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The American Dream in the 21st Century. Will Smith and *The Pursuit of Happiness*

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Abstract

This project involves analysis of the American Dream in its four versions as classified by Jim Cullen: upward mobility, equality, home ownership, and fame and success. Furthermore, it looks at its applications on the motion picture *The Pursuit of Happyness* (2006) as well as Will Smith's personal and professional life. The aim is to demonstrate that the Dream is still a recurrent idea in the 21st century and that Smith's character, Chris Gardner, and the celebrity himself fully illustrate the four versions of the Dream. Primary sources, including the above mentioned film directed by Gabriele Muccino and the biographical book *The Amazing Life of Will Smith* written by Matt Green have been used for the purpose of this study. Moreover, interviews with Will Smith and other important works published on the topic of the Dream have been consulted. We finally conclude that the American Dream is a controversial topic which has played an important role in USA history and culture and is still an important issue in the 21st century.

Key words

American Dream, *The Pursuit of Happyness*, Will Smith, Chris Gardner, Jim Cullen

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The American Dream: the Soul of the United States

The American Dream is an intrinsic part of the history and culture of the USA. It is not only an omnipresent idea within the American territory but it has also gained much popularity among other nations. The Dream has been the main reason for thousands of immigrants to see the USA as the Promised Land. Since the 17th century it has been a unifying element across people from different nationalities, races and social backgrounds who have shared common values such as freedom, equality and happiness. It is “a kind of a lingua franca” (Cullen, 2004: 6) and a wide-spread idea: even those who do not identify themselves with the American Dream have a notion of it.

Jim Cullen states that “in the twenty-first century, the American Dream remains a major element of [the American] national identity that may well be greater than ever before” (Cullen, 2004: 6). As an important, contemporary concept in American cultural studies the American Dream is going to be the main focus of this paper. I want to demonstrate that the concept of the Dream is still recurrent today and that Will Smith, the individual, his *persona* or public image, as well as the character he interprets in the movie *The Pursuit of Happyness* (2006), fully illustrates the Dream.

The aim of this project is to analyze the application of the four versions of the American Dream as described by Jim Cullen (upward mobility, equality, home ownership, and fame and success) to Will Smith’s personal and professional life. As Mary Laitinen states it is important to understand that “the American Dream is an abstraction, and can only be located and studied through concrete forms of embodiment” (Laitinen, 2009: 19). In other words, to understand the Dream we need to analyze it through concrete pieces of work. For the purpose of this study, we are going to use as a primary source the motion picture *The Pursuit of Happyness* (2006) based on the autobiographical book with the same title written by Chris Gardner and published in 2006. Furthermore, the publication *The Amazing Life of Will Smith* (2014) is another source we are going to analyze in order to comprehend the American Dream. Cullen’s work and his classification of the Dream have been used as a foremost theoretical source.

Definition and origin of the American Dream

According to Cullen the American Dream is a term that “everyone presumably understands – which today appears to mean that in the United States anything is possible if you want it badly enough” (Cullen, 2004: 5). However, the Dream does not have a clear-cut definition. Although the idea of the Dream dates from the 17th century when the Puritans first settled on the new land, the term itself was not coined until several decades ago. “American Dream” was first used by the journalist Walter Lippmann in a book titled *Drift and Mastery* (1914).

Nonetheless, the definition by the American historian James Truslow Adams given in his book *The Epic of America* in 1931 would become the most popular one. He speaks of “that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement” (Adams, 1931: 404). Adams’ s interpretation of the Dream relies on the notion of opportunity and democracy. It is an idea closely connected to values such as freedom and equality. However, the term is loose and unclear; what is actually a “better and richer and fuller” life? The American Dream is a rather abstract term that has undergone important changes over the years and which even these days has more than one possible interpretation. In the next lines we are going to briefly track the evolution of the Dream.

The basic principle of improvement rooted in the American Dream originates from the first colonists who settled on the territory of America, a group of religious people, known as the Puritans, whose idea of the dream, according to Cullen, was rather contradictory. On the one hand, they believed that their lives were predestined by God and they were powerless to change their fate. On the other hand, they lived in a hope that their actions could make a difference (Cullen, 2004: 19). In the 18th century, this apparent contradiction melted, as there was a shift from religious dogma to Rationalism. The Founding Fathers had a new, human-centered perspective of the American Dream: man was the agent in his life and he could through hard work and persistence achieve his goals and make his own destiny (the self-made man). The *Declaration of Independence* was the key to freedom for the USA and a promise of opportunity and hope for its citizens. Nevertheless, the question of equal opportunity for everyone (not only for white men) was not considered until the 19th century when during the government of Abraham Lincoln slavery was abolished. Even after that moment, the Dream of equality would have a long way to go. A century later, the Dream was put on trial several times: two World Wars, The Stock Market Crash of 1929, The Vietnam War and the terrorist attacks of eleventh of September were events that would shake its foundations. However, the editors of the book called *The American Dream in the 21st Century* argued: “At its core, the American Dream represents a state of mind – that is, an enduring optimism to a people who might be tempted to succumb to the travails of adversity, but who, instead repeatedly rise from the ashes to continue to build a great nation.” (John Kenneth White and Sandra L. Hanson, 2011: 3) In the next section of this paper we are going to focus on the different variants of the Dream and how they are present in Will Smith’s life and the film *The Pursuit of Happyness*.

The four versions of the American Dream

The dream of upward mobility: the self-made man and the pursuit of happiness.

This is understood as the pursuit of economic, social and personal growth. In the first half of the 19th century the American politician Henry Clay argued: “We are a nation of self-made men.” (Clay published in Cullen, 2004: 69) This concept is said to be coined by Benjamin Franklin in his *Autobiography*. It is the idea that man makes his own destiny with hard work and he progresses. The movie *The Pursuit of Happyness* based on Chris Gardner’s real story mostly represents the version of upward mobility because it tells the journey of overcoming obstacles and ascending on the social scale. The main character Chris Gardner becomes from a homeless person into a multimillionaire stockbroker. The title of the film suggests that in order to become happy you have to pursue your dreams. However, there is no promise that it is going to be easy. At the core of the Dream is the idea that one has to work hard and never resign from their goals despite the difficulties one might have to face on the way. When his wife leaves him, desperate and financially strapped, the protagonist remembers a quote from the US Declaration of Independence that all men should have the right of “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness (Jefferson quoted in Muccino, 2014: 31’32’’- 31’35’’). He questions whether you can achieve your dream or it is rather its constant pursuit, an illusion that never comes true. At the end of the movie, Gardner’s skills and effort are rewarded. In one of the final scenes he gets employed as a stockbroker and the viewer becomes aware of the character’s emotions through a voice-over commentary: “This part of my life... this part right here? This is called “happyness”.” (Muccino, 2006: 01h 50’ 59’’)

The concept of the self-made man is not only understood as one’s personal development, it is also the creation of more opportunities for their offspring. Franklin’s autobiographical work begins with a dedication to his son and it is thought to be a model for future generations. In *The Pursuit of Happyness* we observe the same pattern: a loving father struggles to achieve a better life for himself and his child. In fact, Will Smith stars together with his actual son, Jaden. The Hollywood superstar introduces his eight-year-old child into the movie business, giving the young boy the opportunity to reach his father’s success on the big screen. The American Dream is associated with expectations that the future generations will perform better and have brighter future than their parents. Probably the scene that most clearly illustrates the Dream of upward mobility in *The Pursuit of Happyness* is that when Chris Gardner plays basketball with his son Christopher. The latter cries enthusiastically that he will become a professional basketball player but his father is skeptical. According to Gardner, when he was young he was not good enough, therefore his son would not become much

better. Christopher's disappointment makes Gardner reconsider his words: "Don't ever let somebody tell you... you can't do something. Not even me. [...] You got a dream... You gotta protect it. People can't do somethin' themselves, they wanna tell you you can't do it. If you want somethin', go get it. Period." (Muccino, 2006: 54' - 55' 40'') In a documentary about his life and success, Smith confesses that his own father once said similar words to him. He was told to never think that there is such a goal he cannot achieve. (Smith, 2013: 02' 40'')

This scene is also representative for another core component of the discussed topic: one has to pursue their dream even if others do not believe in it. Chris Gardner's wife does not support him and does not believe in his dreams. Even though he is left with scarce financial resources and with the challenges of single parenthood, Gardner is determined to achieve the job at Dean Witter Reynolds and to provide economic stability for his family. In a scene when Gardner impresses a manager at the stock brokerage by solving a Rubik's cube for several minutes, the latter does not believe in Gardner's ability at first. Nevertheless, the protagonist does not get discouraged and proves his skills. (Muccino, 2006: 25' 20'' - 27' 40'')

The Founding Fathers created the concept of "natural aristocracy", the idea that one's growth in the social scale is due to their own merit. Regardless Gardner's poor background and lack of higher education, he believes in his right to a more prestigious social position ("from rags to riches"). Even though he does not have the required degree for the job position, Gardner excels with his intellectual and hard-working qualities. In the above mentioned scene, thanks to the protagonist's ability to solve the Rubik's cube he impresses the manager and obtains a real chance to work in the stock brokerage company that otherwise he would have not had because of his lack of academic preparation.

In the *Biography Series* collection Math Green argues: "Smith saw a lot of his own drive and passion in Gardner's story." (Green, 2014: 301) In fact, the celebrity's biography has several intersections with that of his fictional character. Both Smith and Gardner had a working-class origin, did not attend college and at a given point in their lives underwent bankruptcy because of unpaid income taxes; however, they managed to strive and to become successful.

Regarding Will Smith's professional career many of the roles he chooses to perform share common ground with the Dream of upward mobility, e.g. the character of Mohammad Ali tells the biographical story of the sports legend's professional rise. Green writes that Smith himself spent over a year in athletic training and long hours of workouts, as well as reading Islamic literature in order to present the character accurately (Green, 2014: 271-2) Smith's example of extraordinary work ethic and his constant personal improvement is correlative

with the prospect of “betterment” embedded into the Dream of upward mobility. The next section will focus on the second variant of the Dream, that of Equality.

The Dream of Equality

Cullen describes this version of the Dream as “the most noteworthy and unsuccessful” (Cullen, 2004: 8). If we look back at US history, the matter of equality has undergone several changes. The separation of the thirteen colonies from the British Empire enfranchised the colonists on the new land. However, the segregation of the African Americans led to the idea that the Dream was entitled to white men only. Cullen claims that “Abraham Lincoln may have made the slaves free, but not even he [...] was prepared to make them equal.” (Cullen, 2004: 107) As John Kenneth and Sara Hanson state in their book *The American Dream in the 21st Century* it was because of leaders such as Martin Luther King and some feminists that minorities were included in the promise for a better life arriving at a point when in 2008 America chose its first African American president (Sandra L. Hanson and John Kenneth White, 2011: 1). Today a number of illustrious characters from African American origin such as Barack Obama, Oprah Winfrey and Will Smith (among others) are considered the very embodiment of the Dream of equality. However, it is important to understand that those examples cannot be taken as a proof that the Dream is real and equality has been fully achieved. Even though most racial differences have been eliminated through time, according to Alison R. Lanier “there are still frictions and sometimes riots, and educational equality remains a dream” (Lanier, 2005: 29). She argues that some ethnical groups do not have the same opportunities as whites do. In her words, because of many African Americans’ descent from slaves they are seen as “involuntary immigrants” (Lanier, 2005: 30). The leader of the Civil Rights movement (1950-1960s) Martin Luther King’s most famous speech is probably the one that best represents the issue of equality. He dreamt of brotherhood between blacks and whites, and equal rights for the former. Maya Angelou’s autobiographical book *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969) is another emblematic piece of work that deals very well with the topic of racism.

The Dream of Equality is also a recurrent topic in *The Pursuit of Happyness*. First of all, the title is inspired by the Declaration of Independence and conveys the meaning that everyone has the right to pursue their dreams. The word “happyness”, which is intentionally misspelled, appears written as graffiti in the film and it is taken from an essay called “Liberty Further Extended: or Free Thoughts on the Illegality of Slave-keeping” and written by Lemuel Haynes in 1776. The author quotes the well-known sentence by Thomas Jefferson, which appears in Haynes’s essay as follows: “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.” (Haynes quoted in Saillant, 2003: 15) Secondly, the theme of equality is present through the opening scene in the movie, which depicts citizens from different ethnical groups and different social classes on the streets of San Francisco. It intends to visualize the metaphor of the “melting pot” used to describe the USA as a country which heterogeneous society becomes more homogeneous. The scene is representative of the ambiguous issue of equality; is the American Dream actually attainable for all citizens despite their social background or it is a utopia. Is the aspiration to a better tomorrow achievable for each and every one on the Promised Land or it is reserved only for “the fittest”, white male citizens? Thirdly, Chris Gardner brings his toddler son to a kindergarten in a Chinese neighborhood. Although the institution is not in the best conditions and the kids watch television instead of actually being academically taught, it is the cheapest one that Gardner can afford. Another way in which this variant of the Dream is present in the movie is through the background of the protagonist. Even though he is an African American who comes from a humble origin and with no higher education, he is the intern who is chosen for the job position among twenty other (mostly white) candidates. Gardner’s dedication to his objectives is finally rewarded regardless of his “inferior” origin. In this sense, the protagonist’s Dream of equality has become true; however, by no means this can be taken as the general truth.

Will Smith like his fictional character grew up at a time when the feminist and Civil rights movements, which share a common ground with the Dream, were still a contentious problem. Therefore, his vision of the world was shaped according to values, including equality, freedom and human rights. In fact, Smith was born in the same year of Martin Luther King’s death. Not only in his career as an actor, but also in his earlier occupation as a rap singer the celebrity shows his concern about political and social issues such as black segregation and civil rights. In the chorus of one of his songs named “Afro Angel” he sings: “Afro Angel, born against the world/ You don’t have to sell you soul and throw away your pride/ Afro Angel, sent from heaven above/ Never forget that you are loved/ You know that you are loved.” (Higgins et al., 1999: 25-29) The lyrics proclaim the message that African Americans should not feel inferior and they should fight for their right to stand as equal citizens of this country. Smith was not only a loved Hollywood star because of his talent; his attempts to eliminate racial discrimination converted him into an example to follow in this matter. Green says that: “Will Smith conquered every area of entertainment he attempted. Even more important than his entertainment achievements, however, were his continued contributions to

further breaking down the racial barriers for African Americans in the entertainment industry.” (Green, 2014: 34) In his role in *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* Smith attempted to rebut negative stereotypes for African American families as being “poor, violent and broken” (Green, 2014: 120) With a sense of humor he portrayed them in a rather more positive way in the show. After we have seen the most unrealized version of the dream we are going to move to the most accomplished of the four - the aspiration to own a house.

The Dream of Home Ownership

In *Living in the USA* Alison R. Lanier says: “Nothing symbolizes the American Dream more than owning your own house.” (Lanier, 2005: 170) According to Cullen home ownership is “the most widely realized American Dream.” (Cullen, 2004: 9) The right of ownership has its origin in 1862 when the Homestead Act was signed during the government of Abraham Lincoln. It was a law that allowed adult citizens (or male immigrants who had the intention of becoming citizens) to possess a piece of public land in exchange of a small amount of registration fee and with the condition that they will cultivate the land and stay there for a minimum of a five-year period of time, at which point they will become the official owners. (Cullen, 2004: 141)

Cullen states that: “[the American landscape] could be more than a mere marketable commodity: it could serve as a *home*.” (Cullen, 2004: 138) This variant of the Dream goes beyond the materialistic need to possess a house. It is rather related to the desire of having a home and a family. Nowadays, it is a fashionable practice for Americans (a great number of Americans, although people from other countries too) to *vlog* on the internet personal videos about their daily routine, home decoration and family life. This is representative of how the Dream of family comfort and home ownership is still present and due to technology even more visible in the 21st century. Moreover, Jefferson’s ideal of owning a private piece of land is related to the concept of identity. The American Dream is a product of the collective imagination since the USA has been seen as a land of opportunity, a place where one can afford to purchase a house and strive for a better life. Furthermore, home ownership is associated with concepts such as independence and freedom, both ethereal and controversial so as it is the Dream itself.

The topic of home seeking is present in *The Pursuit of Happiness* mostly through the character of Christopher. He pays attention to the big houses and the kids playing in the front yard, as well as a closed family he sees in a restaurant, all of which elements of the stereotypical image of the Dream. At a time when Gardner and his toddler son are changing cheap motels and accommodations the little boy dreams of having a home. So does his father.

The big white house of one of Gardner's potential clients symbolizes the Dream of a home: economic stability, safety and a happy family. Homelessness, on the contrary, is another recurrent topic in the film that stays on the other scale of what one can dream of. When left bankrupted the protagonist has to wait in long queues with other homeless people in order to get a bed in the church to overnight with his son. Once again, this is a reminder that the Dream has not been achieved by everyone. The number of homeless people in San Francisco shown in the motion picture makes the viewer questions themselves whether a place called home, therefore happiness, is guaranteed to everyone. The most dramatic moment in the movie when Gardner has to sleep with his son in a public toilet stresses their lack of a physical place to leave. Moreover, the absence of the mother figure in Gardner's family is another key element that reinforces the sense of how important family is to one's happiness. Parental love is another main theme in the motion picture directed by Muccino. Gardner is presented as a loving father who takes custody of his son and struggles to provide for him. Christopher is his main and foremost motivation to continue pursuing his dreams. In the section of upward mobility we mentioned the element of the importance to believe in one's dreams even if others do not. Nevertheless, Gardner asks his son several times in the film to trust him. It is essential for him as a father that his son can rely on him. Chris Gardner, the real person, in his autobiographical book writes that the birth of his son made his existence meaningful and he adds: "Without words, I swore on everything and everyone that I cherished in this world, reaffirming my lifelong promise that I would always care for him and that I would never be absent from his life." (Gardner, 2006: 176).

Two literature productions written in the previous century, both widely studied by scholars, are also representative of the version of home ownership. In contrast to *The Pursuit of Happiness* both F. S. Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman* (1949) illustrate the crooked American Dream: a misunderstood belief that the successful appearance and pursuit of material goods (e.g. a house) would bring one happiness and love. Both works represent the failure of the American Dream, as the protagonists decrease before the realization of their goals.

In an interview in Oprah Winfrey's show Will Smith together with his whole family (and extended family in the audience) talks about the relationship with his wife and children. They all have invented a family business plan and attend regular meetings at their home. According to them, this gives a purpose to all members of the group and strengthens their relationship. Actually, they reveal the interesting fact that Will's ex-wife is a part of their family and a friend of theirs. In their philosophy stays the idea that when adults get separated during these

difficult moments they should think of their children's needs instead of their own selfish desires. Oprah is impressed by Will's devotion to his children and his educational approach to stop them from the dangerous temptations that fame and money bring with them. (Winfrey, 2013) The stereotypical image of this version of the Dream includes being happily married, having children and at least one pet in a cozy house located in a good neighborhood. Will Smith and his current wife, Jada Pinkett Smith, live in comfort in a house in Los Angeles enjoying continuous career success meanwhile they raise their three children. Today they are considered the perfect Hollywood couple who has managed to succeed in both their personal as well as professional lives. The Dream of Fame and Success is indeed our next and last subject to discuss.

The Dream of Fame and Success

According to Jim Cullen "the American Dream was never meant to be a zero-sum solution: the goal has always been to end up with more than you started with" (Cullen, 2004: 159). In this last section we are going to discuss the fourth distinctive version of the Dream, which Cullen calls "the most alluring" (Cullen, 2004: 9), the Dream of fame and success. If upward mobility is understood as ascending on the social ladder through hard work and dedication, this version of the Dream is rather associated with quick fortune without great effort. According to the author it is also known as the Dream of the Coast because of its strong western orientation, being California its "apotheosis" (Cullen, 2004: 161). Through the time, Las Vegas and Hollywood have become a symbol of the glitzy world of celebrity, gambling and frivolous behaviors such as sex and drinking. In other words, they are seen as compelling places for fun, easy money and glamour. Not only Hollywood symbolizes the Dream but it also serves as a powerful tool to promote it across the globe. A myriad of movies have been produced which deal with one or several of the variants of the Dream. *The Great Gatsby*, based on the literature classic from the previous century, is a movie which has several adaptations (one of the most recent ones produced in 2013) shows that the Dream is still an idea that raises interest and is worth exploring. The film depicts the tricky nature of the Dream – its fundamental contradiction between appearance and reality. Success and fame might be alluring; however, as Cullen reminds us they have their own price, which is at least as valuable as money: "time, energy, reputation, a sense of hope." (Cullen, 2004: 161) In the next lines we are going to focus on how the Dream of the Good Life is present in the Pursuit of Happiness and in Smith's life.

The motion picture by Muccino is set in San Francisco, a cosmopolitan city, full of potential and one of the geographical places which best represents this version of the Dream. The

protagonist himself moves from the Eastern state of Louisiana to the Western coast of California in order to pursue his dreams. The red Ferrari which appears in the movie is a symbol of success and welfare. It is the perfect physical representation of this variant of the Dream: it is an alluring, glittering, tangible thing that one can achieve overnight through gambling, for instance. Gardner's dream was born when he encounters an employee in Dean Witter Reynolds parking his red Ferrari in front of the brokerage house building. Gardner wants to know what that man does and how he does it. The protagonist remembers that moment when everyone around him looked happy (Muccino, 2006: 09' 22'' - 10' 28'') It is a key scene in the movie because it is the spark that ignites Gardner's longing for a better life. A counterpoint is the fact that the protagonist lost his car because of unpaid parking fines. Having no car represents his current situation, while the red Ferrari embodies Gardner's goal, the point at which he wants to arrive.

Cullen claims that: "in any event, very little of the wealth of rich people comes from their salaries; instead it comes from investments whose value lies precisely in the way they produce value without labor on the part of the shareholder." (Cullen, 2004: 160) Chris Gardner invests in medical devices known as "Bone Density scanner". He hopes to make a fortune very soon, but they do not sell as well as expected and it actually turns out to be a difficult labor. Therefore, his intent of quick welfare was unsuccessful, as not only has he to struggle to sell the machines, but his wife leaves him due to his failure.

The Dream of fame and success is another version that the celebrity's public persona illustrates. In *The Amazing Life of Will Smith* Matt Green remarks the fact that at the age of nineteen Smith became a millionaire when his first album with his co-worker Jazzy Jay sold over 300,000 copies. (Green, 2014: 49) However, Green adds that the star's reckless spending on cars, clothes, and houses as well as having not paid income taxes led him to bankruptcy. (Green, 2014: 50) Nevertheless, he did not change his focus on entertaining the public and his financial success was later repeated as an actor. The easy path to wealth is another theme present in the celebrity's work. The Dream of the Coast is present in his career in *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, in which he moves from Philadelphia to a wealthy family in California. Furthermore, Green says that in the film *Six Degrees of Separation* (1993) "Smith played a street smart young man who conned his way into the household of a wealthy family." (Green, 2014: 156) The celebrity himself is ranked as the best paid star by Forbes. His family is also involved in the entertainment industry and each of them has their own spot in the stardom. Having discussed the four versions of the Dream, we are now going to proceed to the final conclusions of this study.

Conclusions

We all presumably know what the Dream is - in short, it is an objective to be attained. However, we cannot skip the obvious question - is the Dream actually attainable? Is it real? Since the New Land was discovered, the Dream has meant both opportunity and uncertainty. Cullen writes that “ambiguity is the very source of its mythic power, nowhere more than among those striving for, but unsure whether they will reach, their goals. (Cullen: 2004: 7) It is an almost religious belief, which has no scientific proof and precisely for this reason it is even more attractive - it can be shaped according to each individual needs and philosophy. Therefore, there is no way to know whether it is an achievable objective. As Cullen explains it, on the one hand, those who fail would blame themselves they did it wrong or they did not try hard enough; on the other hand, those who has achieved their goal “may also question the basis of their success – and its price.” (Cullen, 2004: 7) We can conclude that even those who believe the Dream is real and those who do not are usually both equally right. In the end, our beliefs determine our reality. A contemporary book titled *The Man Who Wanted to Be Happy* (2009) written by the French author Laurent Gounelle deals with the topic of how our thoughts influence our lives. Similarly, the American Dream is an abstraction like Love that is experienced by those who believe in it and in the manner in which they do so. Independently of one’s own opinions, an undeniable fact is that the Dream has persisted over the years, resisting numerous historical and cultural challenges. As Samuel states due to the Dream’s “adaptive behavior” it “has continually morphed yet somehow also remained much the same, this paradox a result of its profound ambiguity.” (Samuel, 2012: 4) Moreover, it had a great influence not only on the territory of the USA but also worldwide. The American Dream has become a successful tool for Hollywood to increase its budget. Will Smith’s personal and professional life and Muccino’s film *The Pursuit of Happiness* are only some of the examples which represent the Dream. Pop culture and the Internet have also spread its basic ideology. Hardly there is anyone in the 21st century who has no notion of this concept.

To conclude, the American Dream has no single definition. Its many facets are all mystic and obscure. It is an abstract idea which is individual and at the same time collective, persistent and shifting through time, related to material goods as well as spiritual values. Although its apparent contradiction, this idea has persisted until today and until people have trust in it, the Dream will continue to exist because, in the end, the American Dream means hope, hope that there is a better tomorrow.

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