

FAMILY VALUES IN THE FILM *IN YOUR DREAMS* (2025): A DISCOURSE-HISTORICAL APPROACH

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Received: 12th December 2025

Revised: 22th January 2026

Accepted: 31th March 2026

ABSTRACT This study examined how ideological tensions between traditional family stability and individual aspiration were discursively constructed in *In Your Dreams* (2025) through sibling dialogue and dream sequences. Grounded in Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study focused on five core strategies: nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, and intensification/mitigation. Using qualitative textual analysis of selected script excerpts, the research systematically reconstructed argumentative structures through the claim, warrant, conclusion model to identify the operation of the topos of threat and the topos of loss at the micro-linguistic level (lexical choice, modality, metaphor, and pronoun use). The findings demonstrated that family conflict was discursively framed not merely as interpersonal disagreement but as a structured moral negotiation. Nostalgic generalization and mitigation normalized conflict while simultaneously revealing epistemic insecurity, whereas modal intensification and symbolic metaphor in dream sequences amplified perceptions of instability. Through predication, parental figures were constructed as embodying competing moral orientations, sustainability versus passion, without explicit delegitimation, resulting in ideological ambiguity. The dreamscape served as an arena in which these tensions were dramatized and ultimately rearticulated into a hybrid moral resolution. This study contributes to CDA-based film analysis by demonstrating how DHA's argumentative reconstruction can systematically expose ideological positioning in animated family narratives through explicit micro-linguistic evidence. Future research should integrate multimodal analysis and audience reception to extend the interpretive scope.

Keywords: Discourse-Historical Approach; Critical Discourse Analysis; family ideology; topos of threat and loss; modality and predication

INTRODUCTION

The family has long been recognized as one of the most enduring sites of ideological negotiation, particularly within American cultural narratives, where values such as individualism, stability, autonomy, and collective responsibility often coexist in tension (Wilson & Osman, 2024). Rather than constituting a stable or timeless institution, the American family operates as a historically contingent discursive construct shaped by neoliberal economic restructuring, labor mobility, and shifting gender regimes (Coontz, 2006). These transformations reconfigure the moral logic through which parental authority, responsibility, and success are defined, producing tensions between collectivist unity and individual self-realization. As media scholars argue, popular culture does not simply reflect these changes but actively frames and legitimizes particular family arrangements through representational strategies (Machin & Mayr, 2023). Consequently, examining film scripts as cultural artifacts enables analysis of how ideological struggles over family values are linguistically constructed and normalized.

In Your Dreams, a fantasy-adventure film centered on two siblings navigating both real-life familial conflict and a dream world, provides a compelling case for such analysis. At its core, the narrative depicts parents who embody distinct ideological positions: the mother prioritizes stability and professional security, while the father upholds personal passion and creative self-fulfillment. Their disagreement about whether to relocate the family illustrates broader cultural tensions between traditional expectations of family unity and the modern pursuit of individual aspirations. From the children's perspective, the film dramatizes the emotional and psychological consequences of this conflict, highlighting how changes in adult ideology ripple through the family system.

The film's dual narrative mode, splitting between real-life domestic conflict and dream-based symbolic representations, creates rich opportunities for discourse analysis. The dream world functions not merely as fantasy but as a discursive extension of socio-cultural conflict, externalizing moral dilemmas through narrative exaggeration and symbolic contrast. Such narrative strategies align with CDA's understanding that discourse operates through representation and framing (Van Dijk, 1998). Through dialogue, characterization, and narrative positioning, the film constructs competing representations of traditional and modern family values, inviting critical examination.

From an analytical standpoint, film scripts serve as cultural artifacts that encode linguistic, narrative, and ideological structures. As Richey & Klein, (2007) argue in their Type I Developmental Research framework, the systematic study of existing texts enables researchers to uncover conceptual patterns embedded within cultural products (Richey & Klein, 2007). Applying this framework to the script of *In Your Dreams* allows for an organized and theoretically grounded exploration of how the film constructs family ideology. Rather than focusing on audience reception or production processes, this study centers on the artifact itself, examining its discursive mechanisms and representational strategies (Java & Kurnia, 2023).

To investigate these mechanisms, the study employs the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) of Critical Discourse Analysis. The DHA is particularly suited for examining how cultural texts connect micro-level linguistic choices to macro-level social and historical contexts (Wodak, 2015a). Its emphasis on contextualization, intertextuality, and discursive strategies enables a nuanced understanding of how the script represents conflicting family values. By analyzing nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, and intensification/mitigation strategies in key scenes, the research identifies how opposing ideologies are framed, justified, and emotionally charged within the narrative (Haryono, 2020).

Although Critical Discourse Analysis has been widely applied to media and film, previous CDA-based film studies have predominantly examined gender representation, nationalism, racism, or political propaganda (Van Dijk, 1998), often emphasizing macro ideological critique without systematically operationalizing micro-level discursive strategies. Family ideology, particularly the tension between traditional and modern value systems within a single cinematic text, remains comparatively underexplored. Moreover, while DHA offers clearly defined analytical categories, few studies integrate its strategic framework with a structured developmental research design that enhances methodological transparency and replicability (Blommaert, 2008). Consequently, a methodological gap persists in demonstrating how DHA can be systematically operationalized in film script analysis through explicit analytic stages.

To address this gap, the present study integrates DHA with Type I Developmental Research, combining critical linguistic depth with a sequential artifact-based analytic procedure. This integration is methodologically novel because it connects DHA's micro-level strategic analysis to a transparent, stage-based research design, thereby strengthening rigor and replicability in CDA-based film studies. Conceptually, it clarifies how ideological struggles over authority, generational identity, and moral legitimacy are linguistically structured within a contemporary family-centered film. Family conflict in cinematic narratives does not merely function as a plot device, but operates as a discursive arena in which ideological positions are articulated, contested, and legitimized through language. In this context, dialogue, characterization, and narrative framing serve as linguistic resources that construct particular representations of family roles, authority, and morality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have applied Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to film texts to uncover ideological structures embedded in cinematic narratives. (Van Dijk, 2015), for example, analyzes struggle values in the film *Buya Hamka* using Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical

Approach (DHA). The study identifies values such as unity, self-sacrifice, and perseverance through qualitative content analysis. Similarly, Qibtiyah & Aminuddin (2024) employ DHA to examine socio-political discourse in *Gadis Kretek*, demonstrating how gender inequality, political repression, and cultural identity are represented within Indonesian historical contexts. Both studies demonstrate the applicability of DHA in linking textual features to socio-historical contexts. However, although these studies apply DHA, their primary focus lies in identifying thematic values and socio-political representations rather than systematically operationalizing DHA's micro-level discursive strategies, such as nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, and intensification/mitigation as explicit analytical categories. The linguistic construction of family ideology as a dynamic site of moral negotiation remains comparatively underdeveloped.

Research on family representation in cinema has frequently employed semiotic, narrative, or content analysis approaches. Firtikasari & Rahim (2024), for instance, analyze *Di Balik 98 film* using Peircean semiotics and Todorov's narrative structure to explore how family dynamics mediate historical trauma. Similarly, Sari & Dewi, (2022) Examine family values and stereotypes in *My Name is Khan* through content analysis, emphasizing themes of prejudice and intergenerational socialization. While these studies provide valuable insights into family representation, their analytical frameworks prioritize symbolic meaning or narrative structure rather than examining how family values are linguistically constructed through discursive strategies. Consequently, they do not systematically connect micro-level textual choices to macro-level ideological negotiation. This gap creates space for a discourse-historical analysis that foregrounds language as the primary site of ideological construction.

Scholarship on ideology in popular culture has also examined how family-oriented cinema operates within broader industrial and commercial frameworks. Brown (2012) in his discussion of family entertainment in contemporary Hollywood cinema, argues that family films reflect industrial transformations such as globalization, conglomeration, and market expansion. His analysis highlights narrative transparency, emotional appeal, and audience inclusivity as defining features of the genre. Although such work situates family films within industrial and ideological contexts, it does not provide a systematic linguistic model for analyzing how ideological positions are constructed within the text itself. The focus remains at the macro-industrial level rather than at the micro-discursive level, where values are articulated and negotiated.

Within CDA traditions, different analytical models offer distinct emphases. Van Dijk (1998) foregrounds socio-cognitive models and the role of mental representations in ideological reproduction, whereas Van Leeuwen (2008) focuses on the representation of social actors and legitimation strategies. Both approaches are valuable for examining power and ideology; however, they tend to prioritize either Van Dijk's cognitive structures or Van Leeuwen's social actor representation. By contrast, Ruth Wodak (2015) provides a more comprehensive framework for the present study because it explicitly integrates historical contextualization with clearly operationalized discursive strategies. DHA's strategic categories nomination, predication, argumentation (topoi), perspectivization, and intensification/mitigation enable a systematic analysis of how competing moral frameworks are linguistically constructed and emotionally charged within narrative interaction. Its emphasis on intertextuality and socio-historical embedding makes it particularly suitable for analyzing family ideology in a film that stages tensions between traditional hierarchy and modern autonomy. Furthermore, DHA's multi-level contextualization aligns with the present study's objective of examining family conflict not merely as representation, but as a discursive arena in which ideological legitimacy is negotiated.

Although prior studies have explored ideology, family representation, and socio-political meaning in film, most rely on thematic, semiotic, narrative, or macro-ideological critique. Limited attention has been devoted to the systematic linguistic construction of family

conflict through DHA's strategic categories. Moreover, few studies integrate DHA with a structured developmental research framework that enhances methodological transparency and replicability. Addressing these gaps, the present study investigates how traditional and modern family values are discursively constructed in *In Your Dream* (2025) by operationalizing DHA's strategic categories within a Type I Developmental Research design. This integration strengthens analytical rigor and conceptual clarity by demonstrating how ideological struggles over authority, generational identity, and moral legitimacy are linguistically structured within contemporary family-centered cinema.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative interpretive research design as outlined by Creswell & Poth (2025), which prioritizes the exploration of meaning and the contextual interpretation of cultural phenomena using non-numerical data. This approach aligns with the study's objective of understanding how the film script *In Your Dreams* (2025) constructs and negotiates family value discourses. Complementing this qualitative orientation, the research adopts the Type I Developmental Research framework, conceptualized by Richey & Klein, (2007). Within this framework, the study focuses on the systematic analysis of an existing product, in this case, the film script, to derive theoretical insights regarding its representational and ideological structures. Rather than generating or evaluating an instructional product, Type I research emphasizes descriptive and analytic procedures aimed at understanding the functions, patterns, and implications embedded within a cultural artifact.

This study adopts Wodak (2015a) Discourse Historical Approach to analyze the film script, focusing on the operationalization of key discursive strategies. Nomination is examined by identifying how family members are named, categorized, and positioned within the narrative. Prediction is analyzed through the attributes, moral qualities, and evaluative descriptions attached to these actors. Argumentation is examined by identifying recurring topoi, particularly the topoi of threat and loss, and by reconstructing their internal argumentative structure through a claim, warrant, and conclusion pattern. Specifically, each argumentative instance is analyzed by identifying (1) the explicit or implicit claim advanced in the dialogue, (2) the warrant that links the claim to shared cultural assumptions or moral principles, and (3) the resulting conclusion that legitimizes either traditional or modern family values. For example, the topos of threat operates when a character claims that abandoning hierarchical authority will endanger family unity (claim), presupposes that social stability depends on obedience to elders (warrant), and therefore concludes that traditional roles must be preserved (conclusion). Similarly, the topos of loss is reconstructed when emotional distance is framed as the consequence of rigid authority, thereby justifying greater autonomy and negotiation. Intensification and mitigation are analyzed through linguistic markers that amplify or soften these argumentative moves. These strategies are systematically applied to selected dialogues and dream sequences to reveal how ideological constructions of family values are discursively structured and legitimized.

Data Source and Data Collection Procedures

The primary data for this study consists of the film script *In Your Dreams* (2025), obtained from a verified online transcript source. Following Creswell's (2025) emphasis on purposeful selection in qualitative inquiry, the data were collected through purposive sampling. Script segments were selected based on their relevance to the central research focus: scenes that depict tensions between traditional family ideals and modern family realities. These include the opening portrayals of familial harmony, emerging conflicts related to economic pressure and career mobility, children's moral interpretations of parental disputes, and symbolic dream sequences that intensify ideological tension. This selective approach ensures

that the analysis concentrates on the narrative sections most saturated with discursive and ideological significance.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was conducted using the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) within Critical Discourse Analysis, as developed by Wodak (2015a). DHA enables a multidimensional interpretation that integrates linguistic examination, socio-historical context, and ideological critique. Guided by the systematic analytical orientation described by Richey & Klein (2007). The procedure unfolded in three stages. First, a macro-contextual analysis was performed to map contemporary American family discourse as the socio-cultural environment that frames the film. Second, selected script segments were coded and analyzed using DHA’s discursive strategies: nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, and intensification/mitigation to identify how traditional and modern family values are constructed linguistically and narratively. Finally, a recontextualization stage connected the linguistic findings to broader ideological patterns, producing a coherent interpretation of how the film script represents and negotiates family ideology.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

In this study, traditional morality refers to value orientations that emphasize hierarchical family structure, parental authority, moral obligation, and emotional sacrifice, as discursively constructed through nomination and prediction strategies. In contrast, modern morality denotes value orientations prioritizing individual autonomy, emotional negotiation, creative self-fulfillment, and flexible family roles, which are linguistically realized through argumentation, mitigation, and perspectivization strategies.

Discursive Construction of “Traditional Family Happiness” in Early Scenes

The opening breakfast sequence constructs traditional family happiness through nomination and prediction strategies. The family is nominated as a unified collective entity through inclusive pronouns (we, our), while prediction attributes qualities such as happy, perfect, and together.

Table 1. Micro-level features found in “In Your Dreams (2025).”

Excerpt:

We’re like one of those happy families you see at the beginning of a disaster movie. Everything is perfect

Lexical choice	“Happy”, “perfect” (idealized vocabulary)
Metaphor	“Disaster movie” anticipates collapse
Modality	“Everything is perfect” is declarative certainty
Topos of treat (implicit)	Perfection precedes catastrophe

The metaphor frames harmony as fragile and temporary, introducing ideological tension beneath nostalgic imagery. Thus, traditional morality is discursively constructed as unity, routine, and sentimental stability.

Shifting Discourses: Emergence of Modern Family Pressures (Work, Mobility, Stability)

Conflict emerges through argumentation strategies structured via competing topoi.

Table 2. Micro-linguistics evidence found in “In Your Dreams (2025).”

Excerpt:

Mother: *The university in Duluth is looking for an associate professor... it’s kind of a big step up*

Father: *As soon as I finish the album...*

Feature	Linguistics Evidence	Function
Modality	“Kind of”	Mitigation of assertiveness
Temporal deferral	“As soon as...”	Avoidance of commitment
Lexical contrast	“Step up” vs “finish the album”	Stability vs aspiration

Here, two topoi operate: a) the topos of usefulness is stability ensures family survival, and 2) topos of self-fulfillment is creative completion justifies delay. The clash constructs modern morality as fragmented between economic rationality and personal identity.

Children as Moral Interpreters of Family Conflict

Through perspectivization, Stevie functions as a moral mediator who interprets parental conflict from a child-centered viewpoint. In the utterance “*All parents argue. It’s not a big deal, right?*”, several micro-linguistic features become analytically significant. The universalizing pronoun “*All*” operates as a generalization strategy, normalizing conflict as a common parental behavior. The mitigating expression *not a big deal* softens the perceived severity of the dispute, reflecting an attempt to reduce emotional threat. Meanwhile, the tag question, “*right?*” introduces epistemic insecurity, signaling Stevie’s underlying doubt despite the surface-level reassurance. Collectively, these features demonstrate how perspectivization constructs a discourse of normalization while simultaneously revealing internal moral anxiety.

This negotiation becomes more explicit when Stevie states, “*Maybe they just need to remember how great things used to be,*” where the modal adverb *Maybe* indicates hesitation and speculative reasoning, while the nostalgic lexical phrase “*how great things used to be*” activates the topos of loss. Structurally, the argument follows a claim, warrant, conclusion pattern where “*The family is deteriorating*” is the claim, “*The past represented harmony and stability*” is the warrant, and “*Returning to the past will restore happiness*” is the conclusion. Through this argumentative structure, traditional family morality is discursively reconstructed as an idealized, stable past that should be recovered rather than renegotiated.

Table 3. Analytical Transparency found in “*In Your Dreams (2025).*”

Scene	DHA Strategy	Linguistic Evidence	Micro Feature	Ideological Implication
Stevie reassures himself	Perspectivization	“ <i>All parents argue.</i> ”	Generalization (“ <i>All</i> ”)	Conflict is normalized as universal
		“ <i>It’s not a big deal</i> ”	Mitigation	Minimization of threat
		“ <i>Right?</i> ”	Tag question / epistemic insecurity	Internal doubt despite reassurance
Nostalgic reflection	Argumentation (Topos of Loss)	“ <i>Maybe they just need to remember how great things used to be.</i> ”	Modal hesitation, nostalgic lexicon	Past constructed as morally superior

The table demonstrates how Stevie negotiates parental conflict through distinct DHA strategies. In the self-reassurance scene, perspectivization operates via generalization (*All parents argue*), which normalizes conflict as universal. This is reinforced by mitigation (“*It’s not a big deal*”), minimizing perceived threat. However, the tag question (*Right?*) reveals epistemic insecurity, indicating internal doubt beneath the surface reassurance. In the nostalgic reflection, argumentation emerges through the topos of loss. The modal hesitation (*Maybe*) combined with nostalgic lexicon (*how great things used to be*), constructs the past as morally superior. Structurally, this implies that present instability is framed as a decline from a harmonious past, reinforcing traditional family ideals through nostalgia.

Moral Tension Encoded in Symbolic Dream Imagery

Dream sequences function as discursive intensification. In the statement “*But lately, all my dreams... keep turning into nightmares*”, the quantifier “*all*” totalizes the disruption, while the progressive construction “*keep turning*” encodes ongoing deterioration. The metaphorical shift from “*dreams*” to “*nightmares*” symbolizes moral instability.

Table 4. Analysis of the dream sequence in “*In Your Dreams (2025).*”

Scene	DHA Strategy	Linguistic Evidence	Micro Feature	Ideological Implication
Dream sequence	Intensification	<i>All my dreams...</i>	Totalizing quantifier (“all”)	Instability is constructed as pervasive
		<i>...keep turning...</i>	Progressive, iterative aspect	Ongoing deterioration
	Argumentation (Topos of Threat)	<i>...into nightmares.</i>	Metaphor (dream, nightmare)	Moral disorder and symbolic danger

The dream sequence combines intensification and argumentation. The quantifier *all* amplifies the scope of disruption, while the progressive construction “*keep turning*” encodes continuous decline. The metaphorical transformation from “*dreams*” to *nightmares* activates the topos of threat, structurally implying that persistent chaos signals moral disorder and ultimately positions the family as endangered.

Parental Role Prediction

The parental dialogue reveals contrasting moral orientations through predication and modality. The mother’s statement, *It’s been two years... something’s gotta change*, contains obligation modality (gotta), signaling urgency and forward-looking rationality. She is discursively constructed as pragmatic and oriented toward sustainability. In contrast, the father’s utterance, *I could’ve finished it if my lead singer didn’t give up on me*, employs counterfactual modality (could’ve), which functions as self-justification.

Table 5. Moral Construction in “*In Your Dreams (2025)*.”

Speaker	DHA Strategy	Linguistic Evidence	Micro-Feature	Discursive Construction
Mother	Predication & Modality	<i>It’s been two years... something’s gotta change.</i>	Obligation modality (gotta); temporal marker (two years)	Constructed as pragmatic, rational, and forward-looking
Father	Predication & Modality	<i>I could’ve finished it if my lead singer didn’t give up on me.</i>	Counterfactual modality (could’ve); conditional clause; blame shifting	Constructed as emotionally reactive and identity-drive

The conditional clause (if my lead singer...) shifts responsibility externally, constructing him as emotionally reactive and attached to unrealized passion. Through predication, the mother is framed as embodying responsibility and sacrifice, while the father represents identity and artistic aspiration. Importantly, neither position is explicitly delegitimized, producing ideological ambiguity between two competing moral models: sustainability versus passion.

Siblings’ Interactions as Micro-Level Moral Negotiations

Beyond parental conflict, ideological tensions are also reproduced at the sibling level. Within the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), sibling interaction can be examined through nomination, predication, perspectivization, and modality to uncover how moral orientations are subtly constructed. The dialogue between Stevie and Elliot does not merely reflect interpersonal dynamics; it discursively mirrors the broader ideological contrast operating within the family structure. Through modal choices and lexical selection, the siblings embody competing orientations toward order, control, and relational flexibility. The following table presents the DHA coding of this moral positioning.

Table 6. DHA Coding of Sibling Moral Positioning

Speaker	DHA Strategy	Linguistic Evidence	Micro Feature	Discursive Construction
Stevie	Prediction and Modality	“It has to be perfect”	Deontic Modality (has to); lexical perfectionism (Perfect)	Constructed as control-oriented and order-seeking
Elliot	Perspectivization	“Can I help?”	Minimalist interrogative; relational offer	Constructed as cooperative and emotionally attuned

The sibling dialogue reflects contrasting moral orientations through modality and lexical choice. Stevie’s deontic modality “has to” encodes obligation and control, reinforced by the perfectionist lexicon “perfect”, positioning him as order-oriented. In contrast, Elliot’s minimalist offer “Can I help?” foregrounds relational alignment rather than control. Through nomination and perspectivization, this interaction mirrors the parental ideological tension, reproducing at the sibling level the broader contrast between structural order and emotional flexibility.

Discursive Triggers that Motivate the Children’s Quest for a “Perfect Family”

In the correlation discussion, the question “Are you and Dad okay? Is this about money?” triggers an argumentative reconstruction of both the topos of threat and the topos of loss.

Table 7. Topos of threat

	Topos of Threat	Topos of Loss
Claim	The planned move signals instability within the family	Familial happiness is deteriorating
Warrant	Significant change disrupts family unity and emotional security	The past represented greater harmony and stability
Conclusion	Stability must be preserved to prevent further damage	The family should return to its previous, more harmonious state

Table 7 demonstrates how the relocation discourse structurally realizes two interrelated topoi: the topos of threat and the topos of loss. In the topos of threat, relocation is framed as a source of instability, with change functioning as the warrant that justifies the need to preserve stability. Simultaneously, the topos of loss constructs the present as a decline from a previously harmonious past, leading to the conclusion that the family should return to its earlier state. Together, these argumentative patterns reveal how mobility is discursively transformed into moral and emotional risk rather than a neutral practical decision.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that *In Your Dreams* (2025) constructs ideological tension through systematic discursive strategies identifiable within Ruth Wodak’s (Wodak, 2015) Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis: Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). Across the narrative, four interrelated patterns emerge: (1) nostalgic idealization, (2) symbolic intensification in dream sequences, (3) moral polarization through antagonistic discourse, and (4) negotiated hybridization in the resolution. These patterns are linguistically realized through perspectivization, predication, modality, and argumentation, particularly via the topos of threat and the topos of loss.

First, the opening sequences establish what (Van Dijk, 1998) describes as ideological polarization through positive self-representation. The early montage of familial harmony constructs a mythic image of the perfect family, later destabilized by Stevie’s metanarrative remark: *We’re like one of those happy families you see before the disaster*. The lexical

prefiguration of disaster anticipates decline and activates the topos of threat, structurally realized as: harmony is fragile; disruption signals danger; therefore, stability must be protected. As everyday conflicts emerge, “*I thought you paid the bill. Something’s gotta change*” obligation modality “*gotta*” encodes urgency, reframing economic strain as moral pressure. In DHA terms, this shift represents recontextualization (Wodak, 2015), whereby domestic disagreement becomes an index of competing value systems: sustainability versus aspiration.

Second, the dream world operates as discursive intensification. Stevie’s statement, *All my dreams keep turning into nightmares*, exemplifies quantifier amplification “*all*”, progressive deterioration “*keep turning*”, and metaphorical inversion “*dream nightmare*”. Following The Politics of Fear, such constructions realize the topos of threat, where perceived chaos justifies the need for restored order. Simultaneously, nostalgic lines such as “*Maybe they just need to remember how great things used to be*” instantiate the topos of loss: the past is idealized; the present signals decline; restoration becomes desirable. As argue (Fairclough, 1992), Discourse does not merely reflect reality but actively constructs social meaning. Here, the dreamscape transforms private anxiety into structured ideological struggle, making children the mediators of adult moral tension.

Third, antagonistic discourse crystallizes ideological polarization. The Sandman’s promises, “*This is the life you deserve, I can give you perfection*”, rely on universalizing and moralizing language, echoing what (Laclau, 2005) terms the construction of fantasy as ideological closure. Perfection is framed as attainable through erasure of conflict, thereby naturalizing homogeneity and suppressing relational complexity. This tension demonstrates what (Jäger, 2001) identifies as a discursive struggle over hegemonic meaning. Stevie’s rejection of the “*perfect world*” marks a shift from nostalgia-driven moral absolutism toward relational negotiation.

Finally, the resolution reconfigures the binary opposition between tradition and modernity. Rather than restoring an idealized past, the family constructs a hybrid model: relocation to Duluth signals pragmatic stability; the father’s renewed musical pursuit affirms identity; Stevie’s acceptance of Elliot embraces relational imperfection. This synthesis aligns with contemporary sociological perspectives that conceptualize modern families as adaptive rather than declining. Discursively, obligation modality softens, blame-shifting decreases, and collaborative dialogue replaces defensive counterfactuals “*I could’ve...*”. The ideological ambiguity identified in the findings thus resolves not through dominance of one moral model but through negotiated coexistence.

Taken together, these four stages confirm that *In Your Dreams* does not simply portray family conflict; it reconstructs the meaning of family values through discursive mechanisms. Through DHA’s claim, warrant, and conclusion structures, the film systematically mobilizes the topos of threat and the topos of loss before rearticulating them into a discourse of adaptability. The myth of the perfect household is not restored but dismantled, replaced by a model grounded in imperfection, mobility, and emotional transparency. In this sense, the dreamscape functions as an ideological laboratory in which traditional stability and modern aspiration are not mutually exclusive but dialogically negotiated.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that *In Your Dreams* (2025) constructs ideological tension between traditional and modern family values through systematic discursive strategies identifiable within the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). The findings reveal four interconnected patterns: nostalgic idealization, dream-based intensification, moral polarization through antagonistic discourse, and negotiated hybridization in the resolution. Through perspectivization, predication, modality, and argumentation, especially the topos of threat and the topos of loss, the film frames family conflict as a structured negotiation between stability and aspiration rather than mere interpersonal disagreement. The dreamscape operates as an

ideological arena in which anxieties about order, mobility, and relational imperfection are discursively intensified and ultimately rearticulated. This study is limited by its script-based textual focus. While DHA enables systematic identification of argumentative structures and ideological positioning, the analysis does not fully account for multimodal elements such as visual framing, color symbolism, sound design, and cinematic composition. Additionally, audience reception was not examined, leaving open questions regarding how viewers interpret and negotiate the film's moral constructions. Despite these limitations, the study contributes to CDA-based film scholarship by demonstrating the applicability of DHA's claim, warrant, and conclusion structure to animated film dialogue and by integrating micro-linguistic analysis with macro-ideological interpretation. Future research should incorporate multimodal discourse analysis and audience reception studies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how family values are constructed, circulated, and interpreted in contemporary media texts.

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