

**THE REPRESENTATION OF AMERICAN DREAM IDEALS
IN THE MAIN CHARACTER'S STRUGGLE IN THE FILM
*KING RICHARD (2021)***

FINAL PROJECT

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



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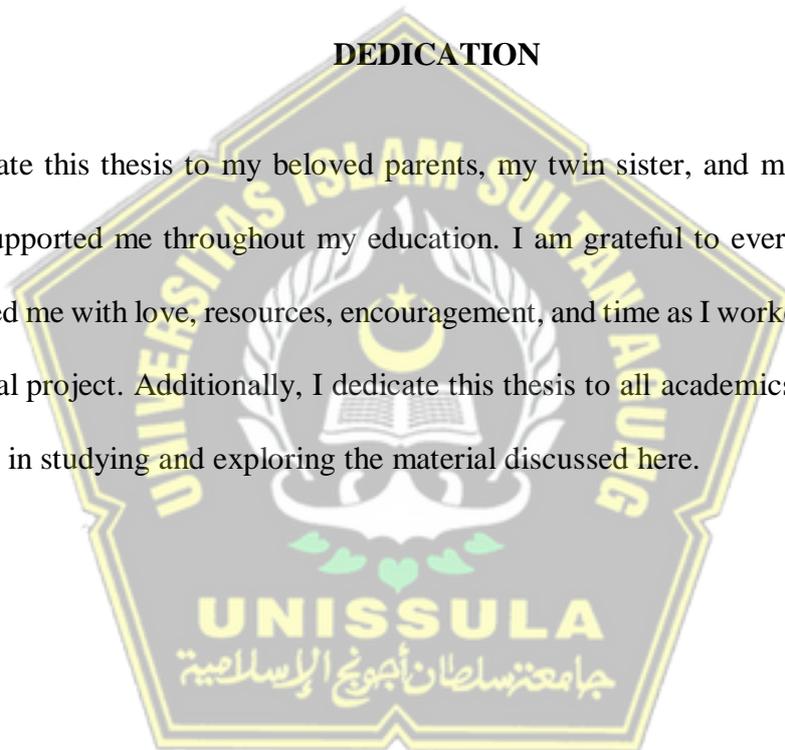
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MOTTO

Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is
always to try just one more time. – Thomas A. Edison

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved parents, my twin sister, and my friends who have supported me throughout my education. I am grateful to everyone who has provided me with love, resources, encouragement, and time as I worked to complete this final project. Additionally, I dedicate this thesis to all academics who have an interest in studying and exploring the material discussed here.



ABSTRACT

Rystien, Cania Mayya. 30802100018. The Representation of American Dream Ideals in The Main Character's Struggle in The Film *King Richard (2021)*. English Literature Study Program. College of Languages, Literature and Culture. Sultan Agung Islamic University. Dr. Didik Murwantono, M.Hum. as Advisor.

This final project examines the representation of American Dream values in the struggle of the main character in *King Richard (2021)*, a biographical film directed by Reinaldo Marcus Green. This research aims to identify the values of the American Dream displayed through Richard Williams's character and analyze how his struggle to realize this dream is represented in the film.

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with primary data in the form of the script of the film *King Richard (2021)*, and was supported by secondary data from books, journals, and previous studies. The theoretical framework referred to the concept of the American Dream as proposed by James Truslow Adams, which was further developed by several contemporary researchers. Additionally, Stuart Hall's theory of representation was used to analyze how this meaning was constructed through reflective, intentional, and constructivist approaches.

The results indicated that Richard Williams' character embodies the core values of the American Dream, including individualism, hard work, realism, optimism, and the pursuit of happiness. His struggle to overcome social, economic, and racial barriers demonstrated that the American Dream encompasses not only material success but also the quest for dignity, family, and a meaningful life. In addition, the film used representational strategies to construct and reinforce cultural meanings associated with family responsibility, perseverance, and fatherly leadership, portraying the father figure as a head of household who overcame structural barriers.

Keywords: *American Dream, Richard Williams, Representation, King Richard (2021)*.

INTISARI

Rystien, Cania Mayya. 30802100018. The Representation of American Dream Ideals in The Main Character's Struggle in The Film *King Richard (2021)*. Program Studi Sastra Inggris. Fakultas Bahasa, Sastra dan Budaya. Universitas Islam Sultan Agung. Dr. Didik Murwantono, M.Hum. sebagai Pembimbing.

Tugas akhir ini membahas tentang representasi nilai-nilai *American Dream* dalam perjuangan tokoh utama dalam film *King Richard (2021)*, sebuah film biografi yang disutradarai oleh Reinaldo Marcus Green. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi nilai-nilai *American Dream* yang ditampilkan melalui karakter Richard Williams dan menganalisis bagaimana perjuangannya mewujudkan mimpi tersebut direpresentasikan dalam film.

Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan data utama berupa naskah film *King Richard (2021)* dan didukung oleh data sekunder dari buku, jurnal, dan penelitian terdahulu. Kerangka teori yang digunakan mengacu pada konsep *American Dream* yang dikemukakan oleh James Truslow Adams, yang kemudian dikembangkan lebih lanjut oleh beberapa peneliti kontemporer. Selain itu, teori representasi Stuart Hall digunakan untuk menganalisis bagaimana makna ini dibangun melalui pendekatan reflektif, intensional, dan konstruktivis.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa karakter Richard Williams mewujudkan nilai-nilai inti dari *American Dream*, antara lain individualisme, kerja keras, realisme, optimisme, dan mengejar kebahagiaan. Perjuangannya untuk mengatasi hambatan sosial, ekonomi, dan rasial menunjukkan bahwa Impian Amerika tidak hanya mencakup kesuksesan materi tetapi juga pencarian martabat, keluarga, dan kehidupan yang bermakna. Selain itu, film ini menggunakan strategi representasional untuk membangun dan memperkuat makna budaya yang terkait dengan tanggung jawab keluarga, ketekunan, dan kepemimpinan ayah, dengan menggambarkan figur ayah sebagai pemimpin keluarga yang mengatasi hambatan struktural.

Kata kunci : *American Dream, Richard Williams, Representasi, King Richard (2021)*.

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All praise is due to Allah SWT for giving the success, safety and blessings in completing the final project. I realize that this final project will never be completed without the help, guidance, and support of the various parties involved. Therefore, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to:

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Finally, my final project has been completed. I realize that everything in this world is not perfect except for Allah SWT, therefore, I am still welcome to receive

criticism and suggestions for my final project.



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the foundation of the research topic and is divided into seven sections: Background of the Study, Problem Formulation, Limitation of the Study, Objective of the Study, Significance of the Study, and Organization of the Study. Each section provides a detailed framework to support the research focus and its overall structure.

A. Background of the Study

Literature serves as a mirror for society, reflecting its complexity and challenges. Through their works, writers express and explore the issues of life. The term "literature" originates from the Latin word *littera*, meaning "letter" (Claudarista, Murwantono 2). To distinguish literary works from ordinary texts used in daily life such as magazines, newspapers, legal documents, and scholarly writings definitions of literature often include qualifiers like "aesthetic" or "artistic" (Murwantono 135–138).

Film, as a product of art and culture, serves both as a medium of expression and a source of inner satisfaction for its audience. Among the many significant aspects of film, character stands out as a crucial narrative element. Characters are integral to storytelling, designed to differentiate one entity from another be it human, animal, spirit, robot, or even inanimate objects through their distinct mental, emotional, and social traits (Pratista:40, translated by the reseacher).

Films frequently act as reflections of societal realities and function as

platforms for representing cultural values, dominant ideologies, and personal or collective struggles. *King Richard (2021)*, directed by Reinaldo Marcus Green, the true story of Richard Williams is shown, a father who wants to help his daughters, Venus and Serena, succeed in their chosen sport. The story is illustrative of the American Dream, which James Truslow Adams defines as every person having the right to succeed and be happy due to hard work and goals chosen by themselves.

According to Hauhart, the essential element of the American Dream lies in the possibility for each individual to realize their individual goals within the framework of American civilization. In its original conception, the American Dream emphasized that success could be achieved as a result of natural talent, hard work, determination, and the accomplishments derived from these efforts (Hauhart 2).

The United States was established based on the principles of inalienable rights and natural rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These ideals gave rise to the concepts of the American Creed and the American Dream, which have inspired millions to strive for their aspirations with the promise that hard work could lead to improved circumstances (Wyman 2). American sociology, in particular, has a rich tradition of exploring the social factors influencing various interpretations of the American Dream. These factors include class, stratification, status, intergenerational mobility, individualism, community commitment, ideology, race, and the balance between work and family life (Hauhart 3).

The American Dream has long stood as a powerful cultural ideal in the United States, embodying the belief that anyone can attain prosperity and success through hard work and determination. Over time, this concept has evolved under the influence of historical, social, and economic events, yet its core remains centered on the hope for opportunity and upward mobility. The expansion of liberal democratic ideals in the early United States, particularly in Western states, played a significant role in shaping this dream. These states adopted constitutions granting broad voting rights to white males, reflecting the Jeffersonian political vision. Thomas Jefferson and the Democratic-Republican Party championed the principles of popular control of government, grounded in the revolutionary ideals and the Declaration of Independence, which asserted that voting rights for white men were a matter of natural entitlement (Wyman 4).

The American Dream embodies the idea that economic opportunities are accessible to those actively seeking them out and willing to work hard. The biographical drama *King Richard* (2021) presented the story of Richard Williams as he directed his daughters Venus and Serena Williams through their path to becoming elite tennis competitors. The film illustrated how Richard implemented his visionary plan to ensure success in tennis for his children while battling through social obstacles and racial and economic barriers in Compton California's working-class district. This principle is clearly illustrated in Richard's journey of nurturing and educating his daughter to become a successful tennis player. His story underscores the idea that perseverance and dedication can lead to financial stability and personal success. Beyond material

achievements, the American Dream also represents hope and belief in a brighter future. Richard's unwavering optimism and determination to create a better life for himself and his daughters is a driving force throughout the movie. Despite facing significant hardships, his belief in the possibility of a better future aligns with the core values of the American Dream. The movie's title, *King Richard*, directly reflects the dream's promise of the right to pursue happiness. Richard's journey highlights that happiness is not a guaranteed outcome, but rather a goal that requires effort and resilience. His desire to provide a better future for his daughter and achieve personal fulfillment aligns perfectly with the ideals of the American Dream.

Richard's journey is not just about ensuring his daughter's success; it is also about seeking his fulfillment and happiness. His achievements are reflected not only in Venus and Serena's triumphs in tennis but also in his fight against discrimination and his challenge to the status quo. Richard Williams demonstrated that with the right strategy and strong belief, big dreams can indeed become reality. The film "*King Richard*," inspired by his true story, captures the essence of the American Dream: resilience, hard work, and the quest for a better life. His determination to secure free training for his daughters and ultimately their success exemplifies this dream. Richard's journey is a powerful testament to how determination and perseverance can conquer even the toughest obstacles, showcasing the enduring appeal and complexity of this classic ideal.

The researcher selected the film *King Richard* as the object of research for the thesis titled "*The Representation of American Dream Ideals In The Main*

Character's Struggle In The Film King Richard (2021)". The film was selected for its powerful moral message, which resonates deeply in today's society, especially for those facing challenges in pursuing their dreams due to social and economic barriers. Will Smith's portrayal of the main character, Richard Williams, offers a heartfelt depiction of life's realities. It illustrates how parents often take on the roles of coaches, protectors, and motivators, and while their approach may sometimes seem harsh, it ultimately comes from a desire to secure a better future for their children. The film emphasizes that success stems not solely from inherent talent but also from hard work, strategic planning, and the bravery to challenge societal norms. Richard Williams's journey reflects core principles of resilience and determination, which resonate with the ideals expressed by one of the United States' founding fathers, Thomas Jefferson, in the 1776 Declaration of Independence: "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that the Creator endows them all men are created equal, that with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*" (US Declaration of Independence, Paragraph 2). Through Richard's struggle and his adherence to these principles, the film underscores the enduring relevance of the American Dream and its emphasis on perseverance, equality, and the pursuit of a better life.

Previously, the researcher reviewed several previous scientific works as references. One of them was a study conducted by Fatma Mutia Dewi entitled "*The Struggle of Richard Williams to Educate and Train His Two Daughters to Become World Tennis Athletes in King Richard Movie (2021): An Individual*

Psychological Approach.” This research used a qualitative method that focused on Richard Williams' struggle to educate and train his daughter's from an individual psychological perspective. The difference between this research and the previous one is that this research also uses a qualitative method but emphasizes the analysis of the representation of American Dream values in the main character's struggle, utilizing James Truslow Adams' American Dream theory and Stuart Hall's representation theory as the main theoretical frameworks.

The purpose of this research is to explore how the core ideals of the American Dream are portrayed through the challenges faced by the main characters in the film *King Richard (2021)*. By employing James Truslow Adams' concept of the American Dream alongside Stuart Hall's theory of representation, this research seeks to offer insight into how cultural values such as perseverance, familial dedication, and leadership are shaped and communicated through cinematic narratives, particularly concerning racial and social inequalities in the American context..

B. Problem Formulation

Based on the background of the study above, the author formulates the statements of the problem as follows:

1. What American Dream values are depicted through the struggles of the main character, Richard Williams, in *King Richard (2021)*?
2. How does the film *King Richard (2021)* represent the main character's struggles to achieve the American Dream?

C. Limitation of the Study

This research examines the struggle of the main character, Richard Williams, in pursuing the American Dream as depicted in the film *King Richard* (2021). Specifically, it analyzes how the core aspects of the American Dream such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness- are represented through the character's actions, thoughts and decisions in the narrative. The scope of this research is limited to the movie and its script for data collection.

D. Objective of the Study

Based on the formulation of the problems above, this study highlights on the following objectives as follows:

1. To identify and describe the values of the American Dream as depicted in the film *King Richard* (2021).
2. To represent the main character's struggles in pursuing about American Dream in the film *King Richard* (2021).

E. Significance of Study

This research has two meanings, the theoretical meaning and the practical meaning. The explanation is as follows:

E.1. Significance of the Study for Students of Sultan Agung Islamic University

This research can be used as a reference for fellow English Literature students at Sultan Agung Islamic University who want to improve their skills in analyzing a literary work, with methodology, data analysis, and

academic writing. In addition, the research opens students' insights into the theory of the American Dream which is reflected in literary works in the form of films.

E.2. Significance Study for Public

This research can be used as a reference for general students who want to explore some aspects of psychology, sociology, and the value of the American Dream contained in the film of "*King Richard*".

F. Organization of the Study

This final project is divided into five main chapters, each of which focuses on a specific component of the research. Chapter I contains an introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, Problem Formulation, Limitation of Study, Objective of the Study, Significance of Study, and Organization of Study. Chapter II explores the theoretical foundation of the study through a literature review, which includes a synopsis of the film, a discussion of American Dream values, and an overview of the concept of the American Dream within American society. Chapter III elaborates on the research methodology, detailing the types of data used, the procedures for data collection, and the techniques of data analysis. Chapter IV contains the findings and analytical discussion, particularly regarding the representation of American Dream values and the application of Stuart Hall's theory of representation. Chapter V presents the final conclusion of the study along with suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical framework and literature review, divided into three sections: They are Synopsis, American Dream Values, and Review American Dream in Society.

A. Synopsis

King Richard is a biographical drama film based on the true story of *Richard Williams*, as a father and coach of successful tennis players *Venus Ebony Starr Williams* and *Serena Jameka Williams*. He is a figure who has an important role in building the success of world tennis players *Venus* and *Serena*. The film was directed by *Reinaldo Marcus Green* and released in 2021, lasting one hundred and forty-five minutes. The film tells the story of a father determined to fight for his children's dreams amidst the challenging environment of Compton, California, to reach the world tennis stage. Richard cleverly and optimistically devised an ambitious strategy for the future of his daughters *Venus* and *Serena* before they were even born. Without the benefit of a professional tennis background and with limited funds, he trained his daughters on public tennis courts, defying the odds, including racial discrimination, pressure from the sports world, and question marks from sections of society. Richard Williams' job as a security guard at a market did not stop him from dreaming. Richard did not want his children to suffer like him. *Venus* and *Serena* were the dreams he wanted to build by making his

two daughters world tennis players. Their journey was not easy because they had to face the issue of white supremacy. Black people are often looked down upon. Richard's spirit never died.

The training of his daughters served to prove to society that their expectations of the family were incorrect. In the face of numerous rejections, he stayed loyal to his core values while keeping his children shielded from exploitation and giving them a typical childhood despite facing competitive pressures. At the beginning of their professional careers, Venus and Serena entered tennis championships for players below twenty age years old. At a young age, Venus showcased brighter tennis career performance than her sister Serena did.

Venus Williams won championship after championship until she met Rick Macci, a renowned coach known for promoting junior players to the professional level. Venus trained with Rick for nearly three years. However, during her training, her father, Richard, decided to withdraw her from junior championships, prioritizing her and Serena's education instead. This decision sparked controversy and drew criticism from many people. Eventually, Richard changed his mind and allowed Venus to compete again, ultimately leading both sisters to become legends in the sport of tennis. Venus Williams is a five-time Wimbledon champion and the first African-American woman to be ranked number one in the world. Meanwhile, Serena Williams has won 23 Grand Slam titles and has been recognized as one of the greatest athletes in sports history.

King Richard takes place in the early to mid-1990s, mainly in Compton, California and highlights Richard Williams' attempts to bring his daughters Venus and Serena to achieve success in tennis. Based on Frankel and Orszag (2001), the decade from 1993 to 2000 is considered one of the best economic times in America's history, thanks to an average growth of 4.5% and the lowest unemployment rate dropping to 4% (Frankel and Orszag 3). Thus, Richard Williams' journey in the film shows the values of the American Dream and the difficulties that African Americans experienced during that time.

B. American Dream Values

In the next section, *Historical and Theoretical Approach*, I provide an overview of the historical development of the American Dream, tracing its ideological roots from the early 17th century with the arrival of the first settlers, to its peak in the 1920s before the Wall Street Crash of 1929. This section presents an ideological perspective by synthesizing ideas attributed to the American Founding Fathers including Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Alexander Hamilton as discussed by Mills (Mills, 4).

The idea of the dream was put into words on 4th of July 1776 by Thomas Jefferson. The Declaration of Independence stated that:

(...) all men are created equal; that they are endowed with inherent and inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted by men,

deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their safety and happiness .(US Declaration of Independence, paragraph 2)

There, Wiltse noted that the “happiness principle” is not only the “most significant feature” of the Declaration, but that it also embodies a theory of government. This Article agrees with Wiltse’s assessment and seeks to focus on “happiness” and its relationship with the preservation of “life” and “liberty.” Unfortunately, while Wiltse’s work considerably expanded historians’ understanding of what Jefferson and the founding generation intended by including the preservation of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” in the Declaration’s preamble, it faltered in that Wiltse dismissed Bentham’s understanding of “happiness” without credible reason. Certainly, Bentham opposed the Declaration of Independence, and even wrote Short Review of the Declaration, which was highly critical of the “self-evident truths” espoused. However, as will be explored further in Part III,⁸¹ this dissenting critique was not published until after the Declaration itself, meaning that Jefferson and the founding generation’s views on happiness were not necessarily that different (Charles 472 - 473).

C. Review of the Concept of American Dream in American Society

C.1 Life

According to Hauhart, while James Truslow Adams envisioned a life that was “better and richer and fuller,” he did not define this dream in purely materialistic terms. Instead, Adams referred to a form of personal success that emphasized individual fulfillment and self-defined achievement (Hauhart 2). In his view the crucial factor underlying the dream was the opportunity for every American to realize his or her personal vision within the confines of American society. In his original conception, one could achieve one’s American dream through natural ability, hard work, perseverance and the achievements that would thereby follow (Hauhart 2).

All individuals’ basic liberties of food, shelter, health care and education are protected in the American Dream. All individuals possess the freedom, have a right not to starve and not to lack homes, to live in safety and health. More than the chance to survive, the American Dream is an opportunity to live a better life and take full responsibility of oneself as well as the family.

Everyone has a right to be happy, to do what they want, and to be prosperous. To do this, you have to push and strive to succeed and this is a requirement that you can only come across in other activities.

C.1.1 Individualism

According to Namee and Miller, individualism is the main principle of the American Dream, in which success is believed to come

from individual talent and effort. They state, “The ideology of the American Dream emphasizes individual effort and ability in achieving success, which is often interpreted as the result of achievement alone” (Namee & Miller 2). Each person has the right to strive for their dreams according to their own efforts. Nevertheless, social and economic inequality is often an obstacle to the ability of individuals to rely on themselves to achieve happiness in life.

Namee and Miller describe that people in American culture often see individual success or failure as caused by their abilities or actions, reflecting the value of rugged individualism. Despite this, these theories admit that people have limited control over their own lives because of the effects of social structures (Namee and Miller 10).

Individualism has long been a central focus in discussions surrounding the American Dream. Hauhart notes that the strong emphasis on personal economic success, which frequently appears in both academic studies and public attitudes, is closely linked to America's cultural prioritization of individual responsibility and autonomy (Hauhart 28).

Self-improvement has long been the mantra of American and it is a staple of positive psychology as well. Positive psychologists urge individuals to work on their ‘selves’, thereby increasing their

happiness, improving their moral fiber, and ultimately, leading them to self-fulfillment (Becker and Marecek 1770).

C.1.2 Hard Work

Hard work is one of the essential elements in realizing the American Dream. Fundamentally, every American believes that regardless of social, economic, or cultural background, anyone in the United States can achieve success through hard work, perseverance, and perseverance. According to the American Dream, everyone has the opportunity to improve their lives economically and socially. In of the American Dream, America is the land of opportunity. Presumably, if you work hard enough and are talented enough, you can overcome any obstacle and achieve success. No matter where you start out in life the sky is ostensibly the limit. According to the promise implied by the American Dream, you can go as far as your talents and abilities can take you (Namee and Miller 1). America is seen as the land of opportunity where people get out of the system what they put into it. Ostensibly most, talented, hardest working, and most virtuous get ahead (Namee and Miller 3).

These intellectuals espoused the belief that human beings must assume full responsibility for their lot in life, and the poor were no exception. As such, hard work was viewed as a panacea and through it, one could improve his or her condition in life

Implicit in this assumption was the belief that the poor simply needed to help themselves through diligent labor and all life's ills would vanish (Miller 452).

C.2 Liberty

In a quote from Namara, there is a summary explained by Amato about happiness research, which shows that he doubts overly positive statements, emphasizing that solutions for a happy life can be developed without taking into account individual differences. Namara supports this skepticism by highlighting that liberal theory has not been able to create a universal definition of happiness. Lipton mentions that liberalism provides little guidance on how Americans should achieve happiness. Although political freedom is recognized as important, it is only part of what is needed to ensure happiness. Liberal theory is based on protecting the rights and freedoms of each individual so that they can choose happiness for themselves. This theory ensures a personal definition of happiness by not using the law to impose one model of happiness on everyone. This view is explained more clearly by Namara, who notes that liberalism is reluctant to formulate a universal framework for what constitutes happiness (Namara 660).

As the United States is considered “the land of the free,” it’s no surprise that freedom is also linked to the American Dream. Several participants described freedom as the ability to act according to their own will, whether that freedom stemmed from personal success or was understood as a fundamental right guaranteed by the United States Constitution (Riggio 9 -10)

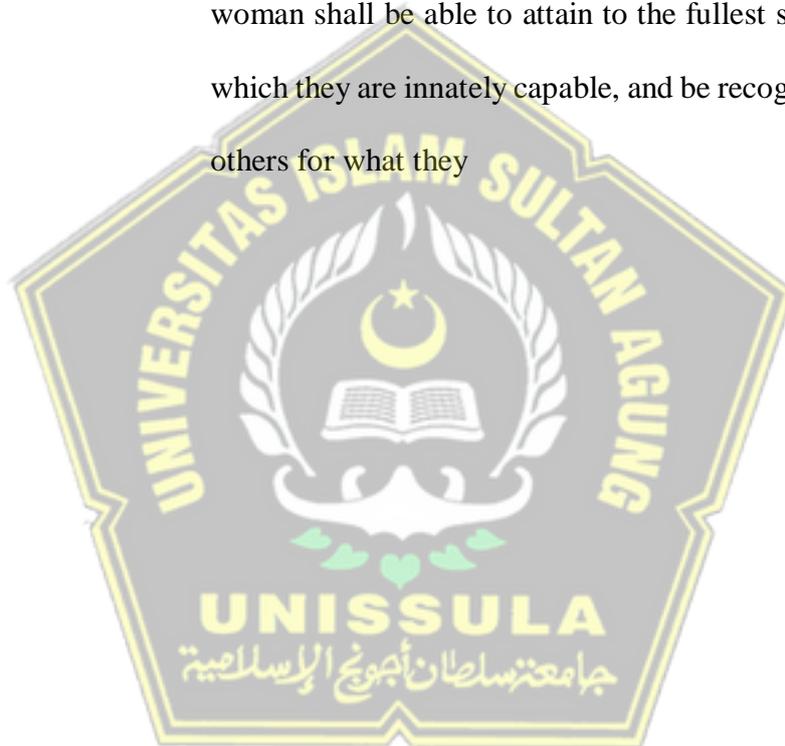
American sociology has long engaged in analyzing the various social dimensions that influence different interpretations of the American Dream. These dimensions include factors such as social class, patterns of stratification, social status, mobility across generations, individualistic values, community involvement, dominant ideologies, racial dynamics, and the challenges of balancing work and family responsibilities (Hauhart 66).

C.2.1 Realism

The idea of a better life has taken on various meanings throughout American history. In the modern era, it is often equated with financial and material accomplishments, such as owning a desirable home or vehicle. High notes that the American Dream has grown increasingly materialistic over time, where success is no longer judged by life satisfaction but by

the quantity of one's possessions (High 1).

It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of a social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they



are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position (Adams 404). Realism is an important aspect of the concept of liberty, particularly in the context of American Dream values. Liberty is not merely viewed as absolute freedom without boundaries. Instead, individual freedom in the pursuit of dreams is often exercised with an understanding of the social, economic, and structural realities that exist. Liberty in pursuing dreams is often exercised with an awareness of existing social, economic, and structural realities.

C.2.2 Optimism

However, factors such as social, racial, and economic variations that limit the opportunities possessed by people make the American dream complex than is often realized. Indeed, this optimism is underpinned by the American belief that the United States is a land of endless possibilities for all; one does not have to remain in poverty for all their lives; factors that determine one's point of origin should not impact one's rise to wealth. There are those in the society who hold the view that it is the fundamental right of each individual to determine his course in life and to shape his future, and this is within the broader perspective of the American Dream.

In short, de Tocqueville maintained that in America individuals are free to achieve, not by virtue of hereditary title but

by their own individual effort and merit. Thus, the emerging ideal of the American Dream incorporated two meanings of freedom: both political freedom from tyranny and economic freedom to achieve on one's own merits (Namee and Miller 8).

C.3 Pursuit of Happiness

According to Yacobi, the pursuit of happiness may ultimately be futile, as it involves chasing something that lacks a fixed definition and is inherently impermanent. Although the idea of happiness continues to be a central concern in human life, it is not a stable or lasting condition, but rather a fleeting psychological experience. Yacobi points out that an overemphasis on seeking an abstract and undefined form of happiness in the future may cause individuals to overlook meaningful moments in the present that often arise unexpectedly and depend heavily on chance (Yacobi 82). The pursuit of happiness implies that such a state exists, and one just has to pursue and attain it, although the concept of happiness is vague and one can never clearly know what happiness is and how to achieve it. One may experience more satisfaction in life not by pursuing happiness, but by searching for some measure of meaning in life, without which life would be pointless (Yacobi 90).

D. Stuart Hall's Theory of Representation

The emphasis on cultural practices is important. It is participants in a

culture who give meaning to people, objects and events. According to Hall, objects do not possess a singular, fixed, or universal meaning on their own. An item as simple as a stone, for instance, can signify different things a physical object, a territorial marker, or a work of art, depending on the context in which it is used and understood. These differing interpretations arise from what philosophers describe as "language games," or the distinct symbolic systems applied to various domains. Meaning, therefore, is not inherent in things themselves but emerges through how we interact with them, speak about them, and embed them within cultural and social practices. Interpretation frameworks and everyday usage both contribute to the construction of meaning (Hall 3).

This research employs representation theory to analyze how cultural values, such as the American Dream, are introduced and developed in films. This theory not only describes reality but also influences people's perceptions of success, freedom, and happiness.. Therefore, representation theory enables researchers to analyze how the ideology of the American Dream is interpreted, negotiated, or even challenged through the narratives, characters, and symbols that appear in the film *King Richard* (2021). By using this approach, the research can examine the content of the message presented and how the meaning of the American Dream is produced within a specific social and cultural context.

D.1 Reflective Approach

In the reflective approach, meaning is understood to reside in the object, person, idea, or event in the real world. Language functions as a

mirror, reflecting the true meaning that already exists independently in reality. As the poet Gertrude Stein once said. A rose is a rose is a ruse In the fourth century BC. the Greeks used the notion of mimesis to explain how language, even drawing and painting. mirrored or imitated Nature: they thought of Homer's great poem. The Iliad. as Imitating a heroic series of events. So the theory which says that language works by simply reflecting or imitating the truth that is already there and fixed in the world, is sometimes called 'mimetic (Hall 24).

D.2 Intentional Approach

The second approach to meaning in representation takes a contrasting view, suggesting that meaning originates from the speaker or author. In this perspective, individuals actively assign their own intended meanings to the world through the use of language. In the intentional approach, meaning is determined by the speaker or writer. Words have meaning according to the writer's intention. The intentional approach describes this viewpoint. It agrees that people use language to convey thoughts and understandings drawn from their experience in the world. Nevertheless, seen as a full theory of representation, it does not consider how sharing language and culture can impact meanings.. We cannot be the sole or unique source of meanings in language, since that would mean that we could express ourselves in entirely private languages. But the essence of language is communication and that, in turn, depends on shared linguistic conventions and shared codes.

Language cannot function as an entirely private system. Even meanings that feel deeply personal must conform to shared linguistic codes, rules, and conventions in order to be communicated and understood by others. As a fully social structure, language requires individuals to align their intended meanings with the collective pool of associations and interpretations already embedded within it. Thus, any act of expression inevitably interacts with pre-existing meanings tied to the words or images being used. (Hall 24).

D.3 Constructionist Approach

This third approach stresses that language is given meaning by the systems and values developed by society. It states that the meaning of language lies neither in the objects themselves nor just in what individual people say. Rather, meaning is formed when people use similar concepts and signs in a particular culture. Thus, this approach is known as the constructivist or constructionist way of viewing language and representation.

According to constructivism, it is important to see the material world and the symbolic systems used for rendering meaning, representation, and language as two distinct areas. Constructivists accept that the material world exists, but argue that it isn't where meaning comes from. Rather, we create meaning by exchanging culturally formed ideas using language or other types of representation. It is social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems in the construction of meaning, to make the world meaningful

and to communicate about that world meaningfully to others (Hall 25).



CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter explains the research methodology used in this study. These are explained in four sections. They are, Types of Research, Types of Data, Data Organization, Analyzing Data and Reporting Findings.

A. Type of Research

This researcher combined materials collected through qualitative methods with descriptive analysis. In qualitative research, researchers study original text materials from subjects and interpret them using context and themes. This method is most useful for topics with little previous research, as it allows researchers to study them freely. Researchers can discover new perspectives, propose new ideas, and possibly develop useful theories through ethnography (Taherdoost 54).

In qualitative research, the main source of data is usually text-based, such as people's narratives, transcripts of interviews, or documents describing lived experiences. They may be recorded by making digital recordings, shooting video, taking pictures, or writing field notes. The information is then studied to see if any certain themes, recurring ideas, or main categories emerge, as these could give further knowledge about the participants' experiences (Magilvy and Thomas 298). In the present work, the subject of concern was to identify the depiction of the American Dream in the film *King Richard* (2021). The chosen qualitative approach enabled the understanding of the characters, the

narrative, and themes, which were discussed and explained based on the selected theories belonging to American dream theory by James Truslow Adams and Representation theory by Stuart Hall.

B. Types of Data

This research utilized a descriptive qualitative method. Primary data referred to original data that provided direct sources concerning the object of analysis. In this research, the script of *Reinaldo Marcus Green's King Richard* (2021), a film belonging to the American sport drama genre, served as the primary data source. The dialogue and narration from the film were extracted and analyzed for this research. Secondary data includes other scholarly works related to the American Dream, sourced from articles, journals, books, previous research studies, and textbooks relevant to this topic. These secondary sources were used to offer explanations and clarifications of the primary data, supporting the research findings. Interpretation and elaboration of the primary data were key to the analysis process in this research.

C. Data Organization

C.1 Primary Data Collection Method

C.1.1 Watching the film

At this stage, the researcher watched the film multiple times. The first viewing was a *fast watching* process, which allowed for the acquisition of general knowledge, such as identifying the main characters and understanding the overarching themes, conflicts,

and plot. Following this, the author engaged in *pleasure watching*, which aimed to evoke emotions and highlight the most engaging or significant aspects of the film. The final stage was *close watching*, during which the author analyzed the film from a representation perspective. This approach enabled a more critical and objective examination of the film, providing a deeper understanding of its themes and how they relate to the research focus.

C.1.2 Reading the film script

In addition to watching the film several times, the next step is to read the script for King Richard. This involved analyzing sentences, narratives, prologues, dialogues, and other elements relevant to the research topic. These textual components were closely examined to gather data pertinent to the study's focus.

C.1.3 Secondary Collection Data Method

Secondary data in this research included a range of scientific writings, particularly those related to American Dream theory, sourced from various journal articles. To further support the main theory, American Dream, additional literature was drawn from *Hall, Stuart. Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices. SAGE Publications, in association with The Open University, 1997*. These secondary sources were carefully selected to provide a solid foundation for explaining and clarifying the primary data, contributing to a more comprehensive analysis.

C.2 Identifying Overall Data

The step aimed was to identify specific parts of the object to be analyzed. Both primary data, in the form of the movie script, and secondary data, sourced from scientific articles, were carefully examined. Relevant sections were identified through techniques such as underlining, coding, and highlighting, focusing on parts closely related to the research topic under discussion.

C.3 Classifying Overall Data

All identified data would be organized and classified into a table presented in the appendix. The appendix would include several columns, such as: number, data, data form, pages, reference, and comments.

D. Analyzing the Data and Reporting Findings

The data collected were analyzed using qualitative techniques, with a sociological approach employed to interpret the findings. Primary data were derived from the film *King Richard (2021)* and its script, while secondary data were sourced from articles, journals, books or e-books, websites, and previous studies. This research focused on analyzing the American Dream values and the struggles of the main character, Richard Williams. The analysis was conducted using American Dream theory and Representation theory to explore how these values were represented and how they drove the protagonist's journey.

CHAPTER IV

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Chapter IV discusses the data and analysis. In this chapter, the identified data is analyzed and discussed to answer the research questions. This study has two issues, which are the values of the American Dream and the portrayal of the main character's struggle in achieving the American Dream in the film *King Richard (2021)*.

A. American Dream Values in Richard Williams's Struggle

This sub-chapter identifies the American Dream values found in the main character of the film "*King Richard (2021)*". As explained in Chapter II, the American Dream is a concept popularized by James Truslow Adams, which defines the Dream as the opportunity for every individual to achieve a better, richer, and fuller life through their efforts (Adams 404). Although the phrase "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" originally appeared in the *Declaration of Independence* by Thomas Jefferson, Adams adopted and expanded these ideals into a broader social and cultural vision of success.

In this analysis, the American Dream values are categorized into three major components: The three essential features of the American Dream unite individualistic life principles with hard work and realist-minded pursuit of happiness through liberal freedoms. The values within the film are studied through Richard Williams' character during the story's events and motivations.

A.1. Life

A.1.1. Individualism

According to Adams, individualism in the American Dream refers to the belief that individuals are responsible for their own success, regardless of background or social class. This reflects the individualist spirit of the American Dream as described by Adams, who envisioned “a social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable” (Adams 404).

Richard Williams in a clip of the film *King Richard* (2021), shows strong individualism by refusing to follow traditional paths or societal expectations. He creates a detailed 78-page plan for Venus and Serena's futures, displaying belief in his own vision rather than conforming to external standards. His actions reflect a deep trust in personal initiative and autonomy, embodying the value of life through individualism. This can be seen in the following quote:

RICHARD

EXT. ANOTHER FANCY TENNIS CLUB – DAY

Richard's presentation continues to BUD COLLINS (60), the Bob Hope of tennis, listening graciously, poolside. I got a plan. I wrote me a 78-page plan for their whole career before they was even born. (Bailyn 3)

Richard's seen enough. He heads over to the men.

RICHARD

Young man, I asked you a couple times. That girl there is only 16 years old. She's out here to work. Just leave her alone (Bailyn 13).

In the quote above, a clip from the film *King Richard (2021)*, Richard did not rely on external authorities to intervene. He acted independently, taking full responsibility for his daughter's safety. This reflects the American Dream ideals of self-reliance and personal responsibility. His proactive attitude in planning and protection shows individualism not only as a mindset, but as a daily practice in pursuit of a better future.

A.1.2. Hard Work

According to the concept of the American Dream, hard work is viewed as a fundamental pathway to achieving personal success and upward mobility, regardless of one's background. Hard work is regarded one of the basic tenets of American Dream. It implies that no matter the kind of social or economic class one is born in or circumstances, anyone can succeed provided they put in efforts with persistence. The American Dream maintains the conception that the United States is a land of opportunity in which people be born from their merit. According to Namee and Miller, success is taken for granted to be the outcome of talent, virtue, and especially hard work. In this context, people are expected to be fully responsible for their own progress and hard work is considered the passport of solving the obstacles of a life. The above supposition means that it is possible for one to overcome even poverty through the effort and responsibility that one takes (Namee & Miller 3).

In the lines of *King Richard* (2021), Richard emphasizes hard work and perseverance, believing that consistent effort is the key to success. He trains his daughters regardless of weather or circumstances and maintains discipline in the face of adversity, showing how the value of life is embodied in the ethic of hard work. “They work as hard as they need to to stay on the streets. I’m in the champion - raisin business.” This shows how the value of life is embodied in the ethic of hard work. This can be seen in the following quote:

The girls do as instructed as Richard crosses to Ms. Strickland’s fence.

RICHARD

They work as hard as they need to stay off these streets. I’m in the champion-raisin’ business. Got a book about it bout to come out soon. Maybe I give a copy to your daughter.

Remind me which corner she working on again ? (Bailyn 6)

You wanna check on the kids? Let’s check on the kids. We got future doctors and lawyers, plus a couple tennis stars in this house. Now, I understand you got to do your job, even if some crazy-ass neighbor do call talking foolishness, and I don’t even mind you saying we hard on these kids, you know why? ‘cause we are. That’s our job. To keep them off these street. You wanna arrest us for that, fine. But what you not gon’ never do is come knock on this door to say you blew our daughters’ damn brains out ‘cause they been hanging with hoodlums and doing drugs and things. That’s what you not never gon’ say in this house. You

wanna arrest us for that? That's fine. You need to be arresting the parents at them tennis matches. (Bailyn 10)

In the film *King Richard (2021)*, there is a scene where a social worker visits Richard Williams' family home to report allegations of child abuse. The social worker reports that Richard's family educates childrens incorrectly, such as continuing to practice tennis even though the weather is raining. However, Richard denies the allegations because he is not just educating ordinary children but educating potential world champions, so a strong mentality and hard work need to be emphasized. Jefferson argued education wards off vulnerability and manipulation. Jefferson also argued educated people tend to think for themselves, making them less susceptible to oppressive systems; therefore, education becomes a means of empowerment and freedom. Richard's education of his daughters in the film *King Richard (2021)* is not limited to academics; it is the cultivation of the mindset, discipline, and resilience necessary to navigate a harsh, unforgiving world. Essentially, Richard, like Jefferson, recognizes education as a form of liberation, not mere instruction.

A.2. Liberty

A.1.2. Realism

King Richard (2021) film presents determination and hope and explores the social struggles that American dream faces. While Admas suggests that the Dream promises opportunities for all, the true intent in his opinion is not simply to own cars or earn high incomes, but in a society where all citizens can discover their best. However, the idealistic version of the Dream is often equated with a

financial gain and property ownership. High argues that the current definition of the American Dream is more inclined to the accumulation of things rather than respect for people or their abilities". In this way, Richard Williams's story is a grounded view of the Dream—he confronts social realities that will undermine the Dream instead of avoiding them. Richard's consciousness of racial discrimination, as well as restricted resources, and systematized disadvantages, reveals the gap between the lofty goals of the Dream and everyday realities of Americans. This realism strengthens Richard's role as a grounded figure who does not chase materialism, but a deeper, values-based success for his family. This is apparent in the quote that follows:

RICHARD

Hold on. Hold on, Paul. That is a full grown adult man. He don't need you to say what he said. If you were going to say what he said, you coulda said it back at the house. We coulda saved everybody the trouble of coming to this meeting. Now I done asked this man a simplified question. He overemphasizing how incredible it is what we did. I see all these white kids around here and he ain't saying how incredible that is. Let him answer the question. (Bailyn

64)

RICHARD

*That's funny. That was funny. When I was your age,
I used to have to fight every day.
If it wasn't the Ku Klux Klan or police
or the white boys from the next town, somebody
was always beatin' on me for something.
And I didn't have no daddy to stand in their way.*

(beat)

This world ain't never had no respect for

Richard Williams, but they gonna respect y'all.

They gonna respect y'all. (Bailey 14)

Richard Williams demonstrates realism through his awareness of how societal systems belittle and ignore individuals from marginalized communities. Seen in both dialogues, Richard, as the main character in the film *King Richard (2021)* he understands that racial bias affects the way success is recognized, especially in white-dominated spaces. His reflections reveal how achievements by Black individuals are treated as exceptional, while the same achievements by White individuals are seen as normal. Furthermore, Richard realizes that respect and validation are not given equally, especially to someone of his background. This perspective revealed his grounded understanding of the social and racial dynamics that complicate the pursuit of the American Dream. With this perspective, Richard reveals his grounded understanding of the social and racial dynamics that complicate the pursuit of the American Dream. His treatment in preparing his daughters reflects this realism, as he anticipates and confronts the systemic inequalities they will face on their journey to success.

EXT. RICK MACCI ACADEMY - PATH NEAR COURT 7 -
ANOTHER DAY

Richard leads Venus, Serena, and a DOZEN YOUNG INNER-CITY KIDS through Macci's grounds toward the court. Macci watches from afar as Richard speaks to a NEWSPAPER REPORTER who is trailing along, taking notes.

RICHARD

And that's why we not rushing. With no education, as good as they are, they won't keep their money. They'll be broke by 18 and have 50 more years to live like a fool. We not doing that. (Bailyn 90)

In his presentation, Richard shows a practical understanding of the risks underlying premature success, especially in marginalized individuals. He certainly knows that talent alone cannot guarantee prolonged success or financial security in a system that often uses young black athletes exploitively. Instead of bombarding his daughters with instant fame, Richard chooses to work on their future by taking his time and picking his strategy. His behaviour depicts the strong belief that sustainable success is not just opportunity. It requires vision, control and immunity from systematic traps. This perception corresponds to a realistic interpretation of the American Dream, with which one can be ready to fight structural inequalities with resilience and planning. As concerning this, the values of Richard also reflect the thoughts of Thomas Jefferson, who, like Adams, insisted on the role of education, as the basis of a strong society. Jefferson felt it was important to educate the people to guard their freedom and to forestall manipulation reaffirming this idea that power lies in the mental grooming.

A.2.2. Optimism

The optimism in the American Dream, as cited by Namee and Miller, is fundamentally based on the belief that America is a land of limitless opportunities, where people have no boundaries of origin. This idea advocates success from one's own effort and willpower, rather than through inherited status and privilege. Despite the fact that social disparities, as well as racial

and economic disparities, often prevent equal access to opportunities, the American Dream does not abandon its premise of personal awakening and transformation. This belief provides a cultural mindset that everyone believes they have the right to determine their destiny regardless of their background. This view is reinforced by Alexis de Tocqueville who emphasized that in America, achievement does not depend on hereditary titles, but on individual effort and skill. Therefore, the American Dream includes not only political liberation from oppression, but also economic freedom - the opportunity for people to pursue a better future using their own efforts. This is apparent in the quote that follows :

The girls nod, sorting out sleeping arrangements. One room, four beds, five girls. Serena gets in with Venus.

RICHARD

One day, not too long, someone's gon' hand you girls a check for one million dollars. You gon' buy as many beds as you want. (Bailyn 19)

Adams argues that many Americans are growing weary and losing faith in the covenant of the American Dream. He sees this phenomenon as a result of people misunderstanding the true meaning of the dream. In Adams' view, the American Dream is not simply a material achievement such as wealth or social status, but a deeper social ideal-the opportunity for every individual to develop to the fullest of their potential, unrestricted by birth conditions or social position. The weariness and suspicion of this dream points to the gap between the ideal and the social reality faced by society, where many people feel that hard work does not always result in the promised social mobility. Adams' statement reflects a realistic view of the American

Dream, acknowledging the structural barriers and inequalities that make the dream seem increasingly out of reach. However, in the dialogue fragment in *King Richard* (2021), Richard shows optimism in the belief that one day his family will reach the pinnacle of success. He does not care about the social disparities that exist in his region.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

*Now we going to go out here and we're going to play these matches
and we gon' compete, but we gon' to stay humble less
we not gon' to do it.*

(then, satisfied)

Y'all go ahead with yourself.

The girls head off.

Richard sits down next to Oracene. (Bailyn 10)

In the film *King Richard* (2021), Richard's attitude towards winning and competition shows a realistic approach to success. He realizes that while talent and winning are important, maintaining humility and integrity is the key to sustainability in the long journey towards the dream. This approach reflects the value of realism in the American Dream, where success is not only measured by external achievements, but also by one's self-awareness, mental attitude, and how one goes about the process. Richard not only encourages his daughters to win, but also to stay noodle and not be lulled by temporary achievements. This strategy shows that true success requires self-control and awareness of larger social realities.

Adams was an enthusiastic believer that a better life is not mainly characterized by material opulence, but rather by the general quality of life of the society. He pointed out that the virtue and education build a meaningful life. In his

opinion, success is not determined by the fact of having or by the society one lives in; however it is by how noble one act and level of knowledge such that one can use it to live a dignified life. By stating that “virtue and temperance in conduct” is necessary in a republic, he thought that character building plays the backbone to an effective society. This understanding goes along with the realistic reading of the American Dream that genuine success is not only occasioned by economic prospects but by moral integrity and intellectual readiness to cope with life’s challenges. Other words, Adams says the American Dream is not just about “having more” but as he states “being better”.

A.3. The Pursuit of Happiness

Based on Yacobi’s revelation, it is evident that the concept of pursuit of happiness encapsulated in the American dream is a problematic concept since happiness is itself an abstract and evanescent state that is hard to give a universal definition. For Yacobi, love, or the quest for happiness can be a chasing after the wind if one is stuck in some idealized image that has no distinct form. When people tend to be overly focused in chasing happiness in the future, they are most likely to overlook meaningful moments in the mundane life that contributes greatly in happiness itself. Therefore, instead of relentlessly chasing a shadow of happiness that is either obscure or indeterminable, it is better to seek the meaning to life than opt for a vague verity. In this regard, the search for happiness as one of the values in the American Dream should be better comprehended-not only in terms of material success or passing pleasure, but as a striving to find a future in life which was worthwhile. This can be seen in the following quote:

RICHARD

Don't you worry about those deals. I bet outside out that door, the hallway's full of fools just fighting to hand you a check but that's not what's important.

(beat)

Look at me. You just went toe to toe for two hours with the best player in the world and you made her knees shake and you did it with grace. You don't have respect for yourself now, you ain't gon' never have none. You're a champion, Venus Williams, and the whole world knows it. Walk out with your head up.

(finally)

I have never been more proud of a person in my whole life.

Venus smiles for her father's sake, but she's holding back tears, afraid he isn't right and. (Bailyn 122)

Richard in the dialog at the end of the scene in *King Richard (2021)* encourages Venus who feels failed and demoralized because she did not win the first place in the world championship event. The quotations of Muludi and Adi affirm that the pursuit of happiness is one of the key ingredients of the national identity of the United States. The happiness in America has been regarded as national purpose from the birth, not as something personal. Under the American Dream, the pursuit of happiness is the yardstick to measure success or failure. This implies that personal achievement is not determined by the material gain or social merit, but by the degree to which one finds fulfillment, freedom and meaning in his life. Therefore, the search for happiness is not only a moral norm, but also cultural and social one, which determines the understanding of Americans about success and failure in their

life.

B. Representation of Richard's Struggle to Achieve American Dream

In the context of Stuart Hall's representation theory, meaning is not a fixed and objective concept that can be attributed to an object or a person; it is developed through cultural behaviors, language constructs, and social constructs of sign systems. Hall underlines that in the process of representation society confers meaning to people, object and events in an interpretative structure that is contextual and dynamic. A thing such as a rock for instance has numerous significances based on the discourse towards it as a natural object, a boundary sign or an artifact. Therefore representation is not only a reflection of reality but also as a discursive practice that constructs and articulates reality (Hall 3).

This idea is applicable to the review of the film *King Richard* (2021), where the character of Richard Williams is not only presented as the figure of a father, but also as the embodiment of resistance, leadership, and the re-creation of the narrative of black success in the American society. Using the cinematic strategies and dialogue techniques, the film is not just offering the audience the facts of its biography, but, instead, influences how the audience perceives the figure of father, black families and fight against exploitative social structures. Richard's representation is based on three main approaches proposed by Hall – reflective, intentional, and constructionist approaches – that create, at the same time, the identity, ideology, and cultural values that the film is seeking to deliver to its potential viewers. Therefore, the depiction in this

movie becomes a way of destroying stereotypes and expression of the new discourse on who can own, define, and chase the American Dream.

B.1. Reflective Approach

Stuart Hall explained that the reflective approach, according to him, has a perception of language that is assumed to be transparent and neutral and serves to summarize and convey pre-existing meanings by itself, separate from the process of representation. Therefore, the relation of sign and referent is considered a fixed one-to-one relation, where the concept of meaning is fixed, final, and universal. Here, the concept of representation is understood as a straightforward depiction of an external reality, and the process of representation is reduced to nothing more than the act of transmitting a fixed truth, which is beyond language (Hall 24). That can be found in the following quote:

RICHARD

Well that's the one then. That's the one. You're gonna have any of these houses that you want. Beverly Hills. Hollywood Hills. Any of these hills, 'cause you got a plan and you gon' stick to it. When I was a little boy, my mom used to say: Son, the most strongest, most powerful, the most dangerous creature on this whole earth is a woman who know how to think. Ain't nothing she can't do. Y'all know how to think? (Bailyn, 27)

Richard is quoted in the film *King Richard (2021)* in which he says his daughters will own a home in Beverly Hills or the Hollywood Hills because they have a plan and are committed to it. This remark reflects a social idea that is already alive in American society, that a luxurious home is a symbol of success and achievement, a tangible image of a dream that can be achieved through hard work.

It is a mimetic depiction of American cultural reality.

In the second part of the dialogue in the film *King Richard (2021)*, Richard echoes a quote from his mother, who states that women who are capable of thinking are the most powerful and dangerous beings. This portrayal is not a new symbolic idea but rather a reflection of the values shaped by the character's life experiences. Richard does not create new meanings; instead, he reiterates the cultural beliefs that exist about female intelligence and strength.

B.2. Intentional Approach

The intentional approach to representation theory claims that the meaning of language depends on the purpose of the speaker or writer of the content. Stuart Hall declared that this can be considered as a strength of this approach when analyzing why people communicate ideas or meaning in a personalized way, but not as a complete theory of representation. This is because language is not a matter of private system. It is a social order with common conventions. The rules of language still have to apply to any meaning to be carried so that it may be understood by others, no matter how personal. Significance of language is not an absolute outcome on the part of individual purposes but rather a result of bargaining between individual intentions and meaning structures which are existing in language and cultural systems. That can be found in the following quote:

RICHARD

I'm going to get us some help. Venus and Serena gon' to shake up this world... least they better, 'cause they not gon' to make it as singers. (Bailyn 13)

In the part of the film *King Richard (2021)*, when Richard says that he will ask for help and when he says that Venus and Serena will “shake up this world”, he is stating his vision clearly with words. He is not just describing an actual reality but creating meaning and future with his personal intentions. He is developing identities for his daughter as agents of change, and with these words, she is depicting the world the way she wants it – not the way it is now.

The concept of representation is a process that involves the creation of meaning for concepts in our minds through language. Representation serves as a link between ideas and language, enabling people to make references to both the real and fictional worlds. In the intentional approach, meaning in representation is understood as the result of the explicit intention of the speaker or creator of the message, that the words mean what the individual who uttered them intended (Hall 17).

RICHARD

UNISSULA

(as Venus listens)

Now, I haven't been no great daddy. But I've never done nothing buy try and protect you. This next step you 'bout to take, it would be hard for anybody. But for you, you not just gon' be representing you. You gon' be representing every little black girl on earth. And you gonna be the first one going through that gate, and I just never wanted you to look up and see your daddy running away. (Bailyn 100)

In a dialog in the film *King Richard (2021)*, Richard expresses his deep conviction that women who have the ability to think are strong, even

“dangerous” in a patriarchal social context. This statement is not merely a reflection of reality, but rather a deliberate expression, meaning that it is a representation that contains personal and ideological messages conveyed by the character.

Richard is not merely presenting facts; he is expressing the worldview he wishes to instill in his daughters. He aims to convey that a woman's true strength stems not from her appearance or social status, but from her intelligence and capacity for critical thinking. This dialogue reflects the character's intention as a father who is dedicated to educating and preparing his daughters to be intellectually and mentally resilient.

B.3. Constructive Approach

In this subchapter, the constructionist approach in representation theory accepts that language is public and social in nature and is thus inseparable from meaning formation. Hall reveals that meaning does not come from objects themselves but individual intentions neither, but from the system of representations concepts and signs used by society in building reality (Hall 25). Here meaning is not perceived as an inherent and unchangeable phenomenon, but something generated by symbolic activities that develop on the basis of social interaction, culture and discourse.

The way people lived and thought in the United States in the early to mid-1990s played a key role in how the film constructed its story. At that period, African-Americans were affected by problems such as racial discrimination, difficulty in getting jobs and common beliefs that influenced

life in cities such as Compton, California. The film's characters were portrayed differently because of the unequal way society was organized. The concept of struggle and success was built through American society's traditions, the experiences of people and the common symbols they used at that time.

According to the constructionist approach, there exists a definite separation of the real world and the world of meanings developed in language and symbols. This approach does not deny the fact of the existence of physical reality, but states that the reality has meaning only after it is appreciated through the cultural perspective and language system used by the community. Therefore, meaning is not the thing that one will just find, but the product of a social construction, negotiation, and communication through a representation system. This approach can also be seen in the following quotes from *King Richard* (2021).

EXT. ANOTHER FANCY TENNIS CLUB - DAY

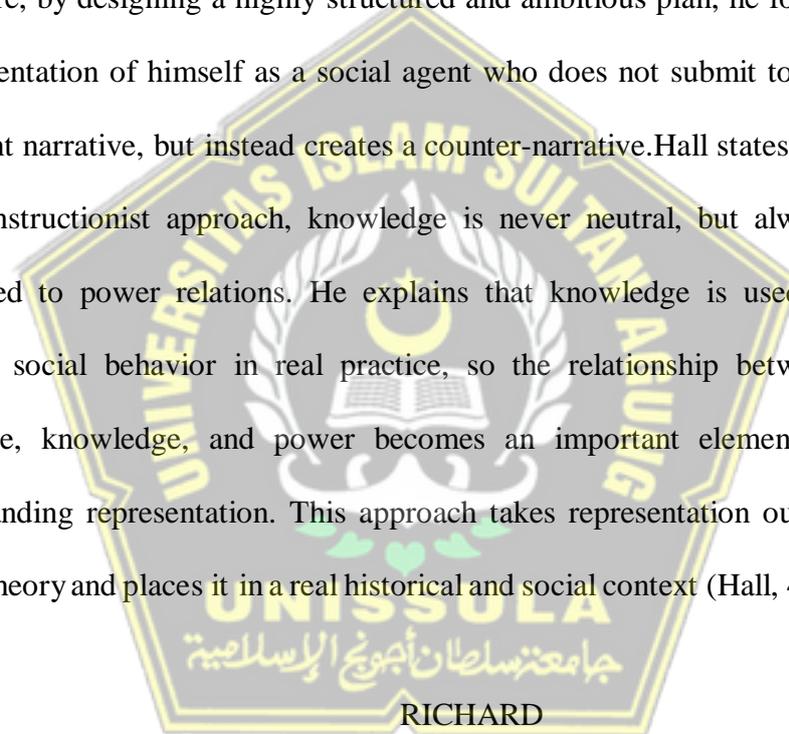
Richard's presentation continues to BUD COLLINS (60), the Bob Hope of tennis, listening graciously, poolside.

RICHARD

I wrote me a 78-page plan for their whole career before they was even born. (Bailyn 3).

In the film *King Richard* (2021), there is the context of Richard Williams' dialogue stating that he had written his daughter's career plans even before they were born; the statement is not just an expression of

personal intention. He is constructing a discourse about control, the future, and resistance to oppressive social systems. The plan is not only a family strategy, but also a form of knowledge production aimed at intervening in social structures, especially sports and education systems that tend to be unfair to the black community. Richard recognizes his social position as a black man in a system that often ignores the aspirations of his community. Therefore, by designing a highly structured and ambitious plan, he forms a representation of himself as a social agent who does not submit to the dominant narrative, but instead creates a counter-narrative. Hall states that in a constructionist approach, knowledge is never neutral, but always connected to power relations. He explains that knowledge is used to regulate social behavior in real practice, so the relationship between discourse, knowledge, and power becomes an important element in understanding representation. This approach takes representation out of formal theory and places it in a real historical and social context (Hall, 47).



Sittin' at the country club with your legs crossed, eatin' a burger on a tab, like you're Queen of Sheba. Never take anything from anybody for free. Everything in this place got hooks in it (Bailyn 67).

In a constructionist approach, meaning is formed through a system of social representations that reflect the values, power and ideologies in society (Hall 61) . This dialogue shows how Richard

constructs the meaning of symbols of luxury (such as country clubs and free food) not as a form of kindness or prestige, but as part of a power system embedded with traps and manipulation. Richard represents these elite places as spaces that appear welcoming but are actually laden with hidden controls. Through his language, he dismantles the dominant discourse on luxury and shows that beneath the comfort, there are social structures that regulate and suppress. This reflects how meaning in constructionism does not come from the object itself, but is shaped by the social context and cultural experiences used to make sense of the world.

Despite his pain, Richard laughs.

RICHARD

*That's funny. That was funny. When I was your age,
I used to have to fight every day.*

*If it wasn't the Ku Klux Klan or police
or the white boys from the next town, somebody
was always beatin' on me for something.
And I didn't have no daddy to stand in their way.*

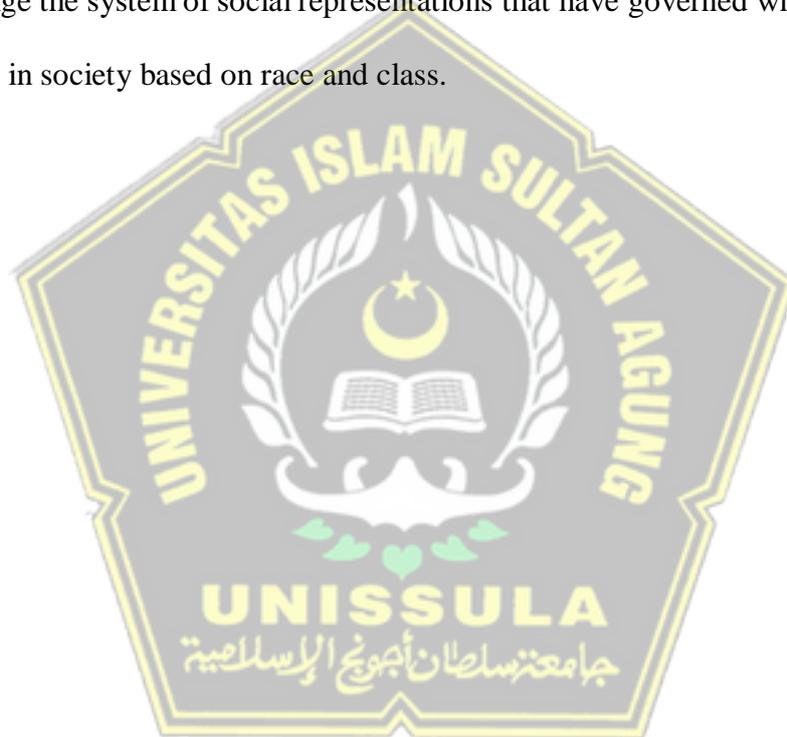
(beat)

*This world ain't never had no respect for
Richard Williams, but they gonna respect y'all.*

They gonna respect y'all. (Bailyn 14)

In the constructionist approach, Stuart Hall emphasizes that meaning is connected to communication and social structure, power, and ideological control. Meaning plays a role in regulating how people think and act, and it serves as a tool for establishing social norms that determine who is valued and who is marginalized

(Hall 4).Richard Williams expressed in his dialogue in the film *King Richard* (2021) that he had not received any accolades from the society. However, he is determined to ensure that his children receive the respect he feels he has been denied. This sentiment is deeply personal but also highlights the social structure that historically places Black people like Richard in a disrespected position in American society. By building on the success of his children, Richard is attempting to intervene and challenge the system of social representations that have governed who is worthy of respect in society based on race and class.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Chapter V includes the conclusions and suggestions. The conclusions summarize the research findings and provide answers to all the research questions outlined in Chapter I. The recommendations are suggestions made by the researcher, based on additional references found during the analysis of this final project.

A. Conclusion

The English language has been evolving since the 18th century, and as a result, it has reached a significant level of development in the world today. This evolution allows earlier literary works to serve as inspiration for contemporary literature. A notable example of this is the film *King Richard (2021)*. In this study, the researcher analyzed the concept of the American Dream and the portrayal of Richard's struggle to achieve it in the film *King Richard (2021)*.

The research and discussion in the previous chapter led to the following conclusions. Based on the research and discussion in the previous chapter, the following conclusions can be made..This study identified ten data points related to the values of the American Dream. In addition, a second focus of the research examined the representation of Richard Williams' struggle to achieve the American Dream, which yielded six data points. All data were obtained from the script of the film *King Richard (2021)*.

The values of the American Dream are clearly embodied in the character of Richard Williams in the film *King Richard* (2021). Throughout Richard's journey, themes similar to individualism, hard work, realism, optimism, and the pursuit of happiness are prominently reflected—each integral to the American Dream. These ideals are evident in his reactions, decision-making, and dialogue throughout the film. Richard exemplifies individualism through his unwavering belief in his personal vision for his daughters' futures, even when it conflicts with expert opinions or societal expectations. His dedication to hard work is shown through his relentless commitment to training Venus and Serena under difficult circumstances. Realism is conveyed through his sharp awareness of the racial, economic, and systemic challenges they face, while optimism emerges in his steadfast belief in their potential for success despite adversity. Furthermore, the film portrays the pursuit of happiness not as mere material gain, but as a quest for dignity, purpose, and familial fulfillment. Ultimately, *King Richard* presents the American Dream not as a simple or singular goal, but as a complex, hard-won journey shaped by effort, conviction, and resilience.

Second, this study concludes that the values of the American Dream in the film *King Richard* (2021) are represented through multiple layers of meaning, which can be analyzed using Stuart Hall's theory of representation. The film incorporates elements from the reflective, intentional, and constructionist approaches. In the reflective approach, Richard's words and actions mirror dominant social ideals of success, family, and achievement—such as owning a house in Beverly Hills and believing that hard work leads to upward mobility. The

intentional approach emphasizes how Richard's personal values and beliefs shape the meaning behind his dialogue, particularly in relation to education, discipline, and female empowerment.

Meanwhile, constructionists explore how the film adds meaning to the way we think about race, gender, and class. He breaks conceptions about black fathers and describes how black children might find success in the sport, despite being seen as outsiders. The different layers of representation confirm that the film is discussing cultural meanings of the American Dream as much as it tells its personal story. For this reason, the film *King Richard* (2021) shows the story of wins and also the ways people resist obstacles in the system.

B. Suggestion

For future, it is suggested to analyze films or other media texts by using reflective, thoughtful, and constructionist methods to examine the way meaning is shown through language and cultural signs. In addition, this research is limited to a single film and one theoretical framework, so future research could expand on this by exploring different films, employing more diverse theories, or focusing on more specific issues. Themes such as gender, race, and identity politics in American cinema offer rich potential for further investigation, particularly concerning the representation of the American Dream across varied social and historical contexts.



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