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American Studies

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America's Values Today

From the very early days of American history, equality and hard-work have been two values that have impacted America in various ways. Equality stems from the Declaration of Independence and is further solidified in the Constitution. Hard-work stems from the very first English colonists, the Puritans, and the Patriots who fought for our freedom. Even though equality was introduced when the Declaration of Independence was made, it seemed to be only a concept and something that America wants to have, but it has not been fully realised. These two values are coefficient because with equality comes more helping hands which means getting more stuff done. America is currently living up to its value of hard-work because Americans put their job ahead of almost anything else, but unfortunately it is not living up to its value of equality and it can be seen in many places today.

America is living up to its core value of hard-work because regardless of the reason, Americans believe that work is very important in life and even though it may not seem like it, they take it more seriously than almost any other country. Compared to other countries, America puts a much bigger emphasis on the importance of work. They believe that the way to succeed in life is to put in a lot of work. There are multiple studies that put into perspective just how much Americans care about their work. 73% percent of Americans believe that the way to get ahead in life is through hard-work (Pew Research center). Countries such as Germany (And other

European countries) have laws that put a limit on the amount of work a person is allowed to do, but America has no such laws. “While the US offers employees around two weeks of paid leave each year, nearly 50% of them do not take it” (The National Digest). From this we can see the value Americans put on hard-work is nearly unparalleled when compared to other countries. Americans believe in being efficient and they would rather get work done then take a break or go on vacation. From the first english colonists, to the puritans, and even the people today, America has proven itself to have some of the most hard-working people in the world and as such it can definitively be said that America is living up to its core value of hard-work.

America is not living up to its core value of equality because in the present day there are groups of people who do not have the same opportunities as others. The groups are women and black people. Even though it has gotten a lot better and to this day there is progress being made to push equal opportunity for all, currently there is too much evidence to support the fact that America is not living up to its value of equality. For women, the workspace has always been an issue. Even though they are theoretically supposed to have the same opportunities and compensation as any other person, studies show that this is not the case. “Females are 45% more likely to be fired than males in CEO positions” (Leftronic). The average salary for female CEOs in 2018 was actually higher when compared to the average salary for male CEOs. But when looking at individual salaries it becomes apparent that men in a CEO position make a lot more than women. “Thomas Rutledge, CEO of Charter Communications, earned an annual compensation of \$99 million, compared to IBM’s female CEO, Virginia Rometty, with annual compensation of \$32 million” (Leftronic). And when looking at the statistics for black people, it becomes even more evident. “Black people account for about 12% of the U.S. population, but

occupy only 3.2% of the senior leadership roles at large companies in the U.S. and just 0.8% of all Fortune 500 CEO positions” (CBS) “About 65% of blacks in the study said they have to work harder to advance, compared with only 16% of white employees” (CBS). From these statistics we can clearly see that there is inequality in at least the workspace in America. Regardless of how much effort they put in, they are simply not treated the same as white males. This is clearly unjust because why should white men be treated more generously than others even if they don’t work as hard. As it stands now, women and blacks do not have the same opportunities as white men, and even though there have been marginal improvements in this area throughout history, ultimately it cannot be said that America is living up to this core value.

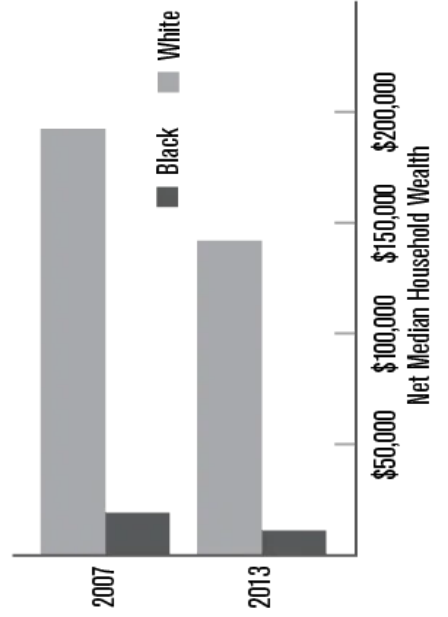
All in all, America is doing a great job at keeping up with its core value of hard work, but there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to achieve America's wish of equality. This is important because these two values are very important throughout the history of America and today. Without the efforts of the men who first established a colony in America, the patriots who fought against Britain, and many others, America would not be where it is today. Of course equality has also played a huge role in the past as well. The lack of equality is one of the reasons for the Civil War and even after that and all the major efforts America has made towards inequality, it is still prevalent to this day. Although America is living up to its core value of hard-work, there is still a lot of improvement that can be to live up to its value of equality and the only way to that is for each individual person in America to open their eyes and see that we are all the same and should be treated the same. Only then can we achieve true equality in America.

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FIGURE 3.2 BLACK WEALTH BARELY EXISTS



Source: Pew Research Center, analysis of Federal Reserve's Survey of Consumer Finances.

