

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The concept of Afro-American father' stereotypes had a long and complicated history in the U.S. The individual's belief in generalizing the group is firmly held even though the truth had not been proven (Rasiah, 2016). It started with the history of Afro-American, which had much impact on men. Then a stereotype was naturally formed in the U.S. in viewing Afro-American role models, especially a father, which had become "*a mind virus*" in Western countries.

Tamrin stated "*Afro-Americans are known as the United States society are the most significant single-race minority and part of the second largest group after white people in the U.S.*" (Tamir, 2021). These people in the history of the U.S. used to be a slave and persisted in the slave trade. The history of a slave has influenced the discrimination act by white people for these people, especially for black men. Furthermore, they did not have the freedom or opportunity to get what they wanted, as simple as respecting one another. This position creates some complicated circumstances for an Afro-American group in the U.S. and even built negative stereotypes.

Through the historical moments, Afro-Americans established their position in the U.S in 1977 during that time. The American Civil Rights Movement petitioned for the dismissal of discrimination to declare that freedom was an inherent right for

all human species. *“Private or public tyranny are alike detestable”* (Tsesis, 2004, p. 12). It aimed to attain economic and political independence and freedom from oppression by white people. In a sense, it made a goal of improving the lives of all underprivileged Americans. However, John Lock, as one of the followers of the Civil Rights Movement, noted the ideals of universal freedom (Tsesis, 2004). He called human rights something that cannot be revoked and is not subject to an arbitrary government system. Unfortunately, Civil Rights do not guarantee the rights of the Negroes mentioned above. Furthermore, they were struggling to live their lives with the negative public views they got among whites from that year until now. In all things, black people are constantly comparing to western people in every aspect, which focuses on men. They are accused of being troublemakers and rioters so that their presence as a figure is doubted.

Among their movement in the U.S. is constructing the negative stereotype that appears in American society. *“That white racist attitude is operationalizing through oppressive and discriminatory actions, illustrates how slaves should think and behave”* (Taylor, Guy-Walls, Wilkerson, & Addae, 2019, p. 214). At first, it was only a stereotype based on biological differences in accent and skin color. However, these stereotypes increasingly persist and are even built-in new forms, turning into social constructions to legitimize the superiority of certain races. Through that incident, systematic racism saw in the presence of an Afro-American male throughout history, which has caused little opportunity and space either as learners in schools, as adolescents, or even father or absent fathers. It is because of *“Many Afro-Americans, especially men, are stereotyped as stupid, cruel, lazy, and*

*dangerous criminals*" (Oliver, 2003, p. 5). That leads to the history that has occurred, where of Afro-Americans demanding their human rights as human beings is considered provocative and triggers riots. This picture is creating when mentioning Black people. In addition, stereotype, criminal justice, and prejudice measures have far-reaching implications for these men relative to the economic support they can provide their families, their involvement in information, and the emotional impact their absence has on their lives. That certainly affects the formation of the stereotype of Afro-American Father in the U.S., who are constantly comparing to Western fathers.

Lopez (2015) was clear to point out, in society and the media, Afro-American fathers are stereotyped as having absent from their children's lives. Thus, in 2013, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's data shows that 71.5 percent of Afro children were born to unmarried women, compared to 29.3 percent of white children. However, the research conducted by Lopez in 2015 said 2.5 million from 4.2 million black fathers, or about 59.5 percent, support their children. All of the info paints a more nuanced view of Afro-American fatherhood than the stereotypes suggest. There are real systemic issues at play, but more specialized in the stereotype of black fathers that get bias by people within the United States during this case.

Stereotype itself is a matter where a person or group decides to judge another group only based on remembering the type of group that is the plain representation or distinctive (Bordalo, Coffman, Gennaioli, & Shleifer, 2015). In

this particular case, stereotypes indeed highlight differences between groups and are highly inaccurate. They sometimes consist of doubt and imply an overreaction to information that generates or confirms the stereotype and an underreaction to information that contradicts it. Stereotypes can change if new information appears to change the group's most distinctive character (Bordalo, Coffman, Gennaioli, & Shleifer, 2015), which can be through media, movies, or literature.

For years, much of the movie has been criticized for its representation of African Americans. African Americans have often been portrayed in stereotypical job roles, with negative personality characteristics, underachievers, and negative stereotypes. Of course, this indirectly has a destructive impact on Afro-Americans from the perspective of people viewing Black people after watching a movie that negates the presence of an Afro person. Therefore, at this time, along with the changing times, the appearance of Afro-American movies is very varied, which used to be a Black movie that presented history or events that relate to the life or presence of an Afro-American itself, currently contains stories with different nuances. Moreover, the Black Lives Matter movement was used as a protest because there are still strong racist cases that have occurred until now and have become a sensitive matter in the U.S. (Ghandnoos, 2014). Behind it all, the existence of black movies today is to prove history and emerge the lives value of minority groups; as the studies noted, T.V. and Black movies are used to describe the importance of Afro-Americans (Redfern, 2005). One of them is *The Pursuit of Happyness* movie, as an outspoken representation of people who seem to oppose the negative stereotype of the Afro-American in the U.S (Zarkasih, 2020).

Furthermore, this thesis will understand the social context and any critical in the corresponding environment. *“Through the sociological approach in the literature, such as the scheme, culture, history, and human life, and try to know social phenomena by collecting and analyzing empirical data”* (Eagleton, 1988, p. 469). Because every line story is influenced by the world view that is very important for the formation of the story, such as life experiences, setting, plot, and other elements are presented based on the writer's experiences (Samanik, 2018). More clearly, this approach is used as a weapon to discover how social issues arise and formed into a social doctrine regarding the stereotype of the Afro-American Father in the U.S. that will be denied by Christ Gardner in *The Pursuit of Happyness* movie.

*The Pursuit of Happyness* movie is an autobiographical movie with a background in the early 1980s in San Francisco, the United States, adopted from the novel within the same title released in 2006s. According to Marcus (2013) reviewed; it presents the colors of the single Afro-American father, Christ Gardner, as the head of the family and as the father with custody of Christopher, his son. Then, the movie supported a true story that reflects the lifetime of the characters on how reality takes place, family problems, economy, children, divorce, and the journey of life as Afro-American people where Gardner was the struggle the better life and reached equality in his environment. Furthermore, the film have been studying in psychology and sociology by Tarigan in 2009, connecting the character's personality as an Afro-American and American Dream in the U.S. (Tarigan, 2009). However, *The Pursuit of Happyness* has received awards in various

nominations for its attention has not been studied from the perspective of father figures, especially Afro-American fathers. That is what makes this movie exciting and unique to be discussed in scientific analysis.

Through the several things have been mentioning about how the stereotype is formed and sometimes ends with prejudice in viewing an Afro-American father in the U.S. *The Pursuit of Happyness* movie has a different picture of the negative stereotypes that appeared in society. It also becomes knowledge for the readers and makes people more open-minded about what they see as terrible does not mean the same thing will end badly either. To be more specific, through the sociological approach and stereotype theory, the writer tries to describe and reveal the figure of an Afro-American father against the stereotype in The U.S. through the character in *The Pursuit of Happyness* movie.

## **1.2 Research Question**

By having the detail explanation that becomes the background of this study, the research question can be formulated into:

How does *the Pursuit of Happyness* movie delineate counter discourse of Afro-American father in the U.S.?

## **1.3 Research Objective**

From the problem formulated, this thesis has objective to delineate counter discourse of Afro-American father in *the Pursuit of Happiness* movie

## **1.4 Use of the Study**

Theoretically, in the academic field, this research is intended to give more understanding, voice voiceless, and knowledge toward Afro-American fathers depicted in the United States. Especially about the negative perspective of Afro-American fathers or the topic presented in this study to reveal and describe a Afro-American fathers through *The Pursuit of Happyness* movie against the U.S.'s stereotype of Afro-American fathers.

### **1.4.1 Practical Use**

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### **1.4.2 Theoretical Use**

This study intends to give benefit readers and the subsequent researchers who want to research the same topic. Readers will know how they have to appreciate or share the meaning of the father's role as the father or Afro-American fathers with custody. Also, they will know how Afro-American Fathers portrait has differentiation on how the stereotype has been creating in the society.

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

To avoid broader discussion on the studies, the writer needs to limit the analysis. This study's focus is the stereotype denial of Afro-American fathers through *The Pursuit of Happyness* movie. To reveal it, the writer applies the sociological approach and stereotype theories. The cinematography is also applies to delicate the stereotype denial from picture, dialogue, setting, and camera angel.



