

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

The concept of American individualism, deeply rooted in the values of autonomy, self-reliance, and the pursuit of personal freedom, has long been a defining characteristic of American culture (Bellah et al., 1985:27). According to Bellah, individualism in the United States is closely linked to the idea of the "American Individualism," where success and identity are shaped through personal effort and self-expression, independent of societal constraints (Bellah et al., 1985:27). This notion encourages Americans to seek personal fulfillment as a route to self-identity and often navigates the tension between self and society. In recent years, however, social and technological advancements have complicated this pursuit of individuality. This distinctly American orientation toward individualism can be traced through historical developments, from the Enlightenment ideals that informed the nation's founding documents to the frontier experience that valorized self-sufficiency (Turner, 1890:199). De Tocqueville et al., (2000:483) famously observed this tendency, noting that Americans "owe nothing to any man, they expect nothing from any man; they acquire the habit of always considering themselves as standing alone." This historical foundation has evolved into what Bellah et al. later termed "expressive individualism," where self-discovery and personal authenticity become paramount cultural values (Bellah et al., 1985:33).

The phenomena of American Individualism is also reflected in movies. One of the movies that describes American Individualism is a movie entitled *Anyone But You* (2023) . This movie tells about romantic comedy that reflects deeper themes rooted in American cultural values, particularly the ideology of individualism. This dynamic is echoed in *Anyone But You* (2023) , as characters

grapple with societal expectations while striving to assert their identities. The movie follows Bea and Ben, meet at a coffee shop and have an instant connection that leads to spending the night together. However, after a misunderstanding the next morning, they part ways on terrible terms. Several months later, they unexpectedly reunite at Bea's sister Halle and Ben's best friend Claudia wedding. They are in love and planning their destination wedding in Australia. Their relationship is portrayed as loving and uncomplicated, serving as a contrast to Bea and Ben's contentious dynamic, forcing them into each other's company despite their mutual dislike. To make the wedding events less awkward, Bea and Ben decide to pretend to be a couple. Amidst the wedding preparations, Bea is carrying a significant secret that she has dropped out of law school without telling her family. This decision reflects her journey toward personal authenticity and her struggle to follow her own path rather than meeting others' expectations. Bea fears disappointing her family and feels pressure to maintain the appearance of success, especially at her sister's wedding. As the celebrations unfold in the picturesque Australian setting, Halle and Claudia's straightforward love story provides the backdrop against which Bea and Ben's complicated relationship eventually transforms from hatred to romance, while Bea also struggles with when and how to reveal her true life situation to her family. Through its characters, the movie portrays key traits of American individualism, such as personal freedom, self-reliance, autonomy in relationships, and the pursuit of happiness and self-determination. These values are not only expressed in the protagonists' actions, but also shape their interactions, decisions, and conflicts throughout the narrative.

The writer is interested in analysis the movie *Anyone But You* (2023) due to several reasons. Firstly, the movie *Anyone But You* (2023) provides a nuanced depiction of this cultural tension by exploring characters' journeys in search of American Individualism. Set against the backdrop of modern American life, the film presents a relevant case for analyzing how the core

characteristics of American individualism are expressed through character development, relational dynamics, and symbolic interactions. Secondly, the structure of the movie itself follows a typical American individualist narrative like characters overcome obstacles through personal growth rather than community intervention. The resolution hinges on individual choices and personal happiness rather than adaptation to social expectations. Thirdly, despite the significant body of literature examining American individualism in dramatic and independent films, relatively little academic attention has been paid to its manifestation in commercial romantic comedies. This research thesis addresses this gap by demonstrating how even seemingly light entertainment engages with profound cultural narratives, by expanding our understanding of how individualism permeates all levels of American cultural production rather than being confined to "serious" artistic expressions. Related to this research thesis, the writer will describe deeply the characteristic of American Individualism, analyze how cultural symbolic reflects these individualistic values through character interactions and identity formation, and investigate the effect of American Individualism in *Anyone But You (2023)*.

## **1.2 Research Question**

- 1.2.1 What are the characteristics of American Individualism in *Anyone But You Movie (2023)*?
- 1.2.2 How does cultural symbolic reflect American individualism in the movie *Anyone But You (2023)*?
- 1.2.3 What is the effect of American Individualism on the character's relationship in *Anyone But You (2023)*?

## **1.3 Research Aims**

- 1.3.1 To describe the key characteristics of American individualism as represented in *Anyone But You* (2023).
- 1.3.2 To analyze how cultural symbolic between characters reflect and reinforce American Individualistic values throughout the narrative in *Anyone But You* (2023).
- 1.3.3 To investigate how American individualism effect the development of relationships between characters in *Anyone But You* (2023).

#### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

*Anyone But You* (2023), directed by Will Gluck, serves as the object of this research thesis to explore the theme of American Individualism. This research thesis examines American individualism in the film *Anyone But You* (2023) through both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. The intrinsic analysis focuses on elements within the film itself are character and characterization, setting, and conflict. The extrinsic analysis connects the writer will discuss characteristics of American Individualism, how cultural symbolic between characters and effect of American Individualism in *Anyone But You* (2023).

#### **1.5 Previous Study**

To understand more about this research thesis, the writer has read some similar research. The writer discovers some research regarding American Individualism and research with the same object as a benchmark in this research thesis. The first previous study is an article entitled *The Invidualism of the cash family potrayed in the film movie captain fantastic (2016)* written by Nugrahaning Anindita Cahyani (2021). The writer focuses on how does the individualism of the cash family is reflected in the movie *Captain Fantastic*. This research is particularly relevant to

Anyone But You, as it allows for a deeper understanding of how gender influences the characters' journeys of self-discovery and the ways they resist or conform to societal pressures.

The second previous study is entitled "The American Individualism as Reflected in Gardner's Character in the Film *The Pursuit of Happyness: A Sociological Approach*" by Londa et al. (2022) explores how the main character, Chris Gardner, embodies the values of American individualism through his perseverance, self-reliance, and determination in overcoming adversity. This study is relevant to *Anyone But You* (2023), as it similarly portrays characters who strive for personal fulfillment and independence while navigating social and familial expectations. It offers a comparative perspective on how American cultural ideals influence character motivations and identity construction in different cinematic narratives.

The third previous study is entitled "Revealing Individualism in *The Adjustment Bureau* Movie: A Critical Discourse Analysis". The *Adjustment Bureau* movie depicts the character David Norris who struggled to get the autonomy of himself because his life is under controlled by The Adjustment Bureau which has full control of human's life to make people live life based on their plan. David Norris as the main character in the movie is believed to construe individualism. This analysis examines how the film challenges the concept of destiny by portraying a protagonist who defies a predetermined path to assert his personal freedom and autonomy. Through critical discourse analysis, the study highlights how language and narrative choices reflect the ideals of American individualism. This research is particularly relevant to *Anyone But You* (2023), as both films emphasize the pursuit of self-determination and the resistance to external control, making it a valuable reference for understanding how individualism is thematically and symbolically constructed in contemporary cinema.

All of these research are similar based on the object and the theory used. This research thesis is very different from any other previous research by focusing on the American study approach and by applying the theory of Cultural Symbolic.

## **1.6 Research Method**

### **1.6.1 Research Approach**

Based on the background of the study that reveals American Individualism in *Anyone But You*, the writer uses American studies approach. According to Fichkin (2021:5), American studies approach is an interdisciplinary methodology that examines American culture, identity, and society through multiple analytical lenses. The analysis focuses on interpreting the behaviors, decisions, and interpersonal dynamics of the characters, particularly how they embody core aspects of American individualism, such as personal freedom, autonomy, and self-reliance by using theory of Cultural Symbolic by Clifford Geertz's.

### **1.6.2 Method of Data Collection**

In this research thesis, the methodology involves employing library research to explore the theme of identity and individualism as portrayed in the film *Anyone But You* (2023). According to (Pickard, 2013:33), library research is a systematic process that involves finding, locating, and examining various documents and sources that are relevant to a particular research problem. Related to this library research, there are two sources of data, namely primary and secondary data. Primary data are those which are collected afresh and for the first time, and, thus happen to be the original one in character (Kothari, 2004:95), while secondary data means data that are available; i.e., to support the first data they refer to the data which have already been collected and analyzed

by someone else (Kothari, 2004). The primary data of this research thesis is the movie script of *Anyone But You*. Meanwhile, the secondary data of this research thesis journal articles, books, and previous studies.

## **1.7 Organization of Writing**

This research thesis will be divided into the following 5 chapters :

### **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

This chapter contains six sub-chapters, including the background of the study, research question, research aims, scope of the study, previous studies, research method and organization of the writing.

### **CHAPTER II : INTRINSIC THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

This chapter is divided into a review of relevant literature frameworks that are utilized to explain the narrative elements which cover characters and characterization, conflict, setting and cinematographic which include the shot, camera angles, and sound aspects of the movie.

### **CHAPTER III : EXTRINSIC THEORITICAL FRAMEWORKS**

This chapter contains a theoritical frameworks of the estrinsic aspect related to the research thesis which covers the historical of development American Individualism and theory of American Individualism.

### **CHAPTER IV : DISCUSSION**

The analysis chapter is the main chapter that includes intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of the object and answer the research problem. The intrinsic aspects include the discussion of character, characterizations, and conflict while the extrinsic aspects show the discussion of research problem which are the characteristics of American Individualism such as personal freedom, self-reliance, autonomy in relationships, and the pursuit of happiness and self-determination. The extrinsic aspects also applies the theory of Cultural Symbolic to show how American individualism is reflected through role taking, the formation of self-concept, the use of social symbols, and the negotiation of identity through interactions. Lastly, the effects of American individualism on the characters' relationships, particularly in terms of family conflict, independence, friendship, and trust.

## **CHAPTER V : CONCLUSION**

This chapter contains of the summary and concludes the discussion of this research thesis.

## **REFERENCES**