

Good the bitter debate on immigration in the united states essay example

[Sociology](#), [Immigration](#)



INTRODUCTION

In the United States today we have symbols, ideals, and imagery that we considered to be uniquely American, however, much of what American culture is based upon can trace its origins to many different sources. The people who came to the United States, beginning with the European colonization of the New World, came from lands far, far away. Some people came seeking new lives and new freedoms, others sought to make a better living, and some were brought against their will as indentured servants and slave labor. However, all of these people and all of those cultures and ideals they brought with them shaped the cultural paradigm of the United States of today. The United States is a country founded on the blood, sweat, and tears of the immigrants who came here from all over the world. In the waters just outside New York City, the Statue of Liberty stands today. She welcomes new immigrants and offers the United States as a place of safety and possibility; bring the poor, the destitute and any who yearned to be free. However, those sentiments seem to have changed a great deal over the last several decades. Why? Why has the nation of immigrants so divided on the issues of immigration today? The debate on immigration can definitely become a heated one, rather quickly. Both sides of the argument offer valid perspectives. Supporters of immigration hold to the spirit of liberty and the culturally, racially, and ideologically mixed origins of all Americans and believe that that is the mission of the USA (Newman and et. al. 2012, pg. 160). However, opposition claims that there are legitimate cultural, economic, social, and political reasoning that favors limiting immigration to the United States from any foreign country. The arguments only become

more heated and oppositional when the issue of illegal immigration is introduced into the conversation. Immigration is a serious issue in modern America and understanding how a nation descended from immigrants can be so divided on the issues of and related to immigration.

HISTORY

Again, we all know the story that founded this country. Those who had chosen to make the voyage to the New World became dissatisfied with British sovereignty and fought the American Revolution to earn a permanent separation between Britain and form the beginning so the United States today. However, more peoples came to the New World than just the British and the future founding fathers. In fact, there were peoples from many nationalities and races, France, Germany, Eastern Europe, and, of course, many African slaves were brought here as well (Caplan 2012, pg. 5). All of these cultures shared in what we consider American culture today. From the foods that we eat to architecture and art we preference from the religious ideologies to our social norms, all can be traced to a mulit-cultural, multi-ethnic background.

However, over the years the racial, political, and religious tensions began to develop in the United States, and gaining agreement was becoming more difficult. Of course troubled times in America, financially, politically and socially began to change the mentality of Americans towards to immigrants coming into the United States (Muller 2012, pg. 1). They felt that they would take jobs, diminish resources, and interfere with the culturally identity of the land. Suddenly foreigners found themselves less welcome in the United

States than ever before. This mentality has continued to cause arguments and fevered debates. While immigrants traveled freely into the United States for generation, it was not until the 20th century that “ caps” began to place on how many people from each country would be admitted and allowed to seek citizenship in the United States. Nations now had to compete and hope to be accepted by America.

Immigrants came to these shores legally and freely, however, that did not mean they were always made to feel welcome. This attitude transcended; suddenly coming to the United States had become very difficult, combining years of rules and paperwork, which are expensive to file and complete, and tests that make citizenship all the harder to earn. This brings us to illegal immigration. When most Americans think of illegal immigration they most commonly and stereotypically think the Latin/Hispanic peoples crossing the borders into the United States, ether on foot, through the water, or smuggled in, hidden in vehicles. According to current statistics there are 14 million undocumented immigrants living within the U. S. Borders today (Flannery 2013 pg. 1). That is a huge increase from the in the latter part of the 20th century. There are a number of reasons why the perception of immigration has changed over the years and why this country, founded by immigrants, can have so much opposition to immigration; money, politics, cultural protectiveness, psychologically referred to as “ us vs. them” mentality. In order to understand these differences causes for the immigration issues and intolerances present in modern day America it is necessary to look at them individually

DISCUSSION

Many Americans have the impression that all immigrants who illegally enter the United States do so knowing that they are breaking a law. However, one of the darker realities of modern society is human trafficking. That said, many men, women, and children, of Hispanic, European, and Asian descent are kidnapped or sold into slavery and brought to the United States against their will (Caplan 2012, pg. 1). If they are adults they could be perceived as criminals, after all, they are here in the United States illegally. However, are they not also victims? Is it not true that the first reason that people left their homelands behind was because they lived in a world of mistreatment, poverty, and corrupt law enforcement and governmental entities; they are victims before they have ever arrived. Is that not why the first settlers came to these shores; to avoid persecution and have the opportunity to be free? First and foremost, one of the greatest issues that modern Americans have shared as a reason to limit, reform, and reconsider the policies that we have that benefit immigrants. When undocumented individuals enter the country their willingness to work for a lower wage deprives citizens of those positions. These undocumented immigrants, also, pay no taxes on the monies that they earn, and often send monies they earn back to Mexico, where it does not benefit the United States at all. However, it is not just undocumented immigrants that create economic issues with the U. S. borders. When legal immigrants holding high degrees and possess marketable skills also take jobs from American-born citizens who should have the first opportunity for these jobs over foreign individuals. Of course the employment of undocumented immigrants cannot be completely blamed

upon the immigrants. There are many, particularly in agriculture, businesses that knowingly employ migrant, undocumented workers because they are willing to accept a lower wage. As long as there is an American demand for undocumented labor there will always be an ample supply. That aspect is an American problem, not an immigrant one.

Immigration has been a huge element in any politicians' campaign, especially for the office of U. S. President over the last few decades (Muller 2012, pg. 1). However, it was the actions of current President, Barack Obama, during his reelection campaign that have been questioned and, by some, deemed an abuse of his power. Of the many undocumented immigrant in the United States, a large number were children when their parents crossed into the United States illegally. These children have grown up in America, they know no other country, and should not be viewed as criminals that should be immediately deported. This concern spawned the development of the DREAM ACT, which has been presented in a number of drafts over the last 20 years; none, however, were ever agreed upon. The DREAM ACT essentially offers the children of undocumented immigrants who have grown up in the United States the opportunity to avoid deportation and be able to attend school, become employed, and gain citizenship. Of course this was and remains a controversial issue. However, during his reelection campaign, Obama used his title and his power to pass the DREAM ACT as part of an executive order. Many Americans who argue the issues of U. S. immigration believe that Obama's act was an abuse of power; many others feel he did the right thing, and the rest feel that his motivations were not humanitarian in nature, but entirely self serving (Shear 2014, pg 1). Obama,

very likely, chose this time to force the DREAM ACT in order to gain the much needed Latin/Hispanic vote to win the election.

While Americans pride themselves on the idea of “ American culture.’

Defining that term is not as easy as many might think. America is a diverse place, which has been influenced by many cultures all over the world, which is exclusively American? Unless you are descended from the Native

American peoples then it is a reality that you are the descendent of immigrants. In the South we see the influences of the African slaves and the

remnants of old world wealth. In the West, peoples are inspired by Latin

cultures (Caplan 2012, pg. 5). Are any of these more or less American than any others? No. Yet, there are still, Americans that think that American

culture is something separate from the rest of the world, original and pure.

However that is not the case. Immigration has never poisoned the culture, in fact, historically, immigration has provided America with much of the ideas,

thoughts, designs, arts, humanities, literature, and that has made this

country so rich, diverse, and successful. Unfortunately, the opposing opinion still has a large following.

The psychology that keeps the immigration a controversial and provocative issue is actually quite natural. Whenever groups of people share life, ideas,

traditions, and social issues it becomes a bond, of sorts. Whenever new

variables are introduced, like outsiders from a foreign land, the first group may feel threatened, often acting out is suspicion, intolerance, fear, and,

even, violence and hatred (Wadhwa 2012, pg. 1). Experts in psychology call

these phenomena “ us vs. them.” People trust what is normal for them, what is familiar, and, in many ways predictable. Outsiders may act differently, look

differently, believe “ strange” things, and, because they are different, their behaviors are not so easy to predict. The “ us vs. them” mentality realistically does play heavily in the immigration debates in present day United States

There are many Americans that would prefer if the United States closed its borders and refused any and all entry for a long period of time. Others are completely opposed to this xenophobic perspective. However, one American state has already chosen to take a controversial stand against illegal immigration. Arizona passed a law that now allows law enforcement to stop, detain, and question anyone who they deem potentially illegal (Flannery 2013, pg. 1). In other words, they can detain and question anyone who appears to be Hispanic. The racial profiling aspect makes the bulk of the law unconstitutional and it is not fully supported by the Federal Government. The most difficult aspect of the immigration issues is that neither side is entirely wrong or entirely right. Many that opposes immigration due to economic and protection for American citizens. Americans must pay taxes on the monies they earn, it is not ethically fair that these undocumented individuals are able to be paid for their services, but not be accountable to the taxes. This is a huge problem for many American and does speak to a financial burden that undocumented immigrants can cause the overall economy (Flannery, 2013 pg, 1). There are many today who are asking that amnesty be given to the undocumented immigrants who are already in the United States. This would alleviate the fiscal impacts and allow the immigrants to remain but become automatic citizens (Planas and Foley 2014, pg. 1).

Unfortunately this is not an acceptable solution to many immigration opponents. To provide amnesty, in their eyes, will only encourage more and more illegal immigration. If people do not believe there is a negative consequence for an illegal action then there is nothing stopping the actions to continue (Muller 2012, pg. 1). That said, it does not mean that America's borders should be closed and deport everyone, young and old. There are possible solution possible on the issues of immigration in the United State, both legal and illegal, is in need of proper balance. One researcher said “ This is the sad state of our competitiveness debate: anger, protectionism, and emotion are trumping logic, data, and common sense” (Wadhwa 2012, pg. 1). Regardless of which side of the argument people fall under, the reality is that there have been no agreeable solutions to the immigration problem. There is a desperate need for efficient, functional, and proactive reforms. The immigration issues in the United States can be resolved without the ethnic profiling in Arizona or “ stereotyping” that was antiquated long ago. Immigration needs to be reformed, absolutely, but not through ending immigration in it's entirely (Flannery 2013, pg. 1).

CONCLUSION

It is without question that the United States is still a work-in progress when it comes to certain areas, at least. Immigration is easily one of those areas. America was built by immigrants from countries all over the globe; England, Ireland, Africa, Asia. Germany, France, Spain, and Mexico, that is just to name a few. Our culture is a fusion of different ideologies, the laws that we pass, foods we eat and architecture that we build, all speak to that fusion of

cultures and traditions. However, psychologists and other researchers understand the “ us vs. them” dynamic that can occur, however, that mentality does not aid in the goals of tolerance, acceptance, and understanding. In the end the United States needs to reform its policies to address illegal immigration appropriately, while at the same time acknowledging and respecting the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and combining of influences that has led to the America that we celebrate and enjoy today. Had it not been for all of the immigrants that aided in the founding of this country it might be a very different place and not the country of diversity and freedom that this country prides itself upon.

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