition and confidence; self-actualization needs including developing potential to achieve success.

**Keywords** : *American dream*, Korean Immigrant, American Cultural Value, Cultural Dimension, Human Needs.

## I. INTRODUCTION

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 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.

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.

This research examines how the *American dream* is represented in the film *Minari*. In addition, this study also examines how the motivation of the characters in the movie in achieving the *American dream*. 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*.

## **II. METHOD**

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 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. 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.

### **III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **A. Representation of the *American Dream* in the Film *Minari***

In the film "Minari," a tapestry of themes unfolds through the lives of a Korean immigrant family forging their path in rural Arkansas. Individualism is embodied by Jacob, who takes a bold step in purchasing land to cultivate a Korean vegetable farm, despite Monica, his wife, expressing concerns. Their journey symbolizes freedom as they relocate from California, seeking new opportunities beyond their previous labor-intensive work on a chicken farm. Jacob's entrepreneurial spirit introduces competition as he strives to establish his farm as a supplier of Korean vegetables, navigating the challenges of market dynamics.

Amidst their strong familial bonds, Monica and Jacob exemplify equality within their partnership. Monica not only manages household responsibilities but also contributes to the family's financial stability and supports Jacob's aspirations. Jacob, in turn, actively engages in family matters and child-rearing, emphasizing shared responsibilities and mutual support in pursuit of their dreams amidst the adversities of their immigrant experience. Their adaptation to Arkansas reflects their quest for equality within a new cultural and social landscape, epitomized by their involvement in local community activities and their acceptance of cultural differences at their church.

Informality characterizes their interpersonal dynamics, as depicted through casual dialogues and communal meals, fostering a warm and inclusive atmosphere within their social interactions. Their openness extends beyond family boundaries to embrace their neighbors and integrate into the local community, demonstrating a genuine connection and a willingness to build meaningful relationships.

The family's aspirations for a better future drive them forward, encapsulated in their aspirations for economic stability through farming and entrepreneurship. Their journey unfolds against a backdrop of profound change and adaptation to new environmental and social challenges in Arkansas. Despite setbacks and conflicts, they exhibit resilience and determination, illustrated by Jacob's efforts in agricultural endeavors and his collaborations to expand their market reach.

Humanity shines through their experiences as they navigate cultural differences and personal conflicts with empathy, understanding, and compassion. Their journey underscores the importance of maintaining identity and values while embracing new opportunities and challenges in a foreign land. Time efficiency in their daily tasks underscores their diligence and commitment to their goals, reflecting their dedication to achieving success through hard work and perseverance.

Ultimately, the family's pursuit of achievement and economic stability is tempered by their deeper values and familial bonds, navigating the complexities of material success and personal fulfillment. Directness and firmness in decision-making highlight their resolve in facing uncertainties and challenges, reaffirming their resilience in overcoming obstacles and maintaining their cultural heritage amidst the pressures of assimilation.

In conclusion, "Minari" portrays a poignant narrative of immigrant resilience and familial love amidst the American Dream's pursuit. Through their journey of adaptation, perseverance, and solidarity, the family not only achieves economic success but also strengthens their bonds and finds meaning in their shared experiences and cultural identity. Their story resonates as a testament to the transformative power of determination, community, and the enduring spirit of family in the pursuit of a better life.

### **B. The Motivation of Korean Immigrant Family in Achieving American Dream in the Film Minari**

In the film *Minari*, the physiological needs of the Korean immigrant family have not been fully met, as seen from their previous life living in a small house in California due to lack of work. They move to Arkansas in search of financial stability, which they hope will provide more security, especially for David's health, who has a history of heart disease. The tensions faced created an urgent need for love and belonging within the family. Despite often not receiving support or recognition from others, they continued to work to overcome obstacles to achieve success and self-fulfillment. Each family member has their own dreams and strives to realize them with passion.

## **IV. CONCLUSION**

This research uses Hofstede's cultural dimension theory and Abraham Maslow's needs theory to describe the representation of American Dream values and the underlying motivations for achieving these values. Hofstede's cultural dimension theory analyzes the social values of American culture as the values, namely: individualism, equality, informality, future and change, humanity, time, achievement and materialism, and directness and assertiveness. These values reflect how Korean immigrant families, such as the characters Jacob and Monica in the movie *Minari*, work together despite having different dreams, create a supportive environment, communicate openly, value time, and strive to achieve goals. In addition, this study relates the family's motivations to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, ranging from physiological needs to self-actualization, showing how this family struggles to meet basic needs, security, love, self-esteem, and dream achievement. In conclusion, this

study reveals the dynamics and contributions of Korean immigrant families' experiences in realizing the American Dream.

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