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**AMERICAN AND MEXICAN POINTS OF VIEW  
ABOUT THE “AMERICAN DREAM”**

**AMERIKĀŅU UN MEKSIKĀŅU VIEDOKLIS PAR  
„AMERIKĀŅU SAPNI”**

**BACHELOR THESIS**

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## ANOTĀCIJA

Bakalaura darba tēma ir uzzināt Amerikāņu un Meksikāņu viedokļus par "Amerikāņu sapni", kuri atspoguļojas filmās, kā arī, to kā Amerikāņu sapnis ir uztverts filmās "*Ziemeļi*" (1984) un "*Tiekšanās pēc laimes*" (2006). Galvenais uzdevums bija analizēt filmas, lai redzētu kā Amerikāņu sapnis tiek panākts abām nācijām. Papildus, šim uzdevumam tika arī uzsvērti Amerikāņu sapņa elementi, kas raksturo šo fenomenu. Pētījumā viens no uzdevumiem bija atrast Amerikāņu sapnim pašu piemērotāko definīciju un elementus kas to veido. Tas tika paveikts lasot dažādu autoru grāmatas un rakstus, kuri diskutē par šo tēmu. Bakalaura darbā tika izmantotas pētīšanas metodes, tādas kā, bibliotēkas pētījumi un filmu, attēlu un kinematogrāfiskās reprezentācijas metodes, lai spētu izprast nepieciešamo informāciju par doto tēmu. Atbilstoši informācijai tika izmantotas Džima Kullena (2004), Baraka Obamas (2006), Džeimsa Truslova Adamsa (1931), Hedriksa Smita (2012), Roberta D. Putnama (2015) grāmatas un raksti. Filmu, attēlu un kinematogrāfiskās reprezentācijas analīze tika izmantota, lai izvērtētu notikumu attēlojumu. Pētījuma rezultāti un secinājumi atklāj Amerikāņu sapņa definīciju un tā galvenos elementus, kā arī, tā atainojumu filmās.

**Atslēgas vārdi:** Amerikāņu sapnis, amerikāņi, meksikāņi, sapnis, vēsture, filmas, Ziemeļi, Tiekšanās pēc laimes.

## **ABSTRACT**

The theme of the bachelor thesis is to examine the reflection of American and Mexican points of view about the American Dream in the movies, and how the American Dream is depicted in 'El Norte' and 'The Pursuit of Happyness'. The main task was to analyze the movies in order to see how the American Dream is interpreted differently by both nations. This task also included the listing of the key elements of the American Dream. In this research, one of the tasks was to find the most suitable definition for the American Dream and the elements it consists of. This was done by reading books and articles by different authors that discuss this theme, like Jim Cullen (2004), Barack Obama (2006), James Truslow Adams (1931), Hedrick Smith (2012), Robert D. Putnam (2015). Film, image and cinematic representation analysis was used in order to see the recreation of the events. The research findings and conclusions provide the definition of the American Dream and its key elements, also, its representation in the movies.

**Key words:** The American Dream, Americans, Mexicans, dream, history, movies, El Norte, The Pursuit of Happyness.

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## INTRODUCTION

The main issue examined in this bachelor thesis is the reflection of American and Mexican points of view about “American Dream” in the movies, how the American Dream is depicted in ‘El Norte’ (1984) and ‘The Pursuit Of Happyness’ (2006).

This topic is highly discussed among people who belong to these two cultures because of the timespan that caused the American Dream to change throughout decades. The reason is the fast changing history of the United States.

The topic has been discussed before by Putnam, Robert D. (2015), Jim Cullen (2004), Smith, Hedrick. (2012), Adams, James Truslow (1931), Obama, Barack (2006), Rauchway, Eric. (2008), Fitzgerald, F. Scott. (1925).

For example, Putnam, Robert D. (2015) has discussed the life in modern society; Jim Cullen (2004) explores the meaning of the American Dream and several American Dreams that have both reflected and shaped American identity. Smith, Hedrick (2012) describes the consolidation of wealth in the United States, and the dismantling of the middle class, due to which the American Dream, is becoming increasingly unattainable. Smith, Hedrick (2012) explains how middle-class America and the American Dream have been undermined throughout years. Obama, Barack (2006) gives an impression about the American Dream based on his experience. Adams, James Truslow (1931) was the first author who started to talk about the American Dream as such, describing the characteristics of it in his book *The Epic of America* (1931).

The task is to analyze, how the “American Dream” is perceived by both nationalities. In that way the results will show what is necessary to be able to achieve this, so called, ‘American Dream’ and points of view from both cultures will appear, providing the insight of the American and Mexican people struggle to achieve the dream.

The goal of the conducted bachelor thesis is to analyze the representation of these views, concerning the “American Dream”.

The enabling **objectives** are:

1. To define the ‘American Dream’, giving the closest definition.
2. To read and analyze the secondary sources related to this topic.
3. Analysis of the movies ‘*El Norte*’, ‘*The Pursuit of Happyness*’ which are related to the ‘American Dream’.
4. Compare the points of view of American people and one of the Mexican people in the movies.

5. To study the American Dream in '*El Norte*' directed by Gregory Nava and '*The Pursuit of Happiness*' (2006) directed by Gabriele Muccino.
6. To collect the historical information related to the American Dream from different books and articles. (The Great Recession, The Great Depression, The New Deal, documentary film '*Heist: Who Stole the American Dream?*')

**The research questions** are the following:

- 1) What is the American Dream?
- 2) What are the main elements of the American Dream?
- 3) How the American Dream is represented in the movies?
- 4) How the American and Mexican points of view differ from each other in the movies?

**The research methods** of research

- **Theoretical part:** Library research: the study of the secondary sources on the research problem, textual analysis and interpretation.
- **Practical part:** Analysis of Film, image and cinematic representation.

**Outline of the paper:**

Chapter 1 is devoted to the analysis of secondary sources on the research topic of the American Dream.

Chapter 2 explains the research methodology applied in the study to better research the American Dream as a theme.

Chapter 3 provides the definition of the "American Dream" by different authors who discuss the theme, and collection of information about the historical background related to the theme.

Chapter 4 representation of the American Dream in the movies '*El Norte*' and '*The Pursuit of Happiness*'.

Chapter 5 is devoted to comparing the American and Mexican points of view about the American Dream on the basis of the movies '*El Norte*' and '*The Pursuit of Happiness*'.

The paper is concluded with a summary of the main findings and thesis.

## 1. AN OVERVIEW OF LITERARY WORKS RELATED TO THE THEME

In this chapter, the author presents the literature that is related to the American Dream, written by such authors as, Jim Cullen, Hedrick Smith, Robert D. Putnam, James Truslow Adams and previous President of the United States of America, Barack Obama. The information given in the articles and books of these mentioned authors was useful for defining the meaning of the American Dream. Afterward, an explanation is given of the movies 'El Norte' (1984) and 'The Pursuit of Happyness' (2006) related to the American Dream.

The American dream is primarily discussed by Jim Cullen (2004), *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation*. Barack Obama (2006), *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*. Putnam, Robert D. (2015) *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*. Smith, Hedrick. (2012) *Who Stole the American Dream?* Adams, James Truslow. (1931) *The Epic of America*.

Each author gives an insight of this topic called the American Dream explaining the meaning of it and what it takes to achieve it.

The literature related to the American Dream provides different definitions of this phenomenon. Each author has their own definition and view on this theme. The secondary sources give greater detail about the definition of the topic. According to James Truslow Adams, "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. [...] It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to [...] be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position." James Truslow Adams (1931: 214-215). The author James Truslow Adams is popular in the American culture being the first to define the American Dream in his book 'The Epic of America' in 1931. James Truslow Adams (1931) defines the American Dream as a place where everything is better, where there are many opportunities for everyone who want to achieve the dream. James Truslow Adams mentions the European people as the nations who could not understand this concept, because of their own system and ideology. James Truslow Adams believes that the American Dream is not a materialistic desire but to be accepted in society. That is why many foreigners have problems to make the American Dream come true because they want the materialistic side of it, immigrants do not think about the emotional values, at first.

'For in a sense, America is essentially a dream, a dream as yet unfulfilled. It is a dream of a land where men of all races, of all nationalities and creeds, can live together as

brothers.’ (Cullen, Jim. 1962. page 126). Jim Cullen has the same idea, but he interprets it more towards the modern world. In his book ‘*The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation.*’ (2004), Jim Cullen opinion is that the present idea of the American Dream that conquers present time, what Cullen calls "the Dream of the Coast", is a personal fulfillment, to be famous and to be fortunate, to achieve the American Dream without effort.

‘The first is that the American Dream is about having the freedom to pursue one’s interests and passions in life. By doing so, we are able to strive toward our potential. America, at its best, is a country that not only allows but encourages this to happen.’ ‘A second core feature of the American Dream is the importance of economic security and well-being. This consists of having the resources and tools to live a comfortable and rewarding life. It includes working at a decent paying job, being able to provide for your children, owning a home, having some savings in the bank, and being able to retire in comfort.’ (Rank, Mark. 2014.) Taking in mind, what Mark Rank (2014) says about the stages of the American Dream, is that it has simple human need features, by reading Mark’s Rank article it is not difficult to understand what is the American Dream.

Barack Obama’s point of view on this topic is as follows: ‘Life is not obliged to work out as you’d planned.’ (Obama, Barack. 2006. 3), ‘We should be guided by what works.’ (ibid. 159). Barack Obama thinks that not every time life will go as people plan, there will be obstacles in the way that people need to accept the way that works for them, to achieve the dream that a person has chosen for himself. The American Dream is when a person has reached the ‘peak of the mountain’ by himself through different circumstances, so, basically, through hard work.

The specific quote from the movie ‘*El Norte*’ is said by the main character Rosa: “In the North, we won’t be treated this way.” (1984: 33’ 14”) This quote is the exact impression about the America when it comes to making a better life in a different country. When people think about going to the America, to pursue the dream, they automatically forget that America is a country that also has its own problems. In America there, also are people who struggle. It is just that people have given this ideology of successful life in the North.

In the movie ‘*The Pursuit of Happyness*’ which is based on true events, Chris Gardner who is the main character says the most inspirational message that every man or women, who watch this movie can relate to. ‘You got a dream? You got to protect it! You want something? Go get it! Period!’ ‘*The Pursuit of Happyness*’ (2006: 55’ 33”). Chris Gardner says these words to his son Christopher. The message that Chris Gardner gives is very much related to

the American Dream and its ideology. People need to believe in themselves. If the person has planned to achieve something, then no obstacle should stop him from doing it.

The movies '*El Norte*' (1984) directed by Gregory Nava and '*The Pursuit of Happyness*' (2006) directed by Gabriele Muccino, will be used as information sources in this case, because they provide the information in a different way, such as visualization, reenactment. Movie '*El Norte*' and '*The Pursuit of Happyness*' show the American Dream as one's starting from nothing and going up, taking small steps at the time. Some dreams can come to an end, not being fully reachable. Some dreams can be fully reached by people who work hard enough. and can open many roads to success for fulfilling the dream further. Both movies are about dreaming and not losing the determination to succeed. It does not matter how much the dreamer falls one will get up and will try to make it. These movies portray the hard working people in American and Mexican societies. These films represent people who are pretty poor in the beginning and after they have gone through some bad times in their lives, they understand, what is the American Dream. Movies can help understand the points of view of both nations regarding the American Dream.

In conclusion, all of the sources are useful, because they provide the information that can be used to study the theme.

## 2. METHODS APPLIED TO THE RESEARCH

This chapter is devoted to the description of the methodology applied in the present bachelor thesis, which was undertaken to investigate the reflection of the American Dream and the American and Mexican points of view about the “American Dream” in the movies ‘El Norte’ and ‘The Pursuit of Happyness’.

The goal of the research is to see how the points of view on the American Dream differs between American and Mexican people. Also, to explain what is the American Dream and how it is represented in the movies, what are the key elements that it consists of.

Film, image and cinematic representation analysis was used in order to see the recreation of the events. The movies that were used for cinematic representation analysis were ‘*El Norte*’ (1984) and ‘*The Pursuit of Happyness*’ (2006).

As the present research is meant to study the representation of the American Dream in movies, the author applied the research procedure. It is as follows:

Firstly, to find out what is the American Dream, the origins, definition and the main elements related to the American Dream. Secondly, to watch the chosen movies, ‘El Norte’ and ‘The Pursuit of Happyness’, at the same time making notes how the points of view differ on how the American Dream is achieved by the main characters. After watching the movies, the practical part will be an analysis of both movies to see how the American Dream is achieved by the main characters, and what is their key elements of living the dream.

The historical background was revealed, it included, facts, events that are related to the American Dream, some information about the American Dream and the relations between American and Mexican people. It was done by searching through various articles and books, such as Cullen, Jim. *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation*, 2004. The book describes the history of the American Dream. The book Obama, Barack. *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*. 2006. Is Putnam, Robert D. *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* (2015). Smith, Hedrick. *Who Stole the American Dream?* (2012). Adams, James Truslow. *The Epic of America* (1931). In this book, the clearer definition of the American Dream was given. Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. 1925.

\* To watch the movie ‘El Norte’ directed by Gregory Nava and ‘The Pursuit of Happyness’, directed by Gabriele Muccino.

\* To carry out analysis of both movies.

\* To study the representation of the American Dream in the movies.

\* To compare the points of view of both nationalities about the American Dream.

\* To explain the key elements of the American Dream.

In this chapter, the research methodology applied in the study has been explained, by listing the tasks that were done for this bachelor thesis.

### **3. DEFINITION OF THE AMERICAN DREAM**

This chapter is devoted to the explanation of the American Dream. This part of Bachelor thesis contains the definition, characteristics, the key elements of the American Dream and historical background that is related to this theme.

For many people America is the promised land, land of opportunity that is available to pursue the dreams. Land where everything is possible, people can be anything they want. Through decades America has been considered a country where every dream can come true. Back in the 50's, when the American Dream ideology was new, and nowadays people wish to experience the so called the "American Dream". The American Dream is the appealing ideology of good life. The American Dream back in the 50's was described as the materialistic way of living, this lifestyle included a large amount of money, a well paid job, a big house, a family (husband/wife and kids), a pet and a car. These were the characteristics of the American Dream.

#### **3.1. Definitions of the American Dream**

The American Dream is one of the most famous phrases that comes from the American culture. Many authors who are discussing this phenomenon in their articles or books, give their personal definition, view of the American Dream. The base of these definitions are the historical events that affected the American Dream and authors try to explain it, as clear as possible.

First definition comes from famous internet source Wikipedia. "The American Dream is a national ethos of the United States, the set of ideals (democracy, rights, liberty, opportunity, and equality) in which freedom includes the opportunity for prosperity and success, and an upward social mobility for the family and children, achieved through hard work in a society with few barriers." (Online 2). Wikipedia gives the idea of ideology that includes into the American Dream, as well, the elements, such as, democracy, rights, liberty, opportunity, equality. Family value is highlighted in the context.

According to the documentary film '*Heist: Who Stole the American Dream?*', the American Dream of freedom and security was realized in the post-World War II America of the 1950s and 60s. In those years the New Deal was improving the American Dream and created a secure middle class. 'The New Deal and the provisions of the G.I. Bill made education and housing a large part of the dream. It all came together in a good steady job, a

house in the suburbs, good neighborhood schools, a car in the garage and economic security in old age. The American Dream had a lot to do with consumerism but most Americans also knew that it had a spiritual component and that hard work was essential to make the Dream a reality. Now that Dream is fading.’ (Heist: Who Stole the American Dream? 2011).

Nowadays, the American Dream has become as unattainable dream, it is more and more difficult to realize it, because of wealthy people ruling the ideology of this dream.

“It’s the American dream: get a good education, work hard, buy a house, and achieve prosperity and success. This is the America we believe in—a nation of opportunity, constrained only by ability and effort. But during the last twenty-five years we have seen a disturbing “opportunity gap” emerge. Americans have always believed in equality of opportunity, the idea that all kids, regardless of their family background, should have a decent chance to improve their lot in life. Now, this central tenet of the American dream seems no longer true or at the least, much less true than it was.” (Putnam, Robert D. 2015). According to Putnam (2015) the American Dream needs to be an equality of people and opportunities, but over the years it has become less reachable.

“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. [...] It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to [...] be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.” James Truslow Adams (1931: 214-215). James Truslow Adams (1931) defines the American Dream as a place where everything is better, where there is many opportunities for everyone who want to achieve the dream. James Truslow Adams believes that the American Dream is not a materialistic desire but to be accepted in society. That is why many foreigners have problems to make the American Dream come true, because they want the materialistic side of it, immigrants do not think about the emotional values, at first.

"Americans, more than people in other countries, accept some inequality as part of our way of life, as inevitable and even desirable — a reward for talent and hard work, an incentive to produce and excel," Smith writes. "But wealth begets wealth, especially when reinforced through the influence of money in politics. Then the hyper-concentration of wealth aggravates the political cleavages in our society." (Smith, Hedrick. 2012. Prologue). If Robert D. Putnam (2015) and others think that the American Dream is falling apart, then Hedrick Smith (2012) thinks differently, he believes that Americans as a culture are used to changes and that no matter what, Americans will not lose faith in them.

The quotes from literary sources that are very much related to this topic are as follows, As said “I have learned this, at least, from my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.” by Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, in 1854; quoted by Cullen. 2004. 3. Jim Cullen says that people just need to patiently wait, meanwhile doing things in order to progress being closer to goal and never give up on their dreams. ‘For in a sense, America is essentially a dream, a dream as yet unfulfilled. It is a dream of a land where men of all races, of all nationalities and creeds, can live together as brothers.’ (Cullen, Jim. 1962. 126).

One of the phrases from July 4, 1776, The Declaration of Independence defines the American Dream as it is supposed to be, the phrase is 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.— That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, Deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed” (Online 9) These sentences from the declaration provides the essence of the American Dream. Every person is equal there is no division in groups. Everybody has one’s rights to something. The Dream has the key elements that creates it: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The American Dream is a phenomenon which unites people that have had a rough time being in the positions when they did not have anything and after some long time are there where they wanted to be. People who have achieved it, understand the struggle of others to live in this big dream. Barack Obama in his speech about the American Dream said: ‘If you are willing to work hard it does not matter who you are, or where you come from, or what you look like, or where you live, it does not matter whether you are black or white, or hispanic or asian, or native american, young or old, rich or poor, abled or disabled, gay or straight! You can make it here, in America if you are willing to try! I believe we can cease this future together, because we are not as divided as our politics suggest! We are greater as the sum of our individual ambitions and we remain more than a collection of red straights and blue straights, we are and forever will be the United States of America!’ (Obama, Barack. 2016) This speech by Barack Obama is truly inspirational. The President speaks with passion, encouraging the nation of United States of America to believe in themselves. It does not matter who this person is when doing things important to oneself, only actions speak, everything is achieved by not losing faith, staying focused on the thing that this person wants to achieve.

‘The American Dream of freedom and security was realized in the post-World War II America of the 1950s and 60s. In those years the New Deal delivered on the American Dream and created a secure middle class. The New Deal and the provisions of the G.I. Bill made education and housing a large part of the dream. It all came together in a good steady job, a house in the suburbs, good neighborhood schools, a car in the garage and economic security in old age. The American Dream had a lot to do with consumerism but most Americans also knew that it had a spiritual component and that hard work was essential to make the Dream a reality. Now that Dream is fading.’ (Heist: Who Stole the American Dream? 2011). In this quote, the discussion is about the American Dream and its freedom and security in the early days of this phenomenon. The historical event such as, The New Deal was affecting the image of the American Dream. Everything was fine, because the economical field was stable and people were living in secured middle-class environment, people were able to feed their families and get a stable jobs. Institutions, living apartments and all that was counted as a private property, was secured. Nowadays, it is not as it was back then, the essence mainly has stayed, but it is the idea of it, that has changed.

In the movie ‘El Norte’ the main character Rosa says these words: “In the North, we won’t be treated this way.” Rosa. (*El Norte*. 1984). This quote is the exact impression about the America when it comes to making a better life in different country. As Enrique and Rosa are from San Pedro, a small village in Guatemala, they are desperate to move somewhere else where they could start a new life. Basically, they want to start from a scratch to build their lives better than these were before. The place they both think is the appropriate for this occasion is the North, the United States of America. The idea for better life in the North was given by their Godmother Josefita and magazines that was presenting to the reader the things, that were in vogue at that time and Rosa wanted those things in her life.

‘The first is that the American Dream is about having the freedom to pursue one’s interests and passions in life. By doing so, we are able to strive toward our potential. America, at its best, is a country that not only allows but encourages this to happen.’ ‘A second core feature of the American Dream is the importance of economic security and well-being. This consists of having the resources and tools to live a comfortable and rewarding life. It includes working at a decent paying job, being able to provide for your children, owning a home, having some savings in the bank, and being able to retire in comfort.’ (Rank, Mark. 2014.) Taking in mind, what Mark Rank (2014) says about the stages of the American Dream, is that it has simple human need features, by reading Mark’s Rank article it is not difficult to understand what is the American Dream. Mark Rank (2014) points out that the American Dream is about having freedom of speech. Freedom of speech can help person to stand out

from the massive crowd, to speak one's mind about the related issue, in that way progressing in career. The second point reveals the materialistic view on the American Dream. People, logically, want a stable financial situation that could support them, because without money, in this world, no one can survive, to live in the American Dream all the time, the main thing is money. With the money the man/woman can provide food, can afford schools and many other necessities for his or her family.

‘But I didn't call to him for he gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone—he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and far as I was from him I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily I glanced seaward—and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock.’ (Fitzgerald, F. Scott. 1925. 152) This quote describes the American Dream as something that is so close, yet so far away. The green light that is mentioned in ‘*The Great Gatsby*’ (1925), can be understood as the object that represents the American Dream. In this story, the part where the quote appears, tells about the people who always try to reach for something bigger than themselves, even though knowing that it is out of reach for them. In ‘*The Great Gatsby*’ (1925) the green light symbolizes the American Dream, though it is actually Daisy, which Jay Gatsby loves and wants to prove his love to her, Jay names it as the American Dream. Colour green is a warm, pleasant colour with positive associations. That is why Jay Gatsby defines Daisy in this colour. Jay thinks of Daisy as calm, peaceful human being. Colour green in American culture has many relations to the objects and other things, such as good luck, American planes, green nature, grassy fields. The light is meant as the representation of 'hope' for Jay Gatsby. Throughout the book Jay wants to reach for it, the green light is his personal description of the American Dream.

‘*The Great Gatsby*’ (1925) written by F. Scott Fitzgerald suggests that the American Dream is more like a myth and the illusion that people often invent in their own fantasies. F. Scott Fitzgerald believes that there is no such dream as the American Dream, everybody makes their own dream, there is no label for it. As it is represented in this book the American Dream is the creation of spiritual contentment.

The author of the article Lurana Brown (Online 14) where Lurana Brown discusses poverty and the American dream, Lurana Brown mentions the most discussed feature for living in the American Dream. It is ‘hard work’. Famous people of the American culture are mentioned, such as, Benjamin Franklin who was one of the role models for his significant contribution to the American culture, as well constructing the ideology of the American Dream. Excerpt from this article is as follows.

‘The playing field is a land of plenty. The game is democratic free enterprise. The only skills needed are hard work and a good attitude. If America is a country where anyone can go from rags to riches, then failure must be a sign of personal iniquity, not social inequity. Prosperity is out there for the winning...or so the story goes.’

‘Americans pride themselves on the absence of royalty or nobility in our representative democracy, but there are and always have been elites. Throughout American history, defenders of the American Dream have cited cases of men who made their fortunes through ambition and industry. Certain influential figures---including Benjamin Franklin, Andrew Carnegie, and Russell H. Conwell---stand out for their contributions to cultural dialogue on business ethics and social values. They helped construct an ideology that associates success with individualism, determination, and morality. But after 400 years of American conquest, the millionaires and rags-to-riches stories are still the exception, not the rule.’ (Online 14)

### **3.2.Characteristics of the American Dream**

The characteristics of the American Dream are the personal dream of self-fulfilment, individualism, mobility, flexibility. As these characteristics are mentioned through many authors definitions, it really looks like the American Dream is all about the personal feelings. The main goal is to work hard and if the person works hard, the hard work turns into progress in what person do, which can lead one to ”the top of the mountain”. Basically, all of these things could happen only if a person was a United States citizen or the one who got there to fulfill the dream, such as the immigrants. The moment when individuals have been in the United States of America for some time, they are aware of well paid jobs, the idea of family, private property, car etc. So, what have many people done? They have flown from other countries to the promised land to achieve this dream. European people, who suffered from different ideology systems wanted to be free and the United States provided the freedom of speech. ‘Freedom of speech is the right to articulate one's opinions and ideas without fear of government retaliation or censorship, or societal sanction.’ (Online 3). I believe freedom of speech is the key element of demand for better life. Freedom of speech allows people to speak their minds on any topic they want, not being punished legally.

### **3.3. Family role**

The American Dream consisted of one of the many elements and that was the family. Of course, family is important to any culture, but if speaking about this phenomenon than it is highly expressed in the American Dream ideology. The family in American culture is considered to be two married individuals who can provide care and stability for their biological offspring. Different types of family structures exist today, for example stepfamilies, extended families, nuclear families, of course, anything can happen in people's lives, so single parent families also are very common in this culture. These family types are related to the 'dream', because family status also can be an issue for people who work to achieve the dream.

In the movie '*The Pursuit of Happyness*', Chris Gardner who is the main character, is single parent who looks over his son Christopher. The family status determines Chris' way of becoming successful in many ways. Chris tried many ways to help himself and his son Christopher for better life. Chris' son Christopher was the 'rock' to him, his motivation to live and to not lose his faith.

In '*El Norte*' the family value goes throughout the whole movie. Rosa and Enrique are brother and sister who want to succeed the American Dream together. Both siblings want to share this big dream with each other. Through their journey from San Pedro, Guatemala till Los Angeles, California, movie focuses on them as a family, who help each other. The pure family emotions occur in this movie. '*El Norte*' gives the idea of what brother and sister should be as siblings struggling to succeed. Rosa and Enrique was on their own, because their parents were killed by the military regime back in San Pedro. The circumstances led them to be united, honest and caring towards each other.

### **3.4. Historical background of the American Dream**

The historical background that is presented here is connected to the development of the American Dream. These historical events shows the influence on the American Dream, how it was affected by the World War II, Franklin D. Roosevelt's decision of making such domestic programs as, The New Deal which divided in two parts.

#### **3.4.1. The Great Depression**

The American Dream, it is great and everything is fine, but the United States of America has had also massive economic downfalls through the 20th century. The most critical was from 1929-1941. It was called "The Great Depression".

“The Great Depression began in the late 1920s, not necessarily with the Great Crash of 1929 but around that time, and afflicted a world tied together by specific kinds of debts, both within and between countries.” (Rauchway, Eric. 2008. 3) The United States were taking money from other countries and that led to massive debts, that needed to be given back, decreasing the financial situation in the country.

“This was an economic slump in North America, Europe and other industrialized areas of the world. This was the most severe economic depression ever experienced by the Industrialized Western world. Stock prices started to drop, which led many banks to not being able to deal with the consequences. After that unemployment soared leaving between 12 and 15 million workers without a job. That is about 30% of the work force.” (Online 5). The Great Depression was starting to turn into economical disaster all around the world. The main reason for it to happen was that in World War I, America was having a lot war debts and the war itself was tiring for the financial side of the United States. Once the economy of the United States decreased, American investment credits decreased also.

### **3.4.2. The New Deal**

The New Deal was the period when President Roosevelt was making a changes for his country. The purpose of The New Deal was to stabilize the economical situation in order to cover the massive debts that was piling up. Roosevelt made some changes in laws for the people, for example to buy beer. The New Deal was meant to relief people from tight financial situations that occurred at that time.

“The Great Depression led to a New Deal for the American people. The New Deal was a series of domestic programs enacted in the United States between 1933 and 1938, and a few that came later. The programs were in response to the Great Depression, and focused on what historians refer to as the "3 Rs": Relief, Recovery, and Reform. That is Relief for the unemployed and poor; Recovery of the economy to normal levels; and Reform of the financial system to prevent a repeat depression. In the first hundred days Roosevelt's quest to end the Great Depression was just beginning. Roosevelt asked Congress to end Prohibition-divisive issue of the 1920's-by making it legal once again for Americans to buy beer. In May, President Roosevelt signed the Tennessee Valley Authority Act into law, which enabled the federal government to build dams along the Tennessee River that controlled flooding and generated inexpensive hydroelectric power for the people in the region. In the same month, Congress passed a bill that paid commodity farmers to leave their fields fallow in order to end agricultural surpluses and boost prices. Commodity farmers (farmers who produced things

like wheat, dairy products, tobacco and corn). Every American found something to be pleased about and something to complain about these collections of bills, but it was clear to all that Franklin D. Roosevelt was taking the "direct vigorous" action that he'd promised in his inaugural address. In the spring of 1935, Roosevelt launched a second, definitely more aggressive, series of federal programs sometimes called the Second New Deal. (Online 4) Roosevelt in April created the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to provide jobs for unemployed people. Works Progress Administration was focused on building things like post offices, bridges, schools, highways and parks, because WPA projects weren't allowed to compete with private industry. WPA also gave work to artists, writers, theater directors and musicians. As the Great Depression dragged on. Workers grew more militant: In December 1936, for example, the United Auto Workers started a sit-down strike at a GM plant in Flint, Michigan that lasted for 44 days and spread to some 150,000 autoworkers in 35 cities. By 1937, to the dismay of most corporate leaders, some 8 million workers had joined unions and were loudly demanding their rights. On December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and the United States entered World War II. The war effort stimulated American industry and, as a result, effectively ended the Great Depression. Economy slipped back into a recession when the government reduced its stimulus spending. For Roosevelt it was difficult to enact any new programs and it was basically the end of the New Deal." (Online 4)

"The New Deal did not end the Great Depression. As one American who lived through the 1930s told Studs Terkel, 'industries needed to make guns for World War II made that happen.'" (Rauchway, Eric. 2008. 5). According to Rauchway (2008) The New Deal was not the solution of all the problems, because the World War II began, which meant another financial crisis.

"In November 1938, just months after the Fair Labor Standards Act passed, Roosevelt privately told his secretary of the treasury, Henry Morgenthau, that the world's slide into war might well benefit Americans generally and the Democrats politically. "These foreign orders" for armaments, Roosevelt said, "mean prosperity in this country and we can't elect a Democratic Party unless we get prosperity." At the same time Roosevelt began thinking about building up American military power as a deterrent, to avoid having to negotiate with Hitler.<sup>1</sup> Despite losses in the 1938 congressional elections, the Democratic Party remained in power, as did Roosevelt for an unprecedented third term in 1940. And in a few years he told reporters he "no longer like[d] the term 'New Deal'," that "Dr. New Deal" had come to save the country from one set of ills, but now that it faced new perils, "his partner...Dr. Win-the-War," would take over." (Rauchway, Eric. 2008. 126)

“The Second New Deal was the name given to a series of federal programs passed by Congress between 1935 and 1938 to counteract the Great Depression. Several of the first New Deal programs proposed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933–1945) had earlier been declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court. Roosevelt's Second New Deal included higher taxes for the rich, stricter regulations for private utilities, and increased subsidies for rural electrification. Three federal acts formed the heart of the Second New Deal. The National Labor Relations Act of 1935, also known as the Wagner Act, established a set of fair employment standards and guaranteed the right of workers to organize and collectively bargain with management through union representatives. The Social Security Act of 1935 created a retirement fund, unemployment insurance, and welfare grants for local distribution, including aid for dependent children. The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 was the final significant piece of the Second New Deal. It prescribed the maximum hours employees could be required to work without being paid overtime and also prescribed the minimum wage they could earn.”

“Second New Deal programs fared better before the Supreme Court than did their predecessors. Fueled by his decisive victory in the 1936 presidential election, Roosevelt began his second term by proposing a "court packing" plan that would have allowed him to increase the size of the nation's high court by adding justices with a disposition favorable to his programs. Although Congress rejected the plan, the Supreme Court got the message, as the nine Justices began validating the constitutionality of more federal legislation. With the onset of World War II (1939–1945) America's attention turned from domestic policy to international affairs, and the president's New Deal programs faded into the background of an economy mobilizing for military production.” (Online 7) The Second New Deal was aimed to help the the middle-class people, but the wealthy people were experiencing the pressure on them, because of the higher taxes.

### **3.4.3. The Great Recession**

“The Great Recession—which officially lasted from December 2007 to June 2009—began with the bursting of an 8 trillion dollar housing bubble. The resulting loss of wealth led to sharp cutbacks in consumer spending. This loss of consumption, combined with the financial market chaos triggered by the bursting of the bubble, also led to a collapse in business investment. As consumer spending and business investment dried up, massive job loss followed. In 2008 and 2009, the U.S. labor market lost 8.4 million jobs, or 6.1% of all payroll employment. This was the most dramatic employment contraction (by far) of any

recession since the Great Depression. By comparison, in the deep recession that began in 1981, job loss was 3.1%, or only about half as severe.” (Online 6)

“The job loss during the Great Recession has meant that family incomes have dropped, poverty has risen, and adults as well as children have lost health insurance. The bursting of the housing bubble and the drop in the stock market has meant that family wealth has dropped dramatically, as well. This feature highlights the impact of the Great Recession on the labor market and on working families.” (Online 6)

Another crisis that led people to live in more difficult condition than it already was. It was hard for people because the financial situation was tight and the work force was dropping which led to unemployment.

#### **3.4.4. The Housing Bubble**

“The United States housing bubble was an economic bubble affecting many parts of the United States housing market in over half of American states. Housing prices peaked in early 2006, started to decline in 2006 and 2007, and reached new lows in 2012. Any kind of collapse of the United States housing bubble has direct impact not only on home valuations, but the nation’s mortgage markets, home builders, real estate, home supply retail outlets, Wall Street hedge funds held by large institutional investors, and foreign banks, increasing the risk of a nationwide recession. In 2008, the United States government allocated over \$900 billion to special loans and rescues related to the United States housing bubble, with over half going to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac (both of which are government-sponsored enterprises) as well as the Federal Housing Administration. The Treasury Department made an unprecedented announcement that it would be providing Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac unlimited financial support for the next three years despite acknowledging losses in excess of \$400 billion so far.” (Online 10)

“Belief in the American Dream breeds this optimism about the future. In turn, this optimism leads people to make decisions that are supportive of economic growth. This economic growth fuels and solidifies belief in the American Dream. Homeownership plays an integral role in the American Dream. The years 2003 to 2006 were a period of easy credit in the housing market via subprime lending, when anyone could get access to a mortgage. This was a time when optimism worked against people. Borrowers were confident that they would be able to afford their mortgages or at worst, sell their houses for higher prices if they were unable to make mortgage payments.” (Online 11)

“The decline in home prices led to millions of Americans going underwater on their mortgages. In many cases, this led to crippling losses. The effects of the collapse continue to reverberate and have permanently damaged the psyche of an entire generation as well as their balance sheets. Optimism has been replaced by skepticism. This has not been helped by the financial bailouts and ensuing economic recovery. While the financial economy recovered with bond and stock prices at new, all-time highs five years after the collapse, Main Street did not participate in these gains. Overall, the optimism that was integral to the American Dream has been displaced by the collapse in the housing market and replaced with skepticism towards government, financial markets and the future.” (Online 11)

The Housing Bubble was affecting the economy because of the house pricing going low. People would not be able to get higher prices for their properties and that was causing the low income.

In conclusion, the American Dream was affected by these events massively. The American Dream after all these years has become unattainable mostly because of the financial economy going lower, that is why people cannot afford properties, expensive cars and such things that are theoretically related to the American Dream.

#### **3.4.5. ‘Heist: Who Stole the American Dream?’**

Documentary film ‘Heist: Who Stole the American Dream?’ (2011) was produced and directed by Frances Causey and Donald Goldmacher, distributed by Connecting the Dots. The movie gives the insight in history of the United States crisis and how it affected the American Dream. It focuses more on The Great Depression and The New Deal, but it helps to get a bit of some additional information that is helpful for studying the American Dream. Movie ‘Heist: Who Stole the American Dream?’ (2011) is an informative documentary about the American financial crisis that still haunts the middle-class people till this day in the United States. The movie reveals the economy of the United States. This crisis lasted for four decades and it was as any other crisis, which resulted in massive work force loss, big taxes, decreased the level of stable lifestyle. The opening scene of this movie gives the explanation that the disastrous crisis did not start on the richest street called the Wall Street. The Wall Street was not the guilty street. Crisis started somewhere else deeper into the government system. “The mess we’re in now did not begin on Wall Street. Long before the financial collapse, the dismantlement of government regulation was well under way. All the consequences are the result of a brilliantly executed coup. This is the story of the biggest heist in American history.” (*Heist: Who Stole the American Dream?* 2011). Already, by reading the title of this

movie it gives an impression of something that will be, or is robbed. Movie portrays America as a victim of crime. People associate the word 'heist' with armed, masked men driving a black car to the robbing site with loaded guns. In this movie the discussion is about the American Dream as a combination of both, the materialistic desire and psychological view. The main question in this movie that clearly shows up throughout the whole movie is "Who will govern the future of the United States? Will it be money or people of the country?" The answer is left for the viewers to decide. Movie goes towards the people movement to rebuild the governmental system. The intention is if people will cooperate together they can create strategy which would revive the democracy and economy of the United States of America. That way could help to revive the American Dream to its core, as it was back in the 50's.

### **3.5. Facts that show the American Dream is unreachable**

Nowadays, citizens of the United States look upon the American Dream as the unattainable dream. It means that it has become more difficult to realize it. Everything is influenced by the economical situations and other related issues that America had over the past years. This is the article by Richard Eskow (Online 13) which is pointing out the facts that presents the American Dream as the unattainable dream. Article is related to the overall situation that surrounds the American Dream. It is very interesting seeing that this pretty old phenomenon has somehow come to the stage that it is now. These facts are based on the statistics that the American people provide. Richard Eskow (Online 13) presents the American Dream as unattainable dream.

The article reveals that the American Dream in the last years has become 'reachable' only for the wealthiest people. The key elements that are included into the American Dream, such as, a living wage, retirement security, the opportunity for one's children to get ahead in life, these things are getting nowadays more and more inaccessible to the public. Only wealthy people can get their hands on these type of things. In the modern world everything today is ruled by money, who has more money that person can get, literally anything. Richard Eskow (Online 13) states that when inequality increases, the fundamental elements of the American dream are becoming increasingly unaffordable for the majority. Next part consists of seven facts that indicates that the American dream is slowly dying. All of these facts can be found in the article written by Richard Eskow (Online 13).

#### **1. Most people can't get ahead financially.**

"If the American dream means a reasonable rate of income growth for working people, most people can't expect to achieve it. As Ben Casselman observes at fivethirtyeight.com, the

middle class hasn't seen its wage rise in 15 years. In fact, the percentage of middle-class households in this nation is actually falling. Median household income has fallen since the financial crisis of 2008, while income for the wealthiest of Americans has actually risen. Thomas Edsall wrote in the *New York Times* that "Not only has the wealth of the very rich doubled since 2000, but corporate revenues are at record levels." Edsall also observed that, "In 2013, according to Goldman Sachs, corporate profits rose five times faster than wages." Richard Eskow (Online 13) on the basis of some data provided by Ben Casellman, answers the question, that the middle class people have problems with their wages. People do not get paid enough to live without financial problems. Richard Eskow mentions that nowadays, the wealthy people rule the America, the more money, the more power.

## **2. The stay-at-home parent is a thing of the past.**

"There was a time when middle-class families could lead a comfortable lifestyle on one person's earnings. One parent could work while the other stayed home with the kids. Those days are gone. As Elizabeth Warren and co-author Amelia Warren Tyagi documented in their 2003 book, *The Two-Income Trap*, the increasing number of two-earner families was matched by rising costs in a number of areas such as education, home costs and transportation. These cost increases, combined with wage stagnation, mean that families are struggling to make ends meet—and that neither parent has the luxury of staying home any longer. In fact, parenthood has become a financial risk. Warren and Tyagi write that "Having a child is now the single best predictor that a woman will end up in financial collapse." This book was written over a decade ago; things are even worse today." The problem is that couples cannot support themselves if only one of them is working some kind of a job. Some years ago it was possible because the wage was pretty high and economical situation in the country was stable. Now if one of the couple does not work, the situation is that they cannot keep themselves financially stable. Nowadays both man and a woman go to work to be able atleast, to pay the bills.

## **3. The rich are more debt-free. Others have no choice.**

"Most Americans are falling behind anyway, as their salary fails to keep up with their expenses. No wonder debt is on the rise. As Joshua Freedman and Sherle R. Schwenninger observe in a paper for the New America Foundation, "American households... have become dependent on debt to maintain their standard of living in the face of stagnant wages." This "debt-dependent economy," as Freedman and Schwenninger call it, has negative implications for the nation as a whole. But individual families are suffering too. Rani Molla of the *Wall Street Journal* notes that "Over the past 20 years the average increase in spending on some items has exceeded the growth of incomes. The gap is especially

poignant for those under 25 years old.” There are increasingly two classes of Americans: Those who are taking on additional debt, and the rich.” Actually, everywhere in the world there is the ideology that wealthy people always get some kind of a relief when it comes to money. People that are poor, ‘mortals’ always have to suffer more, whether it is paying bills or earnings.

#### **4. Student debt is crushing a generation of non-wealthy Americans.**

“Education for every American who wants to get ahead? Forget about it. Nowadays you have to be rich to get a college education; that is, unless you want to begin your career with a mountain of debt. Once you get out of college, you’ll quickly discover that the gap between spending and income is greatest for people under 25 years of age.

Education, as *Forbes* columnist Steve Odland put it in 2012, is “the great equalizer... the facilitator of the American dream.” But at that point college costs had risen 500 percent since 1985, while the overall consumer price index rose by 115 percent. As of 2013, tuition at a private university was projected to cost nearly \$130,000 on average over four years, and that’s not counting food, lodging, books, or other expenses.

Public colleges and universities have long been viewed as the get-ahead option for all Americans, including the poorest among us. Not anymore. The University of California was once considered a national model for free, high-quality public education, but today tuition at UC Berkeley is \$12,972 per year. (It was tuition-free until Ronald Reagan became governor.) Room and board is \$14,414. The total cost of on-campus attendance at Berkeley, including books and other items, is estimated to be \$32,168.

The California story has been repeated across the country, as state cutbacks in the wake of the financial crisis caused the cost of public higher education to soar by 15 percent in a two-year period. With a median national household income of \$51,000, even public colleges are quickly becoming unaffordable

Sure, there are still some scholarships and grants available. But even as college costs rise, the availability of those programs is falling, leaving middle-class and lower-income students further in debt as out-of-pocket costs rise.” It seems that students have more debts than politicians, just a joke. These debts appear because of majority of American people not being that wealthy, and they help their children as much as they can. After all, the amount of money that needs to be payed for the studies is pretty high for the average people.

#### **5. Vacations aren’t for the likes of you anymore.**

“Think you’d like to have a nice vacation? Think again. According to a 2012 American Express survey, Americans who were planning vacations expected to spend an average of \$1,180 per person. That’s \$4,720 for a family of four. But then, why worry about paying for

that vacation? If you're unemployed, you can't afford it. And even if you have a job, there's a good chance you won't get the time off anyway."

"As the Center for Economic and Policy Research found in 2013, the United States is the only advanced economy in the world that does not require employers to offer paid vacations to their workers. The number of paid holidays and vacation days received by the average worker in this country (16) would not meet the statutory minimum requirements in 19 other developed countries, according to the CEPR. Thirty-one percent of workers in smaller businesses had no paid vacation days at all. The CEPR also found that 14 percent of employees at larger corporations also received no paid vacation days. Overall, roughly one in four working Americans gets no vacation time at all. Rep. Alan Grayson, who has introduced the Paid Vacation Act, correctly notes that the average working American now spends 176 hours more per year on the job than was the case in 1976. Between the pressure to work more hours and the cost of vacation, even people who *do* get vacation time—at least on paper—are hard-pressed to take any time off. That's why 175 million vacation days go unclaimed each year." The problem is that people are not being paid for their vacations by their CEO's. The idea is that wages are pretty big for being able to afford vacation by themselves.

#### **6. Even with health insurance, medical care is increasingly unaffordable for most people.**

"Medical care when you need it? That's for the wealthy. The Affordable Care Act was designed to increase the number of Americans who are covered by health insurance. But health coverage in this country is the worst of any highly developed nation—and that's for people who have health insurance. Every year the Milliman actuarial firm analyzes the average costs of medical care, including the household's share of insurance premiums and out-of-pocket costs, for a family of four with the kind of insurance that is considered higher quality coverage in this country: a PPO plan which allows them to use a wider range of healthcare providers. Even as overall wealth in this country has shifted upward, away from middle-class families, the cost of medical care is increasingly being borne by the families themselves. As the Milliman study shows, the employer-funded portion of healthcare costs has risen 52 percent since 2007, the first year of the recession. But household costs have risen by a staggering 73 percent, or 8 percent per year, and now average \$9,144. In the same time period, Census Bureau figures show that median household income has fallen 8 percent. That means that household healthcare costs are skyrocketing even as income falls dramatically."

"The recent claims of "lowered healthcare costs" are misleading. While the rate of increase is slowing down, healthcare costs are continuing to increase. And the actual cost to working

Americans is increasing even faster, as corporations continue to maximize their record profits by shifting healthcare costs onto consumers. This shift is expected to accelerate as the result of a misguided provision in the Affordable Care Act which will tax higher-cost plans.

According to an OECD survey, the number of Americans who report going without needed healthcare in the past year because of cost was higher than in 10 comparable countries. This was true for both lower-income and higher-income Americans, suggesting that insured Americans are also feeling the pinch when it comes to getting medical treatment.

As inequality worsens, wages continue to stagnate, and more healthcare costs are placed on the backs of working families, more and more Americans will find medical care unaffordable.” The problem is that financial stability over the years has decreased in the United States, causing healthcare being hardly attainable for people. That is very sad that these kind of things can become unattainable, after all, it is about the people health.

#### **7. Americans can no longer look forward to a secure retirement.**

“Want to retire when you get older, as earlier generations did, and enjoy a secure life after a lifetime of hard work? You’ll get to... if you’re rich. There was a time when most middle-class Americans could work until they were 65 and then look forward to a financially secure retirement. Corporate pensions guaranteed a minimum income for the remainder of their life. Those pensions, coupled with Social Security income and a lifetime’s savings, assured that these ordinary Americans could spend their senior years in modest comfort.”

“No longer. As we have already seen, rising expenses means most Americans are buried in debt rather than able to accumulate modest savings. That’s the main reason why 20 percent of Americans who are nearing retirement age haven’t saved for their post-working years. Meanwhile, corporations are gutting these pension plans in favor of far less general programs. The financial crisis of 2008, driven by the greed of Wall Street one percenters, robbed most American household of their primary assets. And right-wing “centrists” of both parties, not satisfied with the rising retirement age which has already cut the program’s benefits, continue to press for even deeper cuts to the program.”

“One group, Natixis Global Asset Management, ranks the United States 19th among developed countries when it comes to retirement security. The principal reasons the US ranks so poorly are 1) the weakness of our pension programs; and 2) the stinginess of our healthcare system, which even with Medicare for the elderly, is far weaker than that of nations such as Austria. Economists used to speak of retirement security as a three-legged stool. Pensions were one leg of the stool, savings were another and Social Security was the third. Today two legs of the stool have been shattered, and anti-Social Security advocates are sawing away at the third.” Again, this relates to the financial situation, if a person has worked for many years

at some point being at ones age to retire, still, they are not entirely sure whether they will be able to live on the retirement money that the government will give to them. The reason is the high expenses that the government spends every year, that is why people are not secured.

The final conclusion by reading this article by Richard Eskow is that people cannot live so 'flashy' anymore as they could some years ago. Richard Eskow (Online 13) implies that everything can change if the government will pay the attention to the middle-class people. The government always is involved when it come to these type of issues, because the government is responsible for the people that lives in their country. It is very hard to believe that this massively influential phenomenon, called the American Dream is no longer the attainable dream. After all many people live towards this big dream. The morale is that the money rules the world.

Here is the conclusion by the author Richard Eskow (online 13): "Vacations; an education; staying home to raise your kids; a life without crushing debt; seeing the doctor when you don't feel well; a chance to retire: one by one, these mainstays of middle-class life are disappearing for most Americans. Until we demand political leadership that will do something about it, they're not coming back."

"Can the American dream be restored? Yes, but it will take concerted effort to address two underlying problems. First, we must end the domination of our electoral process by wealthy and powerful elites. At the same time, we must begin to address the problem of growing economic inequality. Without a national movement to call for change, change simply isn't going to happen." (Online 13)

### **3.6. What is the American Dream?**

The American Dream is better defined by James Truslow Adams in his famous book '*The Epic of America*' (1931). Truslow's idea is that the American Dream is not necessary being able to buy materialistic things or properties, such as car, big mansion or something else. Truslow believes that this dream is being able to fit in the society, carrying the self-proclaimed title, that and doing as much as people are capable of doing to achieve this title. The idea is to show other people the true identity of what these persons are capable of and who they are. It does not matter where they were born or in what circumstances they were living, what matters is the status that this person has picked for himself.

The American Dream is based on the attitude of the rich and successful people. In a way, if the person is not as rich and successful, one just have not worked hard enough, and the rich

person is not responsible for him. People believe that that certain person has worked harder and longer than the average person. In that way, the person has achieved the American Dream. It is not true. If success was based on hard work and motivation there would be a lot of millionaires out there. If looking from a different angle on this subject it is possible to win the lottery than achieving the American dream. But a very small group of people sometimes do. It is about being in the right place, at the right time.

The elements of the American Dream stereotypically are a moderately sized house, having your own private property, being happy, having supercars or the ordinary hybrid cars, being a part of a family with one or more children, owning a couple of pets, such as dog or cat, both adults working jobs that society perceives as the 'normal' jobs, that is husband works as an employee in the office, wife usually is a homemaker.

In the reality, the American Dream is more based on the psychological view, the key elements would be the personal dream of self-fulfillment, individualism, mobility, flexibility.

#### **4. REPRESENTATION OF THE AMERICAN DREAM IN THE MOVIES ‘EL NORTE’ AND ‘THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS’**

Both movies are related to each other, because of the stories and the same goal that the main characters want to maintain. These two movies ‘El Norte’ (1984) and ‘The Pursuit of Happyness’ (2006) represent the American Dream in two different ways.

##### **4.1. Background of the characters**

‘El Norte’ (1984) and ‘The Pursuit of Happyness’ (2006) characters are coming from different backgrounds, but with the same circumstances and ambition. In ‘The Pursuit of Happyness’ (2006), Chris Gardner was coming from the poorest part of the city, living in the environment where everybody on the block was poor. Chris Gardner was not able to get a steady job and he kept failing with his project, the bone density scanners. While in ‘El Norte’ (1984) Enrique and Rosa were coming from a poor village and did not have any experience living the city life. They were also poor and struggling to adapt to their new environment, that the America presented to them. None of them, lost their faith throughout their stories, because they were determined to achieve their life goals. The only difference was that Rosa and Enrique at the end did not succeed, because of the tragedy that happened. Chris Gardner was the only one that was able to push himself to the limits and to become successful.

##### **4.2. Motivation to pursue the American Dream.**

In ‘El Norte’ for Rosa and Enrique the motivation was to move out of the Guatemala, from their poor village San Pedro to America where everybody is rich and famous. They both want to live in a house, by having a lot of money, to dress fancy. Another fact was that they both did not wanted to live in a place where the military regime was dominating, causing people to lose their lives and their property. Rosa and Enrique wanted to live peacefully, to develop themselves, to start a new life, leaving the past behind them.

In ‘The Pursuit of Happyness’ the motivation for Chris Gardner was similar. Chris also wanted to end his poverty by living in happiness for the entire life. The main motivation was when he became a single parent with his son Christopher. At that moment Chris knew that he need to do something in order to help his son. He wanted to repair his old flat and help to get Christopher the best education as he could. Both movies somehow focus, at the same time, on the family values.

### **4.3. Main elements of the American Dream**

After watching and analyzing the movies, the American Dream seems to be more based on the psychological attitude, the key elements would be the personal dream of self-fulfillment, individualism, mobility, flexibility. It is more related to the reality of this American Dream.

Combining the idea of two movies '*El Norte*' (1984) and '*The Pursuit of Happyness*' (2006) it is possible to stereotypically name the key elements of the American Dream, these are: having your own private property, being happy, owning cars, family that contains of, lovely couple and one or more children, the freedom speech and human rights, happiness which is the result of achieving the dream and entitlement for being somebody. Both adults work jobs that society portrays as the 'normal' jobs making money in order to feed one's family. Stereotypically, a man works as an employee in the office, a woman usually is a homemaker.

### **4.4. Jobs**

The jobs in these movies were different. In '*El Norte*' Rosa worked as a seamstress and a house maid. Enrique was as a dishwasher and busboy, later on, he almost becomes a foreman, which he rejected the offer because Rosa was sick lying in the hospital. In '*The Pursuit of Happyness*' Chris Gardner is selling his scanners and then he gets a job as an employee at Dean Witter's Company, where his main goal is to become an official stock broker by being promoted.

The most interesting scene that is related to jobs was in '*El Norte*' (1984) when Rosa started to work as a domestic maid. She sometimes did not understand what Ms. Rogers was saying to her because Rosa told earlier that she knew only a little of English. There was a bit of language barrier. Rosa worked for this, as it seemed, a rich American woman who owned a big house, the wide territory of property and all the goods that rich people had. In this case the newest at that time washing machine, with digital features. This electronic device was an object that made a comparison between Rosa and Ms. Rogers. The woman tried to explain how to use this washing machine. She showed Rosa and Nacha this complicated scheme of button order. Which button combination to press when there is extra heavy towels, t-shirts, socks. Ms. Rogers in one moment said to Rosa and Nacha: "You see how easy it is?" Rosa only shook her head, as if she understood everything. In reality, she did not. It was a massive information to consume. Then Ms. Rogers moved to the dryer. Then again the scheme of buttons was presented. After Ms. Rogers were finished with the explanation of the buttons.

Nacha just smiled and said: “Thank you, Ms. Rogers, you don’t worry about the machine, we do a good job !” As Ms. Rogers went to the kitchen. Rosa and Nacha stood by the washing machine and asked each other do they understood everything. Rosa particularly asked: “Did you understand how it works?” Nocha replied positively: “Of course...well, we’ll figure it out. Look the important thing is whatever they say, smile and say yes.” An element of comedy is present in this scene, which somehow enlightens the movie for a bit, as ‘El Norte’ is a pretty serious movie. After a couple of days, Rosa was facing this unknown, weird black metal box with many buttons attached to it. Rosa started to panic when washing machine started to make noises, so she in panic pressed with her palms many of these buttons. Rosa tried to stop it. Let’s not forget that Rosa comes from a place, country where there are no electronic devices, such as this metal box. So she is new to these type of devices, not knowing how to behave, being in touch with these ‘things’. The point that is made here is actually pretty simple. Rosa is a functional machine, but the American woman is a standard, ordinary, modern human. Rosa is presented as this woman which has to obey the rules and need to adapt to the environment. Rosa is unfamiliar with modern technology. She is like a little child who tries to see the world in wider perspective. She needs to feel, squeeze and understand what each object is. People after some time getting accustomed to certain things get used to problems related to the machinery. She is like a robot, doing everything in endless routine, she does, what everybody says to her. Meanwhile, the house owner is a woman who already knows everything she just needs to explain to somebody else how to do all the work for her, and that is it. She is an advanced human. She knows how to use electronics. For her, it is nothing new. She does not need to adapt to the environment that she lives in. The moral of this situation is that Rosa is a marionette of her own life, she is pulled by the strings.

The symbol in this scene is definitely, this washing machine that represents the power of technology, that can put a person in misery, as it is represented in the movie. The example is Rosa and her struggle with the washing machine. Camera work in this scene is very good. It shows the desperation of Rosa when hearing about the scheme of buttons to press. Then camera points to the buttons where it is clearly seen what to press. That moment captures the atmosphere of that moment what a person would feel, making one who watches the movie take Rosa’s role, listening to the instructions. Thus, viewers can relate to the emotions of the character, at the same time this scene portrays the struggle that Rosa has when working and how it is difficult to adapt to a different environment.

In ‘The Pursuit of Happyness’ (2006) there were not such unusual scenes because the movie is based on the ordinary American citizen, in this case, Chris Gardner lived in ‘modern world’, he already knew what to do with his life, he set his personal goal. In ‘El Norte’ Rosa

and Enrique did not plan their strategy of achieving their American Dream. It was more difficult for them.

#### **4.5. The American Dream in ‘*El Norte*’**

‘*El Norte*’ (1984) focused more on the immigration and the unattainable dream which was never reached. Rosa and Enrique were the Guatemalans who tried to move to America, leaving their motherland behind to start a new life. The association with the American Dream began at the beginning of this story, which was the reason they did leave their village and tried to pursue this big dream. It was because of the gossips that their Godmother Josefita spread at the dinner table. Josefita had visited the promised land and shared her experience of being there. She told that every American had his or hers own car. Nobody was poor because money in that country was everywhere. There are jobs, there is a place to live, no one is left down. These gossips intrigued Rosa. Before her Godmother came to their house, she was reading a magazine where women dress were shown, Rosa wanted one. ‘After the military men attacked the San Pedro village, Rosa and Enrique fled the village towards the U.S. – Mexico border. After they were over the border, they faced the sad reality of the American culture. It was not as Josefita described it.

There were many poor people around the region where they lived in California, Los Angeles. People were divided into primary, two groups. Poor and Rich. Even though when Rosa and Enrique got the apartment which was filthy and in a bad condition, they thought that it was a pretty good flat. It was because of their previous life circumstances, that they were living in. They did not know any electrical gadget what so ever. When they saw microwave, TV and even the toilet closet with water, which flush, it was like they already were living the American Dream. It was a survival situation, language barrier at first was an issue, but both went to language courses to learn English, so they could, at least, to some degree understand what was asked or said.

Certainly, after some time, getting a job, it dawned on them that it was not as easy as they thought it would be. The Hispanic people did not have an easy way to fit in society and the Hispanic people worked some low-paying jobs. Rosa especially, saw the circumstances when she was working in the sewing factory for some time, that Asian people were in charge there and Hispanic women worked for them. The American Dream started to make an impression on them, it made them think differently and view this phenomenon from a different angle.

If looking back, at the beginning Rosa and Enrique wanted the materialistic things, such as nice, flashy clothes, house, car or even many cars, a lot of money and so on. That way they would be different in this new land, so the old Enrique and Rosa would have the new identity. Brother and sister wanted to become somebody. They faced the painful truth about the American Dream itself, and how society treats immigrants from another country, who basically are nobody entering the, so called, 'promised land'. Now it was about the psychological view. The urge to be recognized in the society with, at least some title.

As the movie goes on with the story the American Dream changes its description. It becomes as the ideology of the grandiose lifestyle and is becoming as the unattainable dream for people that are living in the United States of America. The American Dream can be compared to winning a lottery. It is possible to win, but at the same time, there is a small chance to win. Yes, it is possible to achieve the American dream, although the way in which it is achieved has nothing to do with what many believe. The idea of it is that people need to study hard, work hard and be financially responsible, that they have combined the three ingredients required to achieve the American dream. Actually, that is wrong, because the three ingredients that are required is, luck, profit, and sometimes lineage. '*El Norte*' very distinctly represents these three ingredients, by showing that Rosa and Enrique did not have any luck, what so ever to achieve the American dream, their wage was not that high to live a normal life and it was because of their status in American society, that they both were Guatemalans. Some people eventually go through the tight cracks and achieve the American Dream, and there are times that these people are considered as role models, they are praised as role models.

'*El Norte*' (1984) presents the American Dream as the psychological achievement, in this case, to fit into the society that demands some status from people who are not the citizens of the United States of America. The father of Rosa and Enrique at the beginning of the movie says: "the poor are only arms for the rich," (1984: 10' 20"). This quote is completely accurate for the morale of this story. Immigrants are considered to be workers who will do dirty jobs, that native citizen would not do.

The other movie which is related to this theme is 'The Pursuit of Happyness' (2006). If '*El Norte*' (1984) focused on the immigration issue then 'The Pursuit of Happyness' focuses on the progress of a single person, who struggles to achieve the dream and succeeds by trying out various alternative ways to succeed where the main character wants to be.

#### 4.6. The American Dream in '*The Pursuit of Happyness*'

The movie is based on the true story, it is about Chris Gardner an American citizen, single parent, who invested all of his savings into the unreliable life-saving bone density scanners, which he tried to sell to the local doctors to earn some money. Chris went from being very poor that he could not even support his flat, sleeping in public toilets and daycare centers, to become a successful stock broker.

'*The Pursuit of Happyness*' (2006) is a great example of the human will. Throughout the whole movie, Chris Gardner did not lose the faith, no matter how tough it was at the times. His wife left him and he took custody of their only son Christopher. He had no money left because of these bone density scanners, no one would buy them. Chris and his son got thrown out in the streets because he was not able to pay the rent. Chris did not sleep at nights because he studied for the job and fixed the scanners. His story has many ups and downs but despite everything, Chris Gardner, in the end, succeeded against the odds.

'*The Pursuit of Happyness*' (2006) represents the American Dream as it supposed to be because the American Dream is meant to be challenging and to the person it means to not lose one's faith till the end. It clearly shows that some man or woman who works hard enough is able to succeed. Chris Gardner succeeded that way. If compared to 'El Norte' (1984) then 'The Pursuit of Happyness' (2006) is more about materialistic desires than fitting into society.

The American Dream was represented by the main character Chris Gardner, in a sense that he was the living proof of the successful American Dream. Chris Gardner throughout his search for better life, he found the solutions to many personal problems that he had at that time. Chris never lost faith throughout the whole movie, is very serious and concentrated. Sometimes the person, who watches this movie, will think of him as if he already knows that he will succeed, that it just takes time. Chris Gardner is a very patient man, a man of his word. Chris allowed others to 'climb on his head', at some parts of the movie. In the beginning of this story, Chris was selling the scanners. Through his selling experience, he got doors shut in front of him, people were ignoring him, did not even listen to him when they opened the door. Chris Gardner never gave up after these types of incidents. Chris Gardner was a faithful man when it came to his passion. The personal American Dream for Chris was to sell his scanners, after that to study the environment of the stock brokers, to get the job, to be promoted and then help his son grow up in the middle-class environment. Chris wanted to make his boy happy, to be able to live like other kids at school. Chris Gardners' faith was his family, his son Christopher.

This story which is based on true events, shows the real intention of why Chris Gardner is trying to do the things he does, it is not what Chris has, but what Chris is trying to get in his life. Chris wants to improve his personal life by struggling to get through these problems which he faces every day. That fact shows that the American Dream is reachable by keeping one's faith, with perseverance, and a focus on family values, in Chris Gardner's case his son Christopher.

The family is the most important element for a man's or a woman's life. The family is the motivation for the people who are willing to do something to make their lives better. A good family is a happy family. In Chris' case, his goal is to achieve the American Dream by pursuing happiness. That is why the title of this movie says '*The Pursuit of Happiness*.' (2006). Chris found his happiness through his son Christopher. When Chris thinks about Christopher, is when he never loses his faith that his son provides. What Chris started needed to be carried on, his dream of becoming a stock broker. As long as Chris Gardner will work hard, everything will be just fine. The story ends by Chris reaching his main goal, and happiness.

It is much easier to understand the information through watching the visual representation of something specific. The visual representation shows the actions that people need to take, the background where it happens. The most important feature in visual representation is when the emotions are reenacted, this feature allows to understand and even feel the state that the main characters are in. Both movies were highly emotional to watch. Most of the parts of '*El Norte*' (1984) and '*The Pursuit of Happiness*' (2006) such as family values in difficult circumstances and the hope of succeeding in life, were relatable to the watcher. There was also humanity presented in a way that no matter how difficult it is the person needs to stay as positive as one can, that is why people who watch these movies are emotionally connected to the characters.

The American Dream in '*El Norte*' (1984) and '*The Pursuit of Happiness*' (2006) is presented in two different ways. The key elements of the American Dream that were mentioned in these movies are not that different because both stories deal with self-fulfillment and desires. At the beginning, the American Dream is believed to be as it is portrayed in literature, that every man or woman are equal, everybody has rights and so on. It does not happen like that at all, in the movies, there is individualism, as if, the individuals are by themselves. There is nobody to help them in order to fulfill their desires.

The elements of the American Dream in the movies range from the materialistic desire of house to being recognized in society, as the psychological consolation.

In *'The Pursuit of Happyness'* (2006) the key element is happiness. A Chris says to Christopher: 'You got a dream? You got to protect it! You want something? Go get it! Period!' *'The Pursuit of Happyness'* (2006: 55' 33"). this quote is as powerful as it sounds. Chris Gardner knew what he was talking about. The word 'happiness' in this story can be interpreted as money, place to live, well-paid job. All of these elements include also family values. Chris Gardner definitely knew what his family values are because he was a single parent raising his son Christopher. This movie focuses more on the family theme. The movie suggests that people need to be loving and caring when it comes to family.

In *'El Norte'* (1984) the key element is being somebody and has their rights. Rosa and Enrique tried to educate themselves, in a way, to understand what was needed to reach the American Dream. The conversation between Rosa and Enrique, discussing the life in the North indicates, that they did not know that much about the reality in the United States.

Rosa: 'Life is very hard here, Enrique. We're not really free. Isn't it true we're not free?' Enrique: 'Yes..life is difficult here. You have to work very hard.' (1984: 2. 2' 02"). The reason why they discuss it is, as they have got the impression that everything will be easy in the North. Both think: 'If anyone can have cars in the north, then why we cannot have one? Let's go then !' Sadly, the reality of the American Dream was far more worst then they expected.

"In our own land, there is no place for us. They want to kill us all. There is no home for us there. In Mexico..there's only poverty. There is no place for us there either. And here in the North, we're not accepted. When will we find a home, Enrique? Perhaps we'll find a home when we die." Rosa says to Enrique. (1984: 2. 2' 02"). Rosa is acknowledging the attitude towards the immigrants in the north, that it is not easy to prove oneself in the north. Both does not have any property of their own. Everything is sold. Back in San Pedro, the military regime is forbidding them to return to their village, they will be killed. Now they are stuck in this promised land, which does not promise anything to them. Enrique answers Rosa: "Don't say that, Rosita It's hard..but we'll be lucky from now on. We'll have everything we want. We'll make a lot of money. And we'll go back to our village. When we walk down the street people will look at us with envy. Everything will be all right. Yes, we'll be lucky now. I'm sure of it. You mustn't give up hope. That's it..the most important thing is to not give up hope." Enrique is not that depressed about the situation, he has faith, exactly as Chris Gardner from *'The Pursuit of Happyness'* (2006). Enrique believes in good times. Enrique believed that this is just a phase of obstacles, in front of them that they both can dodge. After that everything will work out well. Rosa and Enrique will have everything that they were dreaming about back in San Pedro. Enrique back in his mind sometimes comes to the point

when he truly knows that hard work leads to success. Maybe, that is why Enrique is so positively disposed of.

This movie is a perfect example of failed/shattered American dream. 'El Norte' (1984) basically, represents the life also of other immigrants that live in the United States, the story is not only about this couple. This story shows that to reach the American Dream for the immigrants is a lot more difficult than for the Americans. Immigrants coming to the U.S. in search for a better life usually get more troubles in their personal lives than they already have.

In conclusion, 'El Norte' (1984) and 'The Pursuit of Happyness' (2006), greatly represent the key elements of the American Dream and the presence of it. Both movies are very useful when researching such theme because they do not have the same pattern of events. 'El Norte' (1984) and 'The Pursuit of Happyness' (2006) represent the American Dream from two views. This helps to see the journey of achieving the dream from the American and Mexican point of view. 'El Norte' (1984) is from the Mexican point of view and 'The Pursuit of Happyness' (2006) is from the point of view of a successful American citizen.

#### **4.7. The outcome**

The outcome of these two incredible movies is motivational, sad and true at the same time. The American Dream is not that easy to achieve as it is portrayed in literature. The definitions do not explain all the hidden points that appear when trying to achieve this dream. The American Dream takes a lot of time, patience is the only thing that will keep person mind occupied in order to realize it. In 'El Norte' the main characters Rosa and Enrique did not achieve their dream Rosa died because of the illness, Enrique rejected the new job that was already in process, but because Rosa was lying in the hospital he rejected it. Here is clearly shown the family values, brother and sister do not betray each other, they hold each other tight.

In 'The Pursuit of Happyness' Chris Gardner was successful, because he could handle his problems with positive attitude. When something happened he said: "Everything will be just fine!" That is what kept Chris sane and focused on his goal of becoming a successful stock broker. The family, particularly his son Christopher, also was his inspiration of his actions. These movies give the answer about the American Dream, that it can go both ways, it can be attainable or in worse case unattainable.

## 5. AMERICAN AND MEXICAN POINTS OF VIEW ABOUT THE AMERICAN DREAM

This chapter is devoted to comparing the American and Mexican points of view about the American Dream. The task is to see the difference how the American Dream is been achieved by both nations in the movies from both perspectives.

### 5.1. American point of view

The American and Mexican points of view differ from each other because of the cultural differences. American people live in the United States, which is the land of the American Dream itself. Some proportion of the American people already knows what it is and how it originated. The main problem is to actually, realize it. In a sense, Americans also struggle with the consequences that occur while trying to succeed, but all they have left in order to succeed is to work hard. Americans are divided into wealthy people and poor people. In America, this division is a little different, then it is for the rest of the world. This division is based on the American Dream ideology. The ones who are successful and the ones who cannot or could not make this dream come true.

*'The Pursuit of Happyness'* is a biography film which tells about Chris Gardner's life. The word 'Happyness' is misspelled, it is spelled with an 'i' not 'y', because in the movie the main character Chris Gardner takes his son Christopher to the Chinese woman, who works in the children daycare centre, and there is door where this word is written, in the way it symbolises the goal of this story. He is a salesman who becomes a rich stockbroker. The film, *'The Pursuit of Happyness'* (2006), shows the American Dream is achieved by the main character, Chris Gardner, by working hard and using his talents. Chris Gardner in *'The Pursuit of Happyness'* (2006) goes through overcoming obstacles which show that the American Dream is possible through faith, perseverance, and a focus on family values.

In the movie *'The Pursuit of Happyness'* (2006) there are parts of life that the main character mentions throughout the whole movie. These parts in a sense are referring to the American Dream. Parts of life shows the lifestyle and the progress towards the big dream. The great part about this movie is that it is based on true story that happened to this man. This movie actually shows the real point of view about the American Dream. The movie represents the successful American Dream.

#### 1. Waiting for the bus.

In the movie, this part shows what Chris deals with everyday. It's more like a routine. He goes to work, which is to sell the scanners. They are Bone density scanners. He tries to sell

them to the doctors in hospitals. Doctors refer to these scanners as unnecessary luxuries. This part represents the ordinary American every day life. Man or woman gets up in the morning, eats breakfast, takes a shower, brushes her teeth, gets dressed and goes to work, by bus or his own car.

## 2. Being stupid.

This part is about Chris being careless. Chris hears that there is a job application available at Dean Witter's Company. One day after not selling the scanner he goes to the job application. There is this hippie girl who is performing on the side of the street, so he asks her to watch this scanner for him, while he goes to Dean Witter's Company. While he gets the job application, he sees through the window the girl with his scanner running away, so he interrupts the employee of the company and runs after her. So he got robbed by this hippie girl. This part encourages people to be focused on the thing, to not make a distraction for themselves. Because distractions will cause mistakes and even loses, in Chris' case, money.

## 3. Running.

For the American people, it is typical to deal with constant changes. In the movie Chris is very flexible, he has many places to be, so Chris knows that in order to be closer to the American Dream he needs to be quick. This part deals with Chris getting brave and showing himself as a man who can do many things at once. One day he sees the hippie girl with another hippie guy carrying his stolen scanner. He follows them into the bus and takes away the scanner from them. Now he has two scanners one that he didn't sell and the other one he got back. Coming back home, Linda his wife is very disappointed about him because he didn't get money by not selling the scanners. Some other day he took the taxi cab with this manager that promised him to call back after the job application meeting, so Chris took the opportunity to talk with him about the job in the cab. While they were driving the manager was distracted by this rubik's cube not paying attention to what Chris is saying. Chris confidently says that he can solve it. The man didn't believe him. So after some short period of time exactly arriving at the destination of this man, he solved the rubik's cube, leaving the manager impressed, but didn't get the answer about the job. So Chris drove taxi further realising that the tax on the screen is already 18\$, but he didn't have that amount of money on him. So he jumped out of the car running away with his scanner, not paying the taxi driver. The driver wanted to kill him in rage. So Chris ran as fast as he could towards the metro station to catch the train. He squeezed into the train leaving his left arm outside the door. It wasn't an option to take his scanner in through the door, he could not hold to it any longer, leaving it on the platform. Homeless, madman stole it believing that it is a time-machine. Another bad day for Chris. He called Linda to say that he is sorry for not being home at the

time. Then he hears painful sentence: 'I am leaving!' After running home he finds out that Linda and Christopher have left. He gets a call from Dean Witter's Company. Chris schedules the meeting with the company managers. If people are patient enough, with clenched teeth, they can be one step closer to their aim.

#### 4. Internship.

People start to look for other jobs to get more money. Chris started to work for this company and at the same time, Chris tried to sell his scanners. Everything seems to be right when people get the first glimpse of the American Dream. The thing is that nothing stops there. There is a lot to prove for other people and oneself, as Chris needed to get promoted in order to move on to the next step in his career. The business finally somehow caught up with him and he started to make some money out of the bone density scanners. He got the job as a candidate for stock broker job. The first period was to show his skills. By phoning the people that were listed on the paper. One time he skipped many clients on the list because he understood that he was far behind the schedule, so he called the last and first client which was 'Passion Fund CEO'. He got the appointment to meet this CEO, but the obstacles of life had different plans. He didn't get the deal with the CEO of Passion Fund. At least he got his son back because Linda has the opportunity to go to New York and work there in her sisters store. Chris refuses to let Christopher with her, Linda understands that Chris will take good care of their son.

#### 5. Paying taxes.

There are times when, everything seems to fall apart. Like every living citizen of any country, they are expected to pay the bills, but not everyone can afford to pay them. Whether, the person does not have money on him, at that time, or simply the person is broke, it is certain that this person can get kicked out of his or hers apartment, no matter in what circumstance that person is at that moment. American people deal with this problem while struggling to achieve the American Dream. It is the part of succeeding. Chris Gardner was broke. With 21.33\$ left in his bank account, Chris and Christopher have no place to live, because Chris do not have money to pay rent to the property owner. They go to the metro and lock themselves in the toilet where they sleep overnight. Basically they are homeless. Being in the park, while Christopher is playing with other kids, he sees the homeless man who stole his scanner. He runs up to him to take his scanner. It's broken. He tries to sell it to the doctor, but it won't work. Next day he donates his blood to get some money. By getting some extra money he goes to the pawn shop to buy a light bulb for his broken scanner which costs 8\$. He fixes it over night. Next day he goes to the same doctor who gave him another chance to sell it. He succeeds and sells his last scanner. Now he had money that could give him four weeks of

oxygen to breath, as he said. In this story the man overcame the struggle time, because of his faith that never faded away. Chris kept on pursuing his goal.

#### 6. Happyness.

This little part and at the same time last part, ends story with Chris getting promoted to stock broker. At the end he achieved what he wanted in the first place. This last part really can be applied to Chris' words that he told to Christopher. **'You got a dream? You got to protect it ! You want something? Go get it ! Period !'** (2006: 55' 33"). These words really, can be associated with the American point of view, because this nation is very positively disposed when it comes to something big. Americans want to pursue the happiness in their lives. The 'Running' part can be associated with the whole movie, because Chris just kept running from place to place, metaphorically speaking. Idea is, if you want to achieve something you need to deal with many, many obstacles. As far as it seems is that 'Running' fits with the ideology of achieving the American Dream. If metaphorically speaking, then the American Dream is achieved by running towards it.

### 5.2. Mexican point of view

If speaking about the Mexican people, than they have a bit different scenario when chasing the American Dream. Mexican people in the United States of America are immigrants. When coming to the U.S. they do not have the social status that could support them as they are not considered to be important people nor are they citizens of this country. Immigrants, in this case, Mexicans, are considered to be a helping hands to the rich people. Mexicans attend jobs which, maybe, ordinary american would not work. Movie like 'El Norte' (1984) portrays the stereotypical life of mexican people in the United States. People who live in the United States does not have any problem with the legal issues. When it comes to the Mexican people they are often involved in these problems, because of nationality and not having a proper documents carried with them. A lot of Mexican people illegally cross the U.S.-Mexico border. That leads to many legal issues in further activities.

In the movie '*El Norte*' (1984) the American Dream is represented as unattainable dream. As this movie is an independent movie, it gives the raw facts and the story is reflecting on the Mexican culture experiences. Such as, life of immigrants in the United States of America. Movie consists of three parts. Every single one of them illustrates the journey from Guatemala to USA. Movie '*El Norte*' is successful in showing the life of immigrants in the United States of America. The decisions they have to make and circumstances they need to live in. The camera work is pretty impressive for the independent movie. '*El Norte*' as the

movie sticks to the realism of a real life stories. The realism that is in 'El Norte' gives this rawness to the story and at the same time camera work is capable of showing the emotions clearer. 'El Norte' is a good example of looking through the eyes of an immigrant, to see and feel the emotions they go through while adapting into the alien environment.

'El Norte' is a story about Guatemalan siblings who try to fulfill their dream of living in the United States. The main goal for Enrique and Rosa is to achieve the American Dream. These three parts of the movie, as it was for the previous movie 'The Pursuit of Happyness', relates to the journey of progressing towards the American Dream.

First part is about leaving all behind and starting a new chapter in ones lives. By leaving the homeland they want to erase all the past that they had. The journey begins by leaving their little village in Guatemala. The destination that they wanted to reach was colorful and flashy Los Angeles, California. Rosas and Enriques father was murdered and their mother was missing, it all happened because of military regime that was happening at that time in San Pedro village. This part shows the scenery and circumstances how Rosa and Enrique lived. Just a hard working family that tries to survive. It was dinner time and the whole family with some guests discussed random things. Godmother Josefita starts to talk about the promised land, United States. It was mentioned that everybody there, has their own house and a car. Nobody is poor there. This let Rosa to think about the dream more. This was the main reaon why Rosa and Enrique wanted to move to the United States of America, to pursue the American Dream. After the family had finished eating dinner, father Arturo goes for a walk. The military men storms into the village and starts to attack people. Arturo gets attacked. Enrique hear people scream so he runs to find Arturo. Enrique founds father murdered. The next day Enrique and Rosa flee from their village. "In the North, we won't be treated this way." says Rosa to Enrique so the journey through Mexico began. They wanted to cross the U.S.-Mexico border by not going through the checkpoints of customs, but brother and sister knew that they will become illegal immigrants if they cross the border like that. They had nothing to lose. At this point they did not have an experience of wandering around and no place to go, because of living in the same place all their lives. At the same time they are homeless.

Both arrived to Tijuana to find the guide (Coyote) that will help them to move further to America. They meet one of the dozen coyotes who agrees to help them by paying him. Coyote tries to rob them but fails. After some wandering they find uncles friend who can help them to cross over the U.S.-Mexico border. Both needed to crawl through sewer which was full of rats. And wait for the patrol helicopter to pass by. Once they were across the border Rosa and Enrique tries to pass as Mexicans not Guatemalans, they heard that every Mexican

puts the F word in their sentences, so they both try this stereotypical fact to use in their conversation with the U.S.. The two try, with varying levels of success, to pass as Mexican. In one of the film's lighter moments, Rosa and Enrique are interrogated by the U.S. border patrol. One of the Patrolman says "I guess they are Mexican". "Send them back to Tijuana." Says to the other Patrolman.

The last part of the story. For Enrique and Rosa the United States of America was a completely different 'planet'. Comparing to the place where they come from, which is village called San Pedro in Guatemala. Rosa and Enrique are able to find some apartment to live in. As they have never been in any flat, to them it is a good start. And the North does provide the things that Godmother Josefita promised which is the electricity, a refrigerator, running water, a flush toilet. To them it was already the American Dream. In the reality the apartment was far from shiny and modern interior, it was filthy and had not been cleaned for a good time. "Now all we need is to find a brand new car we can have without any money," Rosa laughed. It is like all they have left to achieve is their own car. It shows how little people need to be happy, others would look upon the looks and all the shiny things, but as Rosa and Enrique comes from different culture, they are not spoiled. Enrique and Rosa started to look for job. Rosa becomes a housekeeper in this big mansion. Enrique gets a job as a busboy and back-waiter. "Life is very hard here," one night says Rosa to Enrique, "We are not free." At this moment they both understand that it is not easy to start from scratch and being immigrants in different country, where there is no social label for them both. Rosa gets sick and Enrique does the best to help Rosa. Rosa died because of the rare disease. Enrique, lost closest family member he had. One morning Enrique stands outside a motel in a crowd of other Latinos, as usually waiting for the pickup truck to come and offer a job. Truck arrives and a man shouts "I need strong arms!". Enrique gets picked. Working in the construction site Enriques mind start to haunt him, the visions of his father and the lesson he gave to him. Arturo's words about the poor being nothing but arms for the rich, dawned upon him that these words are true even here in the north.

The obstacles in their way were pretty stereotypical. Both were staying in this filthy apartment, which at the moment for them was like first step into the American Dream. Enrique every morning stood on the street along with other latino immigrants, waiting for the truck to pick him up. Rosa worked in jobs that every immigrant woman would do. As a domestic, in factory and so on. Enrique and Rosa actually managed partially to walk through this mental wall. Both stayed positive, they were in country that they previously only read or heard about. Actually, the Godmother Josefita was the person who encouraged them to lean towards this American Dream. When in the evenings dinner conversation it was mentioned

about the new luxury cars that everyone, that is living there has their own cars. Language was the barrier at the beginning, but Enrique and Rosa learned English quickly. They went to the English classes. It allowed them to communicate with American people in daily use and work context. It helped them to blend in to this culture. At the end sadly for Enrique and Rosa, the American Dream became unattainable, they could not fit into the society and even more they came from different cultural background, which led them to being labeled as outcasts. Rosa sadly died, but Enrique did not progress further in his journey to be successful. The American Dream was too far away from his horizon.

The characteristics of the main characters – Enrique and Rosa has the personal dream of self-fulfilment, individualism, mobility, flexibility. Both characters stayed together through the events that happened in their hometown and in the journey to USA. They had to make a lot of decisions, which of course was not easy for them. Enrique a determined man, who is ready to do everything just to make his sister's life better. Enrique is very positive. Rosa is this woman, who is pretty naive and also, does everything to help her brother. This story shows very distinct presentation of how brothers and sisters should behave towards each other in tough life situations, in this case, for achieving the American Dream. Because, after all they are family.

The main element of this story is the immigration and the unattainable dream. Both Enrique and Rosa are young people who wanted to start a new life in the new country, but sadly failed. Both wanted to leave the past behind and look towards the future.

### **5.3. Conclusions about the American and Mexican points of view**

In conclusions, about the representation of the American and Mexican points of view in the movies, is that both nations have hard time to achieve the American Dream. People are people, and everyone has their own strategy how to be successful. American people rely on the idea of working hard and pursuing the happiness, that they want to have in their lives. In that way completing their social status. The American Dream is more available for the American people than the Mexican people. Mexican people deal with tougher situations, when it comes to fitting into society and trying to prove themselves. Mexican people are victims of the racial division. At the same time, Mexicans are immigrants, basically people without authorities, without social status. They are looked upon as low paid, dirty workers. The American Dream for them, takes more time and even then it is not guaranteed that it will come true. In these two movies the points of view about American Dream was represented in

both ways. Which gave the better look on both nations from both perspectives, whether the American Dream is attainable or unattainable.

## CONCLUSIONS

The author was investigating the reflection of American and Mexican points of view about “American Dream” in the movies. How the American Dream is treated in ‘El Norte’ and ‘The Pursuit Of Happiness’.

The author of the paper has analyzed the American Dream and found the most suitable definition for it. The goal of the research was to see how the points of view differ between two nations.

The research enables the author to draw the following conclusions:

There have been previous investigations regarding this topic carried out by Putnam, Robert D. (2015), Jim Cullen (2004), Smith, Hedrick. (2012), Adams, James Truslow (1931), Obama, Barack (2006), Rauchway, Eric. (2008).

The research method that was used in this bachelor thesis was library research and film, image and cinematic representation methods were used to find the necessary information about the topic.

The library research method was used for different sources of information. This method is the study of the secondary sources on the research problem. It was achieved by using the articles and book by such authors as Jim Cullen (2004), Barack Obama (2006), James Truslow Adams (1931), Hedrick Smith (2012), Robert D. Putnam (2015).

Film, image and cinematic representation analysis was used in order to see the recreation of the events. This method helped to work with the visual representation. The movies ‘Heist: Who Stole the American Dream?’, ‘El Norte’ and ‘The Pursuit of Happiness’ helped to use this method.

In general, the results show that the American Dream in real life is not the same as it is portrayed. People need to have some kind of a background to be successful. There is a small chance to achieve it. It is compared to winning a lottery. So, it becomes as the unattainable dream.

The American Dream is not meant to be focused on the materialistic desires but on the mental desires to be someone, to be able to fit into the society.

The American Dream big requires courage and strong will, to be able to manage the obstacles in the path. It can be a long time till the mountain peak. Many days, months and even many years can pass till it is achieved.

The American Dream is not so pretty as it looks. It is a long way to the top if one wants to achieve it. In the whole wide world, there is no place without problems. To get something, one need to work hard. That is the situation in America. Now America is the richest country in

the world. The essence of the American Dream has not faded away, it is still there, but a lot different than it was 60 or 70 years ago. Some people nowadays believe that people only care about possessions, about things, about money, not happiness. When actually it is about giving your kids a better life – as if parenting did not come with enough pressures already.

The main questions that needed to be answered were about the definition of the American Dream and what key elements does it consists of. Also, the representation of the American and Mexican points of view about the American Dream in the movies ‘El Norte’ (1984) and ‘The Pursuit of Happiness’ (2006).

The American Dream is better defined by James Truslow Adams in his famous book ‘The Epic of America’ (1931). The idea of the American Dream is not necessary being able to buy materialistic things or properties, such as car, big mansion or something else, but being able to fit in the society, carrying the self-proclaimed title and doing as much as people are capable of doing to achieve this title. It does not matter where they were born or in what circumstances they were living, what matters is the status that this person has picked for himself.

The American Dream consists of elements that characterize this phenomenon, which is a house, having your own private property, being happy, supercars or the ordinary hybrid cars, a family with one or more children, loving couple pets, such as dog or cat. Both adults work jobs that society portrays as the normal jobs. A man works as an employee in the office, a woman usually is a homemaker. These are the materialistic desires that are considered to be included in the essence of the American Dream, as it was mentioned by James Truslow Adams that the American Dream is a psychological view on things. The key elements of this mental side are to fit into the society, by being able to make oneself recognizable.

How is the American Dream represented in the movies?

The American Dream in both movies is not represented the same. While ‘*El Norte*’ (1984) represents the psychological view of this dream, ‘*The Pursuit of Happiness*’ (2006) represents the materialistic desire. In ‘*El Norte*’ (1984) the American Dream at the end became the unattainable dream because of not fitting into society. ‘*El Norte*’ (1984) is the perfect example of failed American Dream, because of the events that happened to the main characters, Rosa and Enrique. Both never, throughout their journey, felt that they had accomplished something. The disaster of losing his sister was the lowest point for Enrique, he basically lost the whole family of his, and the American Dream did not come true, after all the problems they went through coming to the United States.

In ‘*The Pursuit of Happiness*’ (2006) the American Dream is successful in this story. Chris Gardner gets the job as the stock broker, by working hard and not losing his faith. His goal was

to be happy in his life, after succeeding Chris lived in his own personal American Dream, with his son Christopher by his side.

The American and Mexican points of view differ from each other because of the cultural differences. American people live in the United States, which is the land of the American Dream itself. American people already know what it is and what are the origins of it. In a sense, Americans also struggle with the consequences that occur while trying to succeed, but all they have left in order to succeed is to work hard. The movie '*The Pursuit of Happyness*' (2006) one of the parts of life was called 'Running'. This part fits with the ideology of achieving the American Dream. If metaphorically speaking, then the American Dream is achieved by running towards it. But not everyone can chase it till the end.

The Mexican people. Mexican people in the United States of America are immigrants. When coming to the U.S. they do not have the social status that could support them as important people or as citizens. Mexican people deal with tougher situations when it comes to fitting into society and trying to prove themselves. Mexican people are victims of the racial division. At the same time, Mexicans are immigrants, basically people without authorities, without social status. Immigrants are considered to be a helping hand to the rich people, as it is represented in '*El Norte*' (1984). Mexicans attend jobs which, maybe, ordinary American would not work. A movie like '*El Norte*' (1984) portrays the stereotypical life of Mexican people.

## THESES

1. The generalized definition of the American Dream is that it is not necessary being able to buy materialistic desires, such as, private properties and so on, but the dream is being able to fit into society, by becoming somebody.
2. The key elements for the American Dream is personal dream of self-fulfilment, individualism, mobility, flexibility.
3. The American Dream has been previously discussed by many authors, such as, Putnam, Robert D. (2015), Jim Cullen (2004), Smith, Hedrick. (2012), Adams, James Truslow (1931), Obama, Barack (2006), Rauchway, Eric. (2008), Fitzgerald, F. Scott. (1925).
4. 'El Norte' (1984) and 'The Pursuit of Happiness' (2006) represents the American Dream in two different scenarios, one is unattainable and the other is successful.
5. Mexican people see themselves as the arms for the rich people, where the American people see themselves as hard-workers.
6. The key element of 'The Pursuit of Happiness' (2006) is happiness.
7. The key element of 'El Norte' (1984) is to become somebody, that way, obtaining personal rights.
8. American and Mexican points of view about the American Dream is slightly different, because Americans want to pursue the happiness but Mexicans are concerned about the social status that they want to make in American society.
9. Nowadays, the American Dream has come to the point, when it is not reachable for middle-class people, because of the economical situation in the country.
10. This research can help to understand the problems and circumstances that American and Mexican people face each day pursuing the American Dream.

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## Dokumentārā lapa

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