

Failure in Gaining the American Dream in Sam Shepard's *Curse of the Starving Class*

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Abstract

This study highlights the importance of understanding the complexities of the American Dream, and the challenges that can arise in pursuing it, both on personal and societal levels. This study sought to investigate the failure of an American family in achieving their American dreams; how they attempted to achieve their dreams, what caused them to fail, and what the consequences were for their family. Based on library research, the authors used a descriptive qualitative method. The study used Marx's theory of class struggle to analyze how the characters' dreams are influenced and limited by their social class. The study also used the concept of the American Dream, which has three components: a richer, better, and fuller life. The primary data were derived from the script of Sam Shepard's play, *Curse of the Starving Class*. The supporting data came from English literature journals, English literary theories, e-books, and other internet sources. The data was classified, analyzed, and then presented in a report. According to the study that the writers conducted, all the characters in the play had their dreams, but none of them were realized. This study sheds light on the complex nature of the American Dream. This study reveals the obstacles and challenges that can stand in the way of success, as well as the consequences of such failure. The study finds two factors that make the characters fail to achieve their dreams, namely the internal and external factors. The internal factors consist of the broken family structure, financial problems or poverty, negative escapism, failure in self-reflection, and unrealistic dreams, while the external factors come from a lack of opportunities, societal pressure, and predatory business practices.

Keywords: American Dream, American Family, Curse of Starving Class, Marxist Theory, Sam Shepard

1. Introduction

Sam Shepard was one of the most productive, well-known, and revered playwrights in the United States. Shepard has accomplished eleven Obie Awards despite only ever writing for Off-Broadway and Off-Off-Broadway theater. For *Buried Child*, he received a Pulitzer Prize in 1979. Shepard was nominated for an Oscar for his performance as Colonel Chuck Yeager in *The Right Stuff*, and his script for *Wim Wenders' Paris, Texas* achieved the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival (1983). The Drama Desk voted *A Lie of the Mind* the best new play of the 1985–1986 season (Mambrol, 2019). Beginning in the late 1970s, Shepard's plays gained depth, richness, and a profound sense of place, putting him in the company of such illustrious American dramatists as Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams. Samuel Beckett is the god of contemporary play (McNulty, 2017). Leslie Wade asserts "Sam Shepard is the playwright who has received the most attention and praise in modern American theatre history. He "has attracted audiences with an effulgent, often mesmerizing drama." (El-Hoseini, 2016).

Even Shepard's minor works and oddities are valuable since he was so rational with his themes, which included the relationship between toxic fathers and their sons as well as between toxic men and women, the excellency and imperilment of chauvinism, the significance of the American flag, and the reliability of urban society to reinvent themselves when the economy dissatisfies them, or society neglects them. (Seitz, 2017).

Sam Shepard was widely recognized as one of the most innovative writers of his generation. Critics praised him for his piercing depictions of partners, siblings, and lovers dealing with themes of failure, identity, and the ephemeral nature of the American ideal (Hudson, 2017). Shepard's plays portray an imperfect family where most of the members lack affection, caring, and a sense of belonging. According to Abdelsemie in Sumarsono (2021), Shepard's plays represent the American family as violent and contradictory rather than as a haven of

safety from a harsh outside world. Instead of experiencing the comforts of love, security, ease of soul, and fulfillment, its members suffer from familial famine, a loss of belonging, and a lack of confidence.

Sam Shepard, a recently deceased Off-Off-Broadway playwright, scriptwriter, actor, director, and Pulitzer Prize winner, is widely regarded as one of the greatest dramatists of his generation. Shepard is regarded as the most American playwright among contemporary dramatists because his plays frequently depict the American West and blend the concept of American national identity with past myths and images of America (Hachlerová 2018). Shepard is most well-known for the so-called family plays, which are primarily concerned with the investigation of the American family and clashing family dynamics as well as changes in perceptions of American identity.

Shepard paints a portrayal of the American family to criticize the American family and common American family myths, such as the idea that if each family member strictly fulfills their assigned duty within the family, society will come to a state of social peace, if not utopia. The modern American family is seen by him as a broken social structure whose members are hopelessly estranged, cynical, and still suffering from psychic and emotional wounds (Lee, 2003).

Richard Eder in Barone (2017) stated that Sam Shepard not only criticizes the anarchy and anomie of American society, but he also laments it. His acidic visuals and absurdity-filled settings never mellow to acknowledge the existence of a lament, yet it is nonetheless there. Mr. Shepard is an extraordinarily gifted playwright who does not take criticisms for granted. He struggles against it at the possibility of being flung.

Shepard's 1979 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *Buried Child* has been his most scathing examination of the collapse of family values and the fictitious primacy of the traditional patriarch, but the theme of the family and the unresolvable conflicts, abuses, and rivalries that fuel it were present in many of his best-known works from the 1970s and 1980s, including *Curse of the Starving Class*, *True West*, *Fool for Love*, and the underappreciated, *The Gold* (Rooney, 2017).

Bottom stated that *Curse of the Starving Class* is typically categorized as a "family play" and is seen as a sign of Shepard's "coming toward the mainstream of 'serious' American drama, adding to the role of the family plays by Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, and Tennessee Williams (Akilli, 2004).

Every family member is preparing for their fight against adultery, fierce sibling rivalry, and neglect as they each fight for independence and stability. In *Curse of the Starving Class*, a family farm goes bankrupt, and shady real estate deals take place (Mc. Bride, 2000). In *Curse of the Starving Class*, a postmodern American family's relationship breakdown and elimination are explored. There are individuals in this family who toil agonizingly and incessantly to find their place there. This play's opening scene paints a picture of discord and disharmony (Baqer, 2018). The family serves as a microcosm of society. Shepard wanted his portrayal of a failing American family to be a critique of his community. The crisis of masculinity in *Curse of the Starving Class* seems to be caused by the demise of the postmodern family (Mokbel, 2013).

The *Curse of the Starving Class* depicts strained family relationships. They are trapped in social and domestic situations, and their familial relationships have lost harmony. They are spiritually hungry, emotionally devastated, and psychologically exhausted. In the pursuit of their insatiable desires, they become inherently cruel to one another (Pokhrel, 2018). Shepard's *The Curse of the Starving Class* displays Shepard's disapproving viewpoint on how families and men, in general, are treated in American culture. Shepard is quite critical of how Western families are now structured. He seems to be able to include highly selfish or even crazy conduct in his plays. In the play, he challenges the authority of society, led by men, to show how the American Dream has failed (Saeedabadi & Shahabi, 2015).

Curse of the Starving Class depicts the American dream through the eyes of each member of the family. Everyone in *Curse of the Starving Class*, apart from Wesley, is traveling, at least conceptually. Ella imagines traveling to Europe. Emma, her daughter, visualizes herself traveling to Baja California. Taylor, a dubious attorney, and Weston flee to Mexico. There is nowhere to go (O'Toole, 2011). The different dreams that each member of the family has caused the family serious problems. They fail to build a harmonious family since each of them has a conflict with the other. Weston has lost his role both as a husband and a father, since both his wife and children do not have any respect for him anymore, and each of them just tries to make his or her dream come true, not the family dream.

This study analyzed the American Dream that each character in Sam Shepard's *Curse of the Starving Class* has. This study also analyzed how they tried to make their dreams come true, whether they succeeded or not, and the effects of their dreams on the whole family. And to analyze these problems, the writers used the concept of the American Dream. This study is innovative in the approach to why a family of Americans was unable to realize their American aspirations. The American Dream has been the subject of numerous studies; however, this study examines the idea using *Curse of the Starving Class* by Sam Shepard, a specific piece of literature.

When we ask about the meaning of the "American dream," almost everybody around the world will give some different variations of civil mobility, the American happiness story, or the self-made man. They will use the image of a white picket fence, which represents economic self-sufficiency and security; many will connect the expression to the country of opportunity for newcomers (Churchwell, 2021). The term the American Dream was coined for the first time in a book entitled *Epic of America*. The original "American Dream" was a dream of equality, justice, and democracy for the whole country rather than a dream of personal wealth (Diamond, 2018).

The *Epic of America*, a book by James Truslow Adams, is where the phrase "American Dream" first appeared. He claimed that everyone has the potential for and the right to live in a land where they can enjoy a better, richer, and more fulfilling life. The ideal social order allows everyone to realize their full potential and is one in which they are welcomed for who they are, regardless of their station in life or the luck

of their birth (Murphy, 2010). The American Dream enables everyone to achieve their pleasure in an equitable democratic society that is, just, and fair (Fettke, 2021).

The American Dream brings about the hallucination of equivalency, but control and wealth leverage an individual's socioeconomic outcomes in the United States. The truth is that the nation's fortune is focused on the hands of a few affluent individuals, and the separation between the well-endowed and broke in the country is growing. The Dream is an ugly thing because it de-emphasizes the fact that wealth and power are what rule the United States. Proponents of this dream argue that anyone can succeed in this land of opportunity if they transfigure themselves and use their endowment (IvyPanda, 2019).

The phrase "nation of immigrants" is frequently used to describe the United States of America. The possibility of realizing the American Dream has drawn immigrants from all over the world to the nation for millennia. However, a lot of immigrants have entered the country illegally in recent years or continued to reside there after their visas have expired (Meyer, 2010). Most people who move to the United States aspire of achieving the "American Dream"—being able to make a good living, purchase a home, send children to school, and establish a life there regardless of social standing or place of birth. New immigrants are attracted by the possibility of a better life for themselves and their children, even though they may be fleeing "push factors" like violence, poverty, and persecution. Some immigrants enter the country well-educated, rich, and English-fluent, but some others are not (Ashe & Wilson, 2019).

It takes several steps to realize the American Dream, and some people find it far simpler than others to get from one step to the next. Although having those characteristics can help by placing a person in the center of the funnel, being intelligent, white, and coming from a wealthy family are not guarantees that a person can realize the American Dream. It is made easier to achieve the final aim with solid elementary education, further education, and good employment. In contrast, having lower skill levels or having a poorer upbringing puts one at a disadvantage from the outset. To reach the funnel's center, one must traverse a greater distance, which presents more challenges (Kurtzleben, 2014). That is why for some people it is not difficult to achieve the American Dream, but for others, it is hard to do. For some people, achieving the American dream may entail striving for a happy existence that includes secure work, a family, and wealth or success in life. Due to everyone having the same opportunities, the American dream is made achievable. For some, this dream is merely a fantasy that cannot come true. The American dream is not simple to obtain, but it is highly doable with passion, effort, and dedication.

This study investigates how an American family tried to accomplish their American ideals, what prevented them from succeeding, what the consequences were for the family, and how the characters' aspirations were affected and constrained by their socioeconomic class. The writers hope that readers can understand how social classes interact and compete with one another for resources, as well as how the unequal allocation of power impacts people's lives and aspirations. This knowledge sheds insight into the larger social and economic institutions that influence people's opportunities and aspirations. According to class struggle theory, capitalist countries are characterized by structural inequality. This analysis demonstrates how structural disparities can exacerbate poverty cycles and prevent people from achieving their goals. A critical analysis of capitalist systems is made possible by the application of class conflict theory, and this theory underlines the need for social and economic justice and illuminates the perspectives of the working class. This study gives voice to people who are frequently ignored or marginalized in society's prevailing narratives. This analysis encourages critical thinking and urges radical change in wealth redistribution, social welfare, and the development of more inclusive regimes.

The study examines how the characters' aspirations are affected and constrained by their social class using Marx's theory of class struggle. The American Dream, which consists of three elements, is another idea included in the study, a more abundant, superior, and full life. Because the American Dream has been interpreted incorrectly in modern American society, it appears to be a false consciousness (Karinak120, 2012). Marx would concur that capitalism misrepresents the American Dream idea because the American Dream can only exist in a society where everyone has the same opportunity to pursue pleasure and develop themselves to the best extent possible, regardless of class, race, or gender. Barry in Sumarsono (2022) states that Marxist thought placed a strong emphasis on the need for social classes to overcome one another to achieve equality of status and social recognition.

2. Methodology of the Research

This study uses *The Curse of the Starving Class*, a play by Sam Shepard, as its main information source to conduct a qualitative analysis of how people attempt to realize their aspirations, the challenges they face, and the implications this has for their families within the context of the American Dream. The study will use a descriptive-qualitative approach based on library research, examining the play's script and looking for relevant information from e-books, journals, literary theories, and internet sources. The study will use the idea of the "American Dream," which includes elements of pursuing a richer, better, and fuller life, to investigate this topic completely. To contextualize and advance existing knowledge, past research will also be looked at. characters' circumstances affect them economically, and investigating labor exploitation and the options that exist for them. The data will be meticulously organized, conceptually evaluated, and presented in a thorough report, shedding light on the intricate relationships between ambitions, obstacles, and family results within the context of the American Dream as shown in *The Curse of the Starving Class*.

3. Literature Review

Getting a better understanding of the goal of the study is very necessary for the writers to read what other people have done related to the topic of the study. Reading other people's research helped the authors gain some insight into the subject of the study.

The failure of the American Dream and the damaging mentality depicted in *The Great Gatsby* and *Invisible Man* were examined by

Akesson (2017). He concluded that Ellison's protagonist wants to be recognized in a society with racial institutions. The American Dream is fatally portrayed in the novels, with Gatsby's pursuit of his dream resulting in the tragic loss of his identity and ultimate demise like Myrtle Wilson, who perished because of her obsession with material possessions. He contends that the limitations of class hierarchies prevent Gatsby and Myrtle from realizing their American dreams, regardless of how much money they amass or how many opulent objects they buy.

Sukmaradia (2017) asserted that the main character in Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* is envious of wealth, success, and social standing in her study on the failure of the protagonist to realize his American Dream. Unfortunately, several things contributed to his collapse. The driving forces behind the main character's downfall are his ambition and sexual desire.

According to Lestariningsih (2017) in her study about *Mice and Men*, achieving the American dream is having the power to control one's fate. The characters in the book had goals because they were driven, but when they lost that drive, they also lost the determination to pursue their goals. Motivation alone won't help someone achieve his goals; he also needs to put his strength into it.

4. Finding and Discussion

The American dream is depicted in *Curse of the Starving Class* through the perspectives of each family member. The American Dream has made people from many places migrate from their countries to the United States of America. They believe that the United States of America is the land of opportunity where they can pursue their happiness. They are prepared to leave their hometown or country of origin and sell everything they own to move to a new location where their prospects are better. They must face any possible danger before they can arrive at their dream place and before they can make their dream come true. Since everyone has the same chance to succeed if they are prepared to put in the necessary effort, the American Dream is based on the idea that anyone can achieve success and lead a better, richer, and more fulfilling life. However, the reality they encounter is different; not every immigrant can realize their dream. Although everyone has the same opportunity, a person's ability to succeed in realizing the American Dream depends on their position and wealth. The American Dream cannot be attained simply through opportunity and labor.

The *Curse of the Starving Class* is about a working-class family who lives in a crowded region of California. Wilson Tate, Ella Tate, Wesley Tate, and Emma Tate are the four members of the Tate family. Although they struggle to meet their basic needs, this family is lower middle class, and they try to deny the reality. They attempt to downplay their predicament, their state of being, and their lower-middle-class social standing. They experience mental starvation in addition to physical starvation. All the family members have their ambitions because of having to deal with this reality, but they fall short of achieving them. Their failure to reach a better, richer, and fuller life makes the family's life disharmony. Each member of the family has conflicts with the other. The family is far from the ideal family in American society. Each member of the dysfunctional family develops depression and seeks solace elsewhere.

Compared to the harmony of family names, it is different. There is a harmony related to their names. This family's decision to name their children after the parents of their son and mother indicates that they aspire to have a happy family life. Weston is the father's name, and Wesley is the son. On the other hand, the name of the mother is Ella, and the daughter's name is Emma. The daughter and son were intentionally given different names in the hopes that they would get along well, but so far, that hasn't been the case. They are in serious conflict rather than coexisting in peace. Because of the challenging circumstances, the family must endure, there is discord and conflict.

Shepard also used symbolism to describe the disharmony of this family by describing the setting of the play. According to the description of the scene, there are four different metal chairs placed on either side of the desk. The four metal chairs symbolized the members of the family, the father, the mother, the son, and the daughter. Like how all of the family members are rigid and strong in terms of their personalities, minds, and plans, the metal has a strong and rigid quality. All four chairs are mismatched at the side of the table. The family members' inappropriate compatibility with one another was represented by this. They do not share the same goals or strategies for creating a happy family and realizing their dreams.

Shepard used the refrigerator that the family has as the symbol of the American Dream. A refrigerator should contain a wide variety of foods, produce, and other items that can be kept there. The American Dream, which offers a variety of hopes and dreams to anyone willing to immigrate to the United States in search of a better, richer, and more fulfilling life, is an example of this. People can get whatever they want or need since everything is provided by the American Dream. But the refrigerator is empty, there is nothing inside. The function of the refrigerator is not to store the food, fruits, and vegetables that the family needs, but just to show that the American Dream has disappointed them. The only thing they can do with the refrigerator is simply open it before slamming it shut once they realize there is nothing inside. They continue to do it despite knowing that the refrigerator is empty, just as the American Dream promises a lot of things but ultimately leads to emptiness.

4.1 Wilson Tate's Dream

Of the four members of the family, it is only the head of the family, Wilson Tate, who does not have a specific dream. Wilson Tate is focused on the conflict within the family and the impact of their conflict on each other. He fails to be a good father and husband. He fails to build an ideal American family. The serious problem of the family can be seen in the relationship of each character with the other one in the play. Weston Tate, the father, is a drunkard, wild, and has a bad temper. He used to grow avocados and raise sheep. He does not know what he could do with his farm. He does not have any will anymore to take care of his land after he lost his capital. The condition gets worse after he is fired from his job as a pilot and becomes jobless. He borrows money from some people, and he is being looked after by

the men whose money he borrows. His depression and frustration with the condition caused him to seek an escape. And the escape mechanism that he chooses is being a drunkard. He abandons not only his land but also his family. He spends most of his time outside the house and comes home just to leave his laundry washed by his wife. He comes home without bringing any money for his family but with artichokes as the food for the family. He does not have good communication with his wife, son, and daughter. The last time he left home, he broke down the door, making his wife afraid and having to call the police. Wilson Tate's failure in having an ideal family is caused by his being fired and addiction to alcohol, and being exploited by the ones who hold the authority and wealth. This causes him to have no ability to take care of his land and leads his family to live in poverty. His conflict with both his wife and children makes him lose his wife and children's respect.

4.2 *Ella Tate's Dream*

Ella Tate has an ambitious dream to have a better, richer, and fuller life. She wants to start a new life and move to Europe. She does not realize that she comes from the working class. Ella's dream is her escape from her dysfunctional family structure. Ella Tate is frustrated and depressed. She does not want to accept her social status as a lower-middle-class person since she comes from an upper-class family. She wants to gain upper social class status and live a better, richer, and fuller life. To make it possible, the only thing to do is to sell their farmhouse and move to Europe, where they can start a new life. Her plan to sell the house is her own decision because she does not talk to Weston. Because she believes she has a legal right to make the choice, she acts in this manner. She hopes by selling the farm and moving to Europe she can gain a better, richer, and fuller life.

WESLEY; What's in Europe?

ELLA; They have everything in Europe. High art. Paintings. Castles. Buildings. Fancy food.

WESLEY; They got all that here. (Shepard, 14).

Ella's desire to move to Europe, which she views as a completely new continent, is evidence that the American Dream has failed. The American Dream, which promises a better, wealthier, and fuller life, typically draws people from Europe to immigrate to the United States of America. She believes that Europe is where she can find fine art, paintings, castles, and upscale cuisine. She forgets that the Europeans got the arts, castles, and fancy food from her country, the United States of America.

Ella's failure in achieving her dream is caused by some factors influenced by the class struggle such as the economic constraints as a member of the working class. She has financial instability that makes her and her husband unable to invest money to take care of her farm, and the worse situation is that the farm is under the control of a landowner like Taylor. Taylor tries to take advantage of Ella's farm by buying the farm at a lower price. This exploitation reflects the imbalance of power between the working class and the landowners. Her broken family structure is another factor that causes her to fail to achieve her dream. Her conflicts with the other members of the family make her unable to focus on her aspiration to achieve her dream. Ella's social class limits her mobility in her society. She lacks networks and access to get opportunities to free herself from her difficult situations. This causes her to fail to elevate her social status.

4.3 *Emma's Dream*

Emma Tate is the daughter of Wilson Tate and Ella Tate. Emma's dream is she wants to leave her home, become a mechanic, and live in Mexico. She has a dream because she wants to be independent, go on an adventure, and get away from the chaos of her dysfunctional family, but she never succeeds in achieving her dream. She denies that her family belongs to the lower-middle class. She also denies that the family does not experience starvation, although they do not have anything to eat, and their refrigerator is empty. She claims that, despite the existence of starving people, her family does not belong to the class of those who are food insecure. The fact is that her family has economic limitations in gaining access and opportunity to elevate her social status and make her dream come true.

EMMA'S VOICE; (off) SO NO ONE'S STARVING! WE DON'T BELONG TO THE STARVING CLASS!

ELLA; Don't speak unless you know what you're speaking about! There's no such thing as a starving class!

EMMA'S VOICE; (off) THERE IS SO! THERE'S A STARVING CLASS OF PEOPLE, AND WE'RE NOT PART OF IT!
(Shepard, 11).

Living other people's lives is Emma's strategy for hiding the fact that she is not a member of the lower middle class. She wants to live the lifestyle of other people. When she knows that her neighbor has a new pool, she tells her mother to see it. The pool is one of Emma's dreams that she cannot make come true. It is her denial to see the reality that her family cannot afford to have a new heated pool like her neighbor. Emma is trying to find a way out of these situations, and one way she does this is by setting up a demonstration of cutting up and frying chicken. One of the more affluent table manners involves cutting up fried chicken.

Emma has a dream that she wants to realize, in addition to denying that she is from the lower middle class. She wants to get away from her dull life and into a better one by leaving her home for Mexico, where she can have adventures and live as a mechanic. She wants to free herself from the nightmare in which she is stuck.

EMMA

I was going to work on fishing boats. Deep sea fishing. Helping businessmen haul in huge swordfish and barracuda. I was going to work my way along the coast, stopping at all the little towns, and speaking Spanish. I was going to learn to be a mechanic and work on four-wheel-drive vehicles that broke down. Transmissions. I could've learned to fix anything. Then I'd learn how to

be a short-order cook and write novels on the side. In the kitchen. Kitchen novels. Then I'd get published and disappear into the heart of Mexico. Just like that guy (Shepard, 23).

She runs away from the house by riding the family horse to Mexico, but she falls from the horse and fails to reach Mexico. After the play, she is killed in her father's car after abandoning her family to pursue her dream of living in Mexico. Her leaving for Mexico also indicates the failure of the American Dream. Living in America does not give her any better hope for the future, but depression and frustration. In the 3rd act of the play, Emma is arrested by the police after she rides her horse and shoots the Alibi Bar that belongs to Ellis. Emma can get out of jail after she makes love to one of the police, and when she returns home, she steals her mother's money and leaves the house. When she is asked by her brother what she will do, she says that she will be a criminal because, for her, being a criminal is the only thing she can do without needing any skill or qualification.

Emma's inability to fulfill her desire of becoming a mechanic and relocating to Mexico is influenced by several variables, including financial constraints, a dysfunctional family, social pressure, and a lack of support. As a member of the Tate family, Emma must struggle with her economic limitations and lacks access to opportunities and resources. The dysfunctional family also has a negative impact on her life. The dysfunctional family makes her unable to focus on achieving her dream. She needs family support, but she does not get it. The absence of a supportive and ideal father makes her have no figure to follow as her guidance, mentor, and emotional supporter that she needs to navigate in achieving her dream. Every time her father goes home, he does not bring happiness to the family, but he brings problems. The fact that her father and her mother have a disharmonious relationship also influences her in achieving her dream. Besides she gets pressured and expects by her society which is very hard for her to fulfill. These demands can make Emma hesitant to fully dedicate herself to her passion out of fear of criticism and rejection from others.

4.4 Wesley Tate

Wesley, the son, is the only character who does not deny the circumstances. He is the only family member whose dream is to unite the family. He is the only one who disagrees with his mother's plan to sell the house and move to Europe. When his mother gives him the reason why she wants to move to Europe, Wesley rebates her by saying that everything her mother says about Europe was gotten by the Europeans from his country. Wesley is the only one who does not deny his circumstances as a lower-middle-class person. He is the only one who can face reality and try to improve and fix their family's life. His action of pissing on Emma's flyer for cutting the flying chicken demonstrates and symbolizes how he sees the family's social status. He does not want to pretend to be somebody else. Wesley is the only one who cares about the family's condition. While the other members of the family try to escape from reality by selling the house to get a lot of money and hope to be able to obtain a better, richer, and fuller life as the concept promised by the American Dream, he is the only one who tries to fix the condition.

WESLEY We don't have to sell, you know. We could fix the place up.

WESTON It's too late for that. I owe money.

WESLEY I could get a job.

WESTON You're gonna' have to.

WESLEY I will. We could work in this place by ourselves (Shepard,25).

It is reflected in his actions in taking care of the house and fixing the broken door. Fixing the broken door shows that Wesley wants to fix the family's disharmony and save the family from the destruction caused by each member of the family's ambition and motivation.

Wesley is also the one who realizes that Taylor, the lawyer Ella needs his assistance in selling the house to, and Ellys, the proprietor of the bar, are stooges of the ruthless businessman who will rob not only his farm but the entire nation. Shepard used the zombies to symbolize capitalists, estate agents, businessmen, developers, and lawyers trying to get advantages from the middle-lower class. When zombies bite a man, he will be infected by the virus, and the virus changes him into a zombie too. Zombies will always find their victims until nobody lives. That is capitalism. It will try to capitalize on any property belonging to a citizen for its benefit. It is only Wesley who realizes and knows their real interests as represented by Taylor the lawyer. Not different from his sister, Emma, Wesley also needs a role model as his guidance, mentor, and supporter, but he cannot get it from his father. The dysfunctional family makes him have an emotional burden when he sees and thinks about his father and mother's relationship.

The struggle of a person against American society, in general, is represented by the fight between the cat and the eagle. In contrast to the eagle, which stands for American society, the cat represents the individual as a member of society. Additionally, they can stand in opposition to the eagle-represented capitalists by standing in for the individual. The eagle attempts to fly with the cat to make the cat fall and cause an earth crash. The cat also tries to kill the eagle and does not want to fall to the earth, because if it falls to the earth, the cat will die. Because both animals are attempting to save their own lives, there is a chance that they will both crash into the ground and perish. The death of the cat and the eagle can symbolize the death of the individual's dream and the death of the American Dream. The Cat and the Eagle tale also serve as a metaphor for the difficulty of realizing the American Dream, which allows for a better, wealthier, and more fulfilling life for all. It needs not only hard work but also strategy and competency from the people. Besides that, they also must fight against capitalism that tries to control them and take advantage of them.

The characters' dreams, especially Ella and Emma's, show how the American Dream has failed. While Emma wants to relocate to Mexico

and pursue a career as a mechanic, Ella wants to sell the house and begin a new life in Europe. At the play's conclusion, Weston also devises a plan to leave the country and seek out Taylor, who sells his land, to escape the people whose money he has borrowed. What makes them must leave their home and move to Europe and Mexico is their hard and dull life. The better, wealthier, and more fulfilling life that the American Dream promises them never comes to pass. They moved to California hoping to live a better, wealthier, and more fulfilling life, but they are now trapped in a challenging existence as members of the lower middle class. They sold the house to get a large sum of money to escape their depression, their frustration, and the bad guys who were looking for them to demand their money back. This was done because of their depression and frustration.

Since the government guarantees everyone the same chance to succeed and a better, richer, and fuller life, people typically immigrate from other parts of the world to the United States of America. They were promised by the American Dream that they would have the chance to improve their qualifications, receive the same rights, and have the same opportunities for success without facing any prejudice. The development of industries and technology has attracted people to migrate to the USA. But the reality is different from what is promised. They have worked hard for a long time to obtain the dreams that are promised by the American Dream, but they are not lucky. They fail to make their dream come true. Obtaining the American Dream is not simple, but complicated. It is not enough just to work hard. For people to be successful in achieving the American Dream, they need power, money, resources, connections, and relationships. Leaving the USA for another country reflects the failure of the American Dream.

The family is divided because each family member has his or her own goals, dreams, and motivations, which are not for the family's happiness but rather for their own. There is no harmony among all the members of the family. They cannot build good communication within the family. It makes all the members of the family depressed and frustrated. The failure of gaining their American Dream has made Weston a drunkard, being run after by bad guys since he borrows their money and cannot pay it back. Because they had to sell their belongings to pay off Weston's debt, they also lost those possessions. The worst part is that they are unable to sell their home because Ellis has taken the proceeds as payment for Emma's shooting at his bar, and Taylor, who was hoping to set them free from their mundane existence, has fled after he has taken the proceeds from their land. They also miss their daughter, who is most likely killed when her Weston-based car is bombed by debt collectors searching for Weston, due to the failure of the American Dream.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of Sam Shepard's play, "The Curse of the Starving Class," led to the conclusion that none of the characters succeeded in realizing the American Dream, as defined by James Truslow Adams. According to Adams, the quest of a richer, better, and more fulfilling life is the essence of the American Dream. However, each character in the play encounters overwhelming difficulties and barriers that keep them from achieving their goals.

The play's character Wilson Tate, a husband and father, lacks a clear dream, signifying the disappointment and alienation from the imagined American Dream. His inability to change the family's financial situation is a result of his financial limits, which also contributes to his failure as a husband and parent. background, Ella Tate leaves for Europe in an attempt to improve her lot in life, causing a rift in the family.

The dysfunctional family dynamics prevent Emma Tate from achieving the American Dream, as seen by her refusal to leave the dysfunctional family and her choice to work as a mechanic in Mexico. Furthermore, Wesley's failure to bring the dispersed family under one roof and manage their property well illustrates how a broken family affects goals.

The protagonists' journey toward realizing their aspirations is significantly hampered by financial constraints, problematic family dynamics, and the demands of society. Due to financial limitations, they are limited in their ability to take advantage of opportunities and improve their lives. The lack of encouragement, positive role models, and emotional responsibilities brought on by dysfunctional family relationships make it difficult for Emma and Wesley to concentrate on their goals.

James Truslow Adams' portrayal of the American Dream as being disillusioning is reflected in the individuals' collective inability to realize their dreams. The play emphasizes the harsh realities and difficulties people encounter in pursuing the American Dream through this portrayal, highlighting the idea that success and fulfillment are not simply accessible for everyone in the intricate web of American culture.

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