

Sveučilište J.J. Strossmayera u Osijeku

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Dvopredmetni sveučilišni preddiplomski studij engleskog jezika i

Književnosti i pedagogije

Sandra Dadić

Američki san s imigrantske perspektive

Završni rad

Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Jadranka Zlomislić

Osijek, 2019

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Literature and Pedagogy

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The American Dream from the Immigrant's Perspective

Bachelor's Thesis

Supervisor: Dr. Jadranka Zlomislić, Assistant Professor

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Contents

Abstract.....	1
Introduction	2
1. The Concept of the American Dream	3
1.1 The Origins of the American Dream	4
2. The Four Waves of Immigration	6
2.1. The First Wave of Immigration	7
2.2. The Second Wave of Immigration.....	8
2.3. The Third Wave of Immigration	9
2.4. The Fourth Wave of Immigration.....	10
3. The American Dream from the Immigrant’s Perspective	11
3.1. The American Dream for Latino Immigrants	13
4. Immigrants in America Today; Key Findings	15
Conclusion.....	17
Works Cited.....	18

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore the American Dream viewed from the immigrant's perspective. Various definitions of the American Dream are presented as well as the Dream's origins with a particular focus on the meaning of the American Dream for the immigrants. The paper highlights the four waves of American immigration by explaining who, why and when came to the United States, and what were their expectations. Immigrants have commonly viewed the United States as the country that promises an equal opportunity for everyone to succeed as stated in the United States Declaration of Independence. Despite having to face many obstacles and challenges when arriving to the United States, immigrants keep coming and they never lose their faith in the American Dream. Compared to the countries they left behind, they have always seen the United States as a land of opportunity, and they have embraced the chance to succeed that they did not have in their own countries. Finally, with respect to all the statistics, data, definitions and immigrant's perspective of the American Dream, it is evident that the American Dream continues to attract millions of immigrants who come to the country and will continue to do so in the future.

Keywords: The American Dream, the United States, immigrant's perspective

Introduction

The United States of America has always been seen as the land of opportunity both by the American citizens and the incoming immigrants. Because of their belief in the concept of the American Dream, people from around the world have left their countries to move to the United States. They embrace the chance to succeed that they do not have in their own countries and they especially appreciate the opportunities concerning education, health care, and jobs. The paper explores the immigrant's vision of the American Dream and its traditional values which the immigrants strive to accept in their struggles to adapt to life in unfamiliar surroundings. Despite the challenges and hardships, the immigrants face as they struggle to make a new and better life for themselves and their families in the United States, they never lose their faith in the American Dream.

The first chapter provides various definitions of the American Dream and its fundamental values that have been attracting immigrants to the United States. In addition, the origins of the American Dream are traced from its beginnings to the present day with a focus on the current role of the American Dream in popular culture. The second chapter presents the four waves of immigration that started in 1790 and continue to the present day. Through these four waves of immigration, the paper examines the factors that affected immigration, along with information about who, why and when came to the United States. Furthermore, the third chapter takes a close look at immigrant's testimonies about their vision and experiences regarding the American Dream. Finally, the fourth chapter offers some key findings about the immigrants in America today that reveal that the situation has not changed regarding the immigrant's wish to pursue their American Dream.

1. The Concept of the American Dream

The whole concept of the American Dream is what attracts most people to the United States of America, and Murphy confirms that “the concept of ‘the American Dream’ has lured tens of millions of immigrants from all corners of the planet to the United States with promises of prosperity and happiness far beyond anything attainable in their native countries” (“Conceptions of the American Dream”). In a similar fashion, the Merriam Webster dictionary defines the American Dream as “a happy way of living that is thought of by many Americans as something that can be achieved by anyone in the U.S. especially by working hard and becoming successful” (“American Dream”). Furthermore, James Truslow Adams, who first publicly defined the American Dream in 1931, provides a similar definition claiming that “the American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement” (qtd. in Amadeo). Likewise, Parillo defines the American Dream as “that promise of freedom of choice, education, economic opportunity, upward mobility, and a better quality of life” (2). Finally, the United States Declaration of Independence confirms all of the above saying: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” (“US 1776”).

According to the above-mentioned definitions, it is obvious that there are numerous definitions of the American Dream, but all of them share the same belief that everyone can succeed through hard work and equal opportunities for all. The values that every definition of the American Dream cherishes are equality of opportunity, freedom, hard-work, and material wealth, and precisely those values are what attracts the immigrants to the United States. The American Dream is of great significance not just for the incoming immigrants, but for the whole nation because, as Parillo says: “Every individual has the knowledge that the United States is a nation of immigrants” (2). Looking back at the country's origin it is clear that only the Native American Indians are the true natives and that the rest of the American population comprises individuals who are immigrants or their ancestors were.

Those who support the immigrants in their pursuit of the American Dream are well aware of the fact that the immigrants are an important part of their culture. The belief that the American Dream has always been about immigrants serves as some sort of nationalistic pride for many

Americans. They are a proud nation, and they like to believe that their country is the chosen one and a land of opportunity for all. Since many Americans share these beliefs, they tend to show respect and hospitality to the immigrants who come to the United States. Mahler confirms saying that “mainstream Americans are fond of seeing themselves as constituting a nation of immigrants symbolized by the Statue of Liberty (6). This has also been recognized by the immigrants themselves as is evident in the following statement by Ahmed, a refugee from Somalia: “the American Dream has always been about immigrants and refugees coming to this country and becoming successful” (“The American Dream – From An Immigrant’s Perspective”).

Although most Americans are well aware of the benefits their country has had from the immigrants throughout the country's history, there are those who oppose immigration and claim that immigrants will take over their country. Arrivals of such vast numbers of immigrants from all around the globe have evoked feelings of fear and anxiety in native-born Americans and resulted even in violent acts against the newcomers. Americans who hurl accusations at immigrants are going against their own principles so clearly stated in all their founding documents, especially those about respecting the cultural heritage of others and offering equal opportunities for everyone. When asked why that is so, Parillo says that many Americans answered that things are different now, and that immigrants are involved in some sort of corruption of the American Dream (2). Parillo also claims that earlier immigrants respected the country by working hard and learning the language to become Americanized but now they are draining their tax dollars and refusing to assimilate or learn the language, and even behaving as if they own the country they have moved to (2).

1.1 The Origins of the American Dream

Many people ascribe the existence of the American Dream to James Truslow Adams because he was the one who first publicly defined it. However, Kiger says that it was actually John Winthrop who contributed the most to the Dream’s popularity with “his ‘city upon a hill’ sermon to his fellow Puritan colonists as they sailed to Massachusetts in 1630” (“How the American Dream Works”). In his sermon, Winthrop described “a society in which everyone would have a chance to prosper, as long as they all worked together and followed Biblical teachings” (qtd. in Kiger). The Puritans, to whom the speech was delivered, also believed that everyone can rise to

great heights through individualism, self-reliance and hard work. By cherishing equality, hard work and individualism, Amadeo says that “the Founding Fathers established a society that was very attractive to the ones aspiring for a better life” (“What Is the American Dream? The History That Made It Possible”). With the country’s evolution throughout the 19th century, the American Dream also evolved and became some sort of a trademark. This is when the American Dream gained its enormous popularity in the 19th century and, as Kiger says: “The words ‘American dream’ gradually began to appear in newspaper articles and books in the mid- to late-1800s, often in reference to hardy pioneers who headed westward to seek fortune, or to European immigrants who arrived in U.S. ports in search of better jobs and homes” (“How the American Dream Works”). Even though popular and promising, the Dream did not guarantee the same rights to every American. Amadeo says that “at first, the Declaration only extended the Dream to white property owners. But the idea of inalienable rights was so powerful that laws were added to extend these rights to slaves, women, and non-property owners. In this way, the American Dream changed the course of America itself” (“What Is the American Dream? The History That Made It Possible”).

2. The Four Waves of Immigration

According to Langeland, there were four immigration waves from the Colonial period to today (“The Four Waves from the Colonial Period to Today”). The immigration to the United States started a long time ago in the colonial period when the first slaves from Africa were brought by force to the United States to satisfy the need for free labor on the vast plantations. In addition, many other immigrants came of their own free will in the hope that they will have a better standard of living than in their own country. Since the United States of America is a nation founded by colonists, the first immigrants were colonists themselves. All of them had their own reasons for coming; some came in search of better jobs while the others in search of religious freedom such as the Pilgrims. Amadeo claims that there are:

three main geographic, economic and political factors that made the American Dream possible:

1. large land mass under one government
2. America’s benign neighbors; Canada’s climate is too cold and Mexico’s too hot for them to create powerful economic threats
3. abundant natural resources; oil, rainfalls and plenty of rivers. The United States is a prime example of how the natural resources boosted the economy. (“What Is the American Dream? The History That Made It Possible”).

Hochschild states: “The premise of the American Dream rests on three fundamental tenets: the equal opportunity to participate and the ability to start over, a reasonable anticipation of success, and the notion that success is under one’s control” (qtd. in Gooden and Myers Jr. 1).

Langeland says that factors that influenced immigration the most can be named as push and pull factors: “The push factors were what drove the immigrants from their country such as religious persecution, political oppression and poverty. The pull factors were those which attracted immigrants to America such as civil rights, freedom of expression, religion and speech and economic opportunity” (“Four Waves of Immigration from the Colonial Period to Today”). The Pilgrims who came mainly because of religious freedom, founded many different colonies. Langeland claims that the northern colonies such as Plymouth and Massachusetts were founded because of religious freedom that was denied in most parts of England (“Four Waves from the Colonial Period to Today”). On the other hand, the South for example had its large plantations that

attracted those looking for profit: “The original intention of the first southern colonies was profit. The first settlers in Virginia, for example, were fortune seekers looking for gold and trade routes. When those ideas failed, they turned to farming” (Langeland). The economy of the South was based on slave labor so that in the South values like equality and opportunity were just non-existent as far as laborers were concerned. According to records on slavery, “a group of approximately 20 Africans who were forced into indentured servitude in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619” and almost “500,000 to 650,000 Africans were brought to America and sold into slavery between the 17th and 19th centuries” (“U.S. Immigration Before 1965”). Zeitz claims that in total there were about “some 40 million newcomers to the United States between 1830 and 1940...” (“The Real History of American Immigration”).

2.1. The First Wave of Immigration

During the first wave of immigration from 1790 to 1820, the political, economic, and religious factors caused the English, Germans, Dutch, Scots, Spanish, and Puritans to immigrate to the United States (“Waves of Immigration in America”). Cunneen says that the U.S. population in 1790 was made of the following groups: “English 49%, African 19%, Scots-Irish 8%, Scottish 7%, German 7%, Dutch 4%, French 3%, other 3%” (“The Four Waves of American Immigration”). Among all of these groups, the most significant were the Pilgrims who experienced persecution because of their faith in their home country and set off to the new world to find religious freedom. Likewise, “20,000 Puritans migrated to the region between 1630 and 1640” also in search of religious freedom (“U.S. Immigration Before 1965”). Besides religious reasons, many immigrant groups came because of economic reasons. Those groups comprised mostly the underprivileged European immigrants. Because they lacked the financial means to afford the expensive journey to the United States:

An estimated one-half or more of the white Europeans who made the voyage did so by becoming indentured servants. Although some people voluntarily indentured themselves, others were kidnapped in European cities and forced into servitude in America. Additionally, thousands of English convicts were shipped across the Atlantic as indentured servants. (“U.S. Immigration Before 1965”)

Cunneen also confirms that most of those Europeans could not afford the price of the passage saying that “indentured servants were half the workforce until 1750 but declined afterwards as economic conditions improved in England” (“The Four Waves of American Immigration”) Due to poor conditions, many of these first immigrants did not even survive the trip. Starvation and many diseases killed many of them before even setting their foot on the land (“Waves of Immigration in America”).

2.2. The Second Wave of Immigration

The second wave was from 1820 to 1860 (“Waves of Immigration in America”). The reasons for immigration were mostly economic and people were coming for more job opportunities: “Immigrants came for new opportunities because in Europe, peasants displaced from agriculture and artisans were made jobless from the industrial revolution” (“Waves of Immigration in America”). Also, many people that were already in America were sending “American Letters” which were encouraging other people to join them (“Waves of Immigration in America”). Another important reason for migration was the rise of popularity of the American Dream. In the 19th century, the country went from being agricultural to mostly industrial (“Waves of Immigration in America”). Cunneen states that “the growing reputation of the USA as a safe haven for immigrants and a land of opportunity for those willing to work hard drew people like a magnet” (“The Four Waves of American Immigration”). The ones who migrated were mostly Germans, Norwegians, and Irish mainly because of poverty and famine (“Waves of Immigration in America”). Germans came mostly because of economic reasons. They were numerous, and in the second wave “the United States received some 5 million German immigrants” (“U.S. Immigration Before 1965”). “Many of them journeyed to the present-day Midwest to buy farms or congregated in such cities as Milwaukee, St. Louis and Cincinnati. In the national census of 2000, more Americans claimed German ancestry than any other group” (“U.S. Immigration Before 1965”). On the other hand, Langeland claims that Norwegians emigrated because of the promise of free land that was adopted by the Homestead Act of 1862. Since the Act granted them fertile soil, their farms would look much larger than their landlord’s (“Four Waves of Immigration from the Colonial Period to Today”). Regarding the Irish immigrants, Zeitz says that “in San Francisco in the 1880s, Irish immigrants were five times as likely to be unskilled as

the city's broader population" and that "three-quarters of Irish immigrants remained unskilled workers until retirement or death" ("The Real History of American Immigration"). The Irish were facing starvation because of the failure of the potato crop, and they had no other option than to emigrate. "About 40 percent of immigrants from the second wave came from Ireland" ("Waves of Immigration in America").

2.3. The Third Wave of Immigration

The third wave of immigration was from 1880-1914 ("Waves of Immigration in America"). Again, immigrants came for more job opportunities and religious freedom. This third wave brought a new type of immigrants; some of them were from Eastern and Southern Europe while others came from Asia, mostly China and Japan. As Cunneen lists:

The push factors that caused Southern and Eastern Europeans to come were: High population growth in Southern and Eastern Europe, [l]ack of jobs and food, [s]carcity of available farmland, [m]echanization of agriculture, which pushed peasants off the land, [and] [r]eligious persecution of Russian Jews, who fled their villages after pogroms. ("The Four Waves of American Immigration")

On the other hand, the pull factors that attracted those same immigrants to the United States were: "Democracy, [f]reedom of religion, [a]vailable land, [o]ther forms of economic opportunity, [and] [b]ooming industries like steel and railroads advertised for workers in Hungary and Poland" (Cunneen). Many of the third wave immigrants worked in industry: "Over half of the operatives in steel, meat-packing, and mining were made up of immigrants" ("Waves of Immigration in America"). The third wave immigrants were not completely satisfied with the conditions, and they realized that America was not what they expected it to be. Nevertheless, the wave still continued, and "by 1914. 1.2 million of immigrants had entered the United States" ("Waves of Immigration in America").

2.4. The Fourth Wave of Immigration

The fourth wave that began in 1965 has continued to the present day. This wave brought Europeans, but also Asians, and Hispanics (“Waves of Immigration in America”). Cunneen says that “a major difference between the Fourth Wave and early eras of immigration is the large group of illegal or undocumented immigrants among them” (“The Four Waves of American Immigration”). This wave began with the Immigration and Naturalization Act signed by President Lyndon Johnson which ended “the old racist National Origins quota system that favored immigrants from Northwestern Europe” (Cunneen). The main factor that brought the immigrants was “a new law that altered the selection of immigrants from the country they were from to giving priority to people who already had family in the United States or had skills that were needed in the labor market” (“Waves of Immigration in America”). Regarding the Asian immigrants, most of them expected to get an opportunity to start a business of their own, and the majority of them succeeded (Langeland). The Asians are known for appreciating the values like family, loyalty and tradition, and they wanted to continue cherishing them in America too. Family honor is something that characterizes their families and encourages them to work hard in order to succeed and not to embarrass their families and the nation they came from. In contrast to the for the most part successful Asian immigrants, the Hispanic immigrants were overall less successful, poor, reliant on government and if illegal frequently exploited (Langeland). However, Langeland does mention one more successful Hispanic group of immigrants, those from Cuba, who settled “in southern Florida ... and are generally well educated, middle class, politically conservative and anti-Castro” (“Four Waves of Immigration from the Colonial Period to Today”). It is predicted that in several decades that Hispanics will be the largest group of immigrants while the number of Europeans will decrease.

3. The American Dream from the Immigrant's Perspective

Many immigrants came to America precisely because of the American Dream. Their vision of the Dream may slightly differ from the reality, but the concept is the same; all of them want to succeed in creating a better life for their families. The main reasons that affect their decision to leave their countries are poverty, poor political or economic conditions, education or health system. Most of them found their new home in America and do not regret coming there. Nowadays, more and more people are willing to leave their home countries in order to go to America and pursue their dreams whether they mean getting rich, starting a business or some career or just accomplishing everything that is not possible in their own country. Martinez calls herself lucky for having the opportunity to grow in America (“America: From An Immigrant's Perspective”). Martinez and her family were originally from El Salvador which is known to be among top five countries that have the largest share in the total number of immigrants in the U.S.: “Guatemala, Mexico, and El Salvador represent the three largest national origin groups among the undocumented population of the United States (Abrego and Gonzales, qtd. in Del Cid 5). Different reasons brought her parents to America, but she points out that one of the main ones was lack of security because El Salvador is known for its high murder rates.

Many other Central or South American countries are perceived as dangerous for life, and Martinez confirms that “it is because of the certainty and the security that is encompassed by the American Dream—the certainty that our kids can thrive and the security that we can live to see it happen” (“America: From An Immigrant's Perspective”). Immigrants have to accept the fact that their success depends on themselves only, and that the Dream may not always come true: “They keep dreaming, though, because there is a possibility to achieve it as long as they are in American soil” (Martinez, “America: From An Immigrant's Perspective”). Despite the failure and difficulties, Martinez advises that the American Dream must continue to live because that has always been something that America is known for (“America: From An Immigrant's Perspective”). From her perspective “immigrants from all over the world are grateful for America” (Martinez, America: From An Immigrants Perspective). Many other immigrants share her belief and just cannot imagine America without the American Dream.

The other example of an immigrant who came to pursue his American Dream is Ahmed from Somalia. Being a Muslim, Ahmed faced many prejudices when he came to America, but the

desire to accomplish his dreams was much stronger than any prejudice and problem. The reason that brought him and his family to the United States was the civil war that broke out in Somalia: “This had a huge impact on my family’s life. It not only affected them financially; it also affected their safety, as there were many militias fighting to take over the capital city” (Ahmed, “The American Dream – From An Immigrant’s Perspective”). When asked about the meaning of the American Dream to him, Ahmed said: “The American Dream, to me, meant making something out of nothing. It meant being able to come with nothing and become something” (“The American Dream – From An Immigrant’s Perspective”). Ahmed, as many other children too did not think a lot about it when he came to America. He thought that he was living the Dream only by having the opportunity to come to America. Ahmed states that during his adolescent years he saw the American Dream as “being rich and powerful” (“The American Dream – From An Immigrant’s Perspective”). His perspective of the American Dream is shaped by the fact that he attended a private school with other “rich” children while at the same time he lived in a poor neighborhood: “So this tale of two cities I would see when going to this private school across town in an affluent suburb and then living and waking up in the “hood” was a huge factor in how I viewed the American Dream” (“The American Dream – From An Immigrant’s Perspective”).

The perception of the American Dream changes throughout the years, and in adulthood people realize that the Dream requires constant struggle in order to come true. However, even if one works hard, the success is not always guaranteed. That is what casts a shadow on an otherwise successful concept of the American Dream. The accomplishment of the American Dream does not only mean to provide material things, some strive for an impact much greater than materialism: “The American dream meant coming here as a refugee or immigrant and then helping not only myself but others - being someone who is able to give back to society. It meant being financially secure and being able to touch other people’s lives” (Ahmed, “The American Dream – From An Immigrant’s Perspective”). Religious diversity also affects the perception of the American Dream; while some religions allow material prosperities, others think of them as something unholy, and they do not allow their followers to strive for anything that was not given to them from God. Ahmed says that his religion, which is Islam, does empower people to be humble, and to focus on inner personal growth rather than material growth (“The American Dream – From An Immigrant’s Perspective”). However, immigrants are often stigmatized because of their religion, nation, color of their skin or something else that makes them different

in a way. They are often disappointed in the American Dream because they are not sure whether it refers to all the people who come to America or just native-born Americans: “Is the American Dream becoming limited now to only people in America and excluding immigrants and refugees?” (Ahmed, “The American Dream – From An Immigrant’s Perspective”). Del Cid also agrees that “the United States often desires immigrants from advanced, wealthy, and well educated nations, and drives out those immigrants from poverty-stricken countries...thus, the U.S. has become discriminatory toward the immigrants’ nationalities” (8).

3.1. The American Dream for Latino Immigrants

Being the largest group of U.S. immigrants, Latino immigrants have always been a special part of the American culture. They are also often called Hispanics because they speak the Spanish language. Del Cid says that they mostly emigrate from Central America, South America, Mexico and some islands in the Caribbean (4). Like previously mentioned immigrants, most of them emigrate because of security reasons or poverty. Regarding geography, Del Cid says that “accessibility plays a major role for immigrants, as countries that are geographically close in proximity to the U.S...tend to have higher immigration rates than those countries that are separated by bodies of water or have closed border policies” (5). Latinos are often mentioned in a negative context and “portrayed as attracted to public assistance programs and more likely to take advantage of public welfare, which paints a negative picture of Latinos, just as in past images” (Kilty and Haymes, qtd. in Del Cid 6).

However, many wonder why Latinos decide to stay in the United States since many Americans believe that the Latinos only want to take advantage of their country. Pollina claims that “the American Dream is represented by two main components—freedom and opportunity” (qtd. in Del Cid 10). Del Cid agrees and says that these components are denied to most of the people in Latin America, and that is why they come to the U.S. (10). Besides poverty, lack of security and freedom, another important issue in Latin America is “institutional corruption, and abuses of the government” (Del Cid 10). For example, Chumil says that “in Guatemala, institutionalized corruption affects social and health services, causing a lack of access to health care, safe drinking water, and adequate education” (qtd. in Del Cid 10). Millions of people died, thousands are dying at the moment, and there are no statistics that can confirm how many of them

will die in the future, especially in Latin America where human life is not worth a lot. With those kinds of problems affecting their countries, many Latinos have just no other option but to leave. Originating from the poor countries where people had to work very hard in order to provide for their families, Latinos developed a work ethic that helps them to adjust in the United States, but on the other hand, that ethic brings also many problems. Americans often humiliate Latinos and refer to them as “lower class” just because, unlike many Americans, they are not too proud for any job. Lopez, Gonzales-Barrera and Krogstad also say that Latinos, despite being exposed to prejudice and problems in the U.S., believe that hard work will pay off significantly more than the Americans themselves (“Latinos are more likely to believe in the American dream, but most say it is hard to achieve”). Del Cid says that “Latino immigrants push on to meet their goals despite the menial jobs and intensive labor required of them” (15). Even so, they are well aware that succeeding is not easy, but their vision and faith has never been questioned.

According to Lopez, Gonzales-Barrera and Krogstad, the American Dream for Latinos consists mostly of being a good parent, owning a home, and having enough resources to provide for their family (“Latinos are more likely to believe in the American Dream, but most say it is hard to achieve”). When entering the United States illegally, Latinos often face many problems. Del Cid says that many immigrants “shared how they came with coyotes, or guides, that led them through deserts, rivers, and mountains on buses, trains, trailer trucks, walking, and at times, even in cars” (20). The coyotes are usually paid large sums of money, but even the money does not guarantee that the immigrants will arrive safely to the U.S. Some of them die while crossing the river; some of them are murdered by the police or the coyotes themselves. Achieving the American Dream sometimes also seemed more like a nightmare than a dream to the Latin immigrants because of terror they have been through while traveling. Del Cid states that one immigrant reported “going through hunger for days at a time, watching people get killed, and seeing women raped on the train” (21). Despite all the bad things they went through, the immigrants did not lose their faith in the American Dream. They are learning the language, working hard and trying their best to show that not all Latino immigrants should be perceived to be the same.

4. Immigrants in America Today; Key Findings

America is known as the country with the highest number of immigrants from all over the world, and the number increases on a daily basis. Almost every country in the world is represented among the immigrant population. Most immigrants came in pursuit of their American Dream which meant that everyone, even the poorest ones had an equal chance to succeed, and that their hard work would be rewarded. Some of them succeeded while others are still pursuing their Dream. Even if some immigrants fail in accomplishing everything they have imagined, they still do not give up because the “enduring belief that effort will be rewarded is clearly a motivating force for so many of the new immigrants” (Clark 4). According to Radford, “the U.S. foreign-born population reached a record of 44.4 million in 2017” (“Key findings about U.S. immigrants”).

Regarding the arrival of immigrants today, Radford says that “more than 1 million immigrants arrive in the U.S. each year” (“Key Findings about U.S. immigrants”). Today, “immigrants make up 13.6% of the total U.S. population” (Radford). The majority of them come from Mexico which confirms some author’s attitudes that the arrival of the immigrants sometimes depends on how close the countries are or on the type of borders the countries share. Nowadays, people are still arriving, but in 2017 the country where immigrants came from the most was, according to Radford, India. Mexico was next, then China and Cuba (“Key Findings about U.S. immigrants”). The statistics confirm the earlier mentioned statement that almost every country is represented among the immigrant population. Regarding the race and ethnicity, Radford says that more and more Asians arrive, and that Hispanics slowed their immigration. Despite the predictions from the beginning of the fourth wave of immigration that the Hispanics will be the largest immigrant group Radford says that “Asians are projected to become the largest immigrant group in the U.S. by 2055, surpassing Hispanics” (“Key Findings about U.S. Immigrants”). With the growth of population of the American Dream throughout the years, the immigrant population is also growing. Radford says that if the current immigration trends continue, “the immigrants and their descendants are projected to account for 88% of the total U.S. population growth through 2065” (“Key Findings about U.S. immigrants”). The numbers are fascinating because they show that despite the hardships and challenges the immigrants have been faced with in the past, and still are facing even today, they have not given up on accomplishing their goals.

Today, the words ‘American Dream’ symbolize happiness and prosperity to the ones who decide to pursue their dreams. The immigrants nowadays are attracted by the same reasons as the ones in the past; all of them want opportunities concerning jobs, education, and health: “Then as now, immigrants were drawn by the prospect of jobs that could provide money to send home to their families” (Clark 14). As mentioned earlier, the immigrants were coming in pursuit of their American Dream which meant that no matter how poor or uneducated one was, the country would give him an opportunity. The reasons for migration remained the same even today. Murphy agrees saying that “whether they dream of material affluence, career success, or just overall happiness and prosperity, every story is faced with similar challenges in an altogether unfamiliar land” (“Conceptions of the American Dream”). Another similarity between the immigrants in the past and the ones today is, as Clark says that the immigration “generates the same processes of social integration and upward mobility. And, as in the earlier flows, the current waves bring a diverse mixture of poor and better-off immigrants” (15). Anyone who entered the country did not have an easy path nor will that path be easy for the ones who are yet to come, but the American Dream obviously did not lose its popularity. Regardless of all the good and bad things concerning the American Dream, it is evident that it is still the most attractive thing to all the immigrants who come to the United States.

Conclusion

Since the United States has always been privileged to represent a multicultural nation, the aim of this paper was to explain the meaning of the American Dream for the immigrants, and to show that the immigrants still perceive the United States as the country where their dreams can come true. By presenting certain definitions of the American Dream and its development through different waves of immigration, it is important to say that the American Dream and the immigrants still shape the American society and culture.

With respect to all the statistics and data concerning the immigrants, it is obvious that the immigrants have been a part of America from the first day it was founded, and nothing has changed since. Because America offers something that many countries do not, like freedom and an equal opportunity for everyone to succeed, immigrants still come to the United States in large numbers. Hard work, individualism, and equal opportunities for everyone are something that eventually shapes every immigrant that comes to America.

To conclude, the American Dream has always been something that America has been known for. Even though no one knows what the future holds, certain statistics prove that the number of immigrants increases on a daily basis, and that whether Europeans, Asians or Latino immigrants, all of them keep coming to the United States. Some of them achieved their American Dream while others are still trying. One thing is certain; although their path has not been easy, and they keep struggling with many problems, they have never lost their faith in the American Dream. That does not mean that the Dream will come true for each one of the immigrants, but the faith in the Dream is what motivates and encourages the immigrants to keep dreaming and never give up. Finally, we can say that the American Dream will continue to have the greatest impact on the immigrants who choose to come to the United States.

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