

**ELLOS NO SON SUFICIENTES: A DESMISTIFICAÇÃO DO MITO DO SELF-MADE MAN NO CONTO DE DANI FERNANDEZ “NO ES SUFICIENTE” (2019)**

*ELLOS NO SON SUFICIENTES: THE DEMYSTIFICATION OF THE SELF-MADE MAN MYTH IN DANI FERNANDEZ’S “NO ES SUFICIENTE” (2019)*

Alice Laurentino<sup>1</sup>

Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas da Universidade Nova de Lisboa

**Resumo:** *The Good Immigrant: 26 Writers Reflect on America* (2019) é um livro composto por ensaios de diferentes autores sobre as suas próprias experiências enquanto imigrantes de primeira ou segunda geração nos Estados Unidos da América. Tendo em conta o facto de ter sido publicado durante a administração de Donald Trump, um período em que os direitos dos imigrantes estavam a ser ameaçados, esta obra apresenta um testemunho cru das suas vidas. O conto autobiográfico de Dani Fernandez, "No es Suficiente", é um desses testemunhos e o principal objeto de análise deste ensaio. Considerando a mentalidade norte-americana que estabelece o país como um lugar de oportunidades para todos e a promessa de condições iguais para qualquer indivíduo, independentemente da sua origem, o relato de Fernandez é uma contranarrativa desta crença (inter)nacional. Levanta sobretudo questões sobre a viabilidade e a veracidade de mitos como o do *self-made man*. Como tal, este artigo pretende analisar estas questões através da exploração dos tópicos da Educação, Estereótipos e Linguagem para a desconstrução deste mito tal como é percecionado pelos imigrantes.

**Palavras-chave:** Imigrantes; Mito do *self-made man*; Identidade; Alteridade; Representação

**Abstract:** *The Good Immigrant: 26 Writers Reflect on America* (2019) is a book composed of different authors' essays regarding their own experiences as first- or second-generation immigrants in the United States of America. Given the fact that it was published during Donald Trump's administration, a period in which immigrants' rights were being threatened, this work poses a raw testimony of their lives. Dani Fernandez's short-autobiographical text "No es Suficiente" is one of these testimonies, and the main object of this essay's analysis. Considering the North-American mindset that establishes the country as a place of opportunities for all, and the promise of a leveled playing field for any individual, irrespective of their background, Fernandez's account is a counternarrative to this (inter)national belief. It mainly raises questions regarding the viability and veracity of myths such as the self-made man. As such, this paper aims to shed a light on these questions through the exploration of the topics of Education, Stereotypes and Language for the deconstruction of said myth as perceived by immigrants.

**Keywords:** Immigrants; Self-made man myth; Identity; Otherness; Representation

---

<sup>1</sup> Alice Laurentino is master candidate in Trends in English and North-American Studies at NOVA - School of Social Sciences and Humanities (NOVA/FCSH). She is an integrated researcher at The Centre for English, Translation and Anglo-Portuguese (CETAPS) where she is both researching the Reception of British Culture in Portuguese Press and collaborating in a Project about anglophone travellers in Portugal. Alice Laurentino graduated in Languages, Literatures and Cultures from (NOVA/FCSH), in 2023.

Submetido em 1º de abril de 2026.

Aprovado em 2 de setembro de 2026.

## Introduction

*The Good Immigrant: 26 Writers Reflect on America*, published in 2019, is a book composed of different authors' essays regarding their own experiences as first- or second-generation immigrants. Its title is a reaction to the prevailing narrative that immigrants are never inherently "good" and that this is almost a status that they need to earn (SHUKLA; SULEYMAN, 2019). This book functions as a platform through which they can express their stories with agency, on their own terms (SHUKLA; SULEYMAN, 2019), thus allowing for the demystification of this narrative about immigrants of the United States of America (USA), that was reinforced by the political climate in which this book was published. If this status as a *Good Immigrant* has to be earned, an interesting topic for analysis in this essay would be how the American society constitutes the perfect stage for the (un)success of these immigrants, as it claims it does.

Questions surrounding this idea are commented on by Dani Fernandez in her short-autobiographical text "No es Suficiente". For this reason, it poses a relevant cultural text to the present paper which will direct its focus on Fernandez's narration of moments of her life as a second-generation immigrant<sup>2</sup> from her childhood to adulthood, showcasing the struggles of being a 'non-white'<sup>3</sup> woman in the USA. Even though she did achieve some degree of success in her life, her journey was profoundly marked by hardships deriving mostly from her Mexican heritage. As such, it constitutes the darker side of the American success story, of the popularized 'rags-to-riches' narrative: the self-made man myth.

It is in this sense that this paper aims to understand how her account as a second-generation immigrant demystifies the self-made man myth, calling into question the viability of the foundational myth. To do this, it will, firstly, reflect on the role of

---

<sup>2</sup> In this essay, the definition of this term is as follows: "A person who was born in and is residing in a country that at least one of their parents previously entered as a migrant" (SECOND-GENERATION MIGRANT, [20--], np).

<sup>3</sup> In this case 'non-white' can be perceived as a scientifically incorrect term, hence the usage of apostrophes. This essay, then, will adopt the following conception of 'whiteness': "[...] whiteness has no stable consensual meaning, and has been conceptualized in a number of different yet not mutually exclusive forms. As much as anything, it is a lens through which particular aspects of social relationships can be apprehended." (GARNER, 2007, p. 1).

Education as means for both the upward mobility and the revealing of systemic oppression towards the immigrant demographic; secondly, explore how Stereotypes perpetuated by politics and media mold the experience of an immigrant in the USA and affect their journeys; thirdly, delve into the role of Language both as a tool for immigrants to seek success in the USA and a constraint to their heritage.

### **1. Education: a leveled playing field?**

Originally coined by Henry Clay (1777-1852) in 1832, the term self-made man came to encompass the myth that anyone, through sheer hard work, can achieve whatever they seek, mostly economic prosperity (PEREIRA, 2023), and accomplish the upward mobility. This is deeply connected to the Protestant work-ethic, or the idea that hard work leads to salvation and to success (PROTESTANT ETHIC, [20--], np), almost as if hard work is a Godly duty, whose accomplishment will lead to eternal salvation to the chosen-ones. The myth of the self-made man is often perceived as a path to a better life to immigrant communities who, due to necessity, adhere to this popularized idea of the American Dream that the American society is an equal one, where anyone, no matter their gender, ethnicity, sexuality, or religion, can succeed, particularly economically (PEREIRA, 2023).

An author clearly related to the myth of the self-made man is Horatio Alger who wrote, at the end of the nineteenth century, numerous didactic stories about impoverished boys who precisely achieved wealth and respect through good morals and sheer hard work. Dani Fernandez's narrative can be easily associated with Horatio Alger's idea of America as a classless society where one could go from 'rags-to-riches' by climbing the social ladder. In "No es Suficiente", this upward mobility is initiated via Dani's dedication to school where she excels at English (FERNANDEZ, 2019) despite her family's economic condition ("There were multiple years when my brothers and I shared a single bedroom. One of those years was in my tía Yolanda's house, where my parents, my brothers and I, and my aunt and my uncle all lived together." FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 338). It can be deduced that it is fulfilled when she is able to "turn down a hosting gig," (FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 345), when she has power over her career decisions and is sought after. This is the quintessence of the self-made man myth, something deeply connected with the concept of American Exceptionalism. This term, coined by Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), initially referred to the exceptionality of the American political system, which he considered to be better than the European one (PAUL, 2014). It quickly

broadened to encompass more ideological aspects of the American society, namely its self-proclaimed superiority and sense of election (PAUL, 2014).

However, a society that is made of chosen people is immediately incurring on a contradiction, from the moment it guarantees equality of opportunity to everyone, no matter their condition. In fact, one could argue that it was not hard work as much as it was luck that played a pivotal role in Dani's journey to success: she had the privilege of being sent to a "predominately white private Catholic school" (FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 338). This was uncommon amongst disadvantaged Mexican American students who mostly attended public schools without necessary resources to guarantee them success (HAO; PONG, 2008) in the primary social stage for upward mobility: Education (FRIEDMAN, 2022). In a society that is centered on individualism, which implies that the individual has the right to their freedom as well as the responsibility for tracing their own path independently (LUKES, [2024]), the Government does not necessarily need to intervene and to fund institutions such as Public Schools. This system with minimal Governmental interference belongs to *laissez-faire* capitalism (PEREIRA, 2023) and it is deeply connected with the self-made man myth in the sense that only the strongest of society, the ones with most tools to be accepted and successful, will thrive in this type of system.<sup>4</sup> The establishment of such a society, nonetheless, implies the perpetuation of vicious cycles of poverty and discrimination, or even their aggravation, seeing as there are those, such as second-generation Mexicans, that without Government intervention are always at the risk of downward mobility (HAO; PONG, 2008). Therefore, Dani is also privileged not only in the way in which her parents are able to sacrifice their quality of life for her and her brothers ("my parents couldn't afford" FERNANDEZ, 2019, 338), but also in their perception of the importance of this type of Education for their future insertion in the biased society that is America ("but still felt compelled to send us to. That's how important it was to them." FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 338). Usually, second-generation immigrants who identify themselves as of Hispanic descent are more prone to having lower college expectations, lower self-esteem, and report experiencing greater discrimination than those calling themselves American (PORTES; MACLEOD, 1996). Even Dani herself experienced this in school when she was a victim of bullying due to her Latinx physical attributes<sup>5</sup>: "I would come home almost every single day crying."

---

<sup>4</sup> According to a Social Darwinist perception, in Paul this would be "based on the quasi-natural selection of those fit to compete and succeed in a modern "post-stratificatory society"" (2014, p. 368).

<sup>5</sup> This idea will be further explored in the topic "Stereotypes: a broken social ladder?".

(FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 338), she says, emphasizing this common struggle amongst Mexican American youth. The fact that she persevered suggests that she might have had a strong familial support which, again, is a privilege (HAO; PONG, 2008).

America is known as a land of opportunity, somewhere where everyone, no matter their ethnical, economic and/or social background, have the chance to succeed, namely through the Education system, where one is able to accomplish the upward mobility (FRIEDMAN, 2022). Dani's experience, though, proves otherwise: that it is through privilege and luck that one can make it, since the system is based on the assumption that classes do not exist in the USA when they do clearly exist, otherwise there would not be any differentiation between a private- or a public-school option, for instance. Moreover, the immigrant community is more vulnerable to social exclusion and poverty, with enormous difficulties in accessing Education, proving that the myth of the self-made man fails to live up to its promises and "shrugs off the fact that it is not success and self-making but sheer survival that is at stake for many immigrants in a society that is characterized by gross class inequities" (PAUL, 2014, p. 388). Effectively, these people are confronted with a minefield at every step of the way, inclusively in the spheres for social ascension where they are confronted with their own Otherness.<sup>6</sup> In order to be successful, then, immigrants are forced to expose themselves to a ruthless, judgmental and unjust society, the furthest thing from a leveled playing field for all.

## 2. Stereotypes: a broken social ladder?

The American system is not a leveled playing field from the moment that the people who are responsible for it resort to stereotypes to define immigrants. According to Nayar, stereotypes are "a set of characteristics that are then taken as the 'essential' features of an entire group or community" (2015, p. 140). At its core, stereotyping is a process through which a division is drawn between what is perceived as 'normal' and 'deviant', what is 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' (HALL; EVANS; NIXON, 2013). This inevitably contributes to the construction of the idea of an Other different from an "imagined community" (cf. ANDERSON, B.), typically associated with characteristics such as being uncultured, vile, rude, monstrous, thereby resulting in a symbolic exclusion from said

---

<sup>6</sup> "Alterity [or "Otherness"] is what enables us to distinguish ourselves from the world, to see the world as outside us and our consciousness. Within postcolonial studies the term is deployed to convey the sense of a radical racial-cultural otherness and the *processes* through which this 'otherness' is constructed." (NAYAR, 2015, p. 6-8).

community (HALL; EVANS; NIXON, 2013). Dani herself encounters this prejudice, this (imposed) position as an Other in the American society, when she is called “Shrek” whilst still in school (FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 339), to the point in which she starts perceiving herself as an Other too (“School, specifically, made me hate so much of myself. I developed curves very early on while most of the girls were tiny, white, and blond.” FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 338).

While there were policies such as the Immigration Act of 1965 that led to an increase in the USA’s immigrant population (ANDERSON, K.L., 2021) and had the apparently positive aim of diversifying it (not without its disadvantages<sup>7</sup>), Donald Trump’s Administration (2017-2021) reignited (mis)conceptions about immigrants rooted on a profoundly xenophobic and nationalist discourse (ANDERSON, K. L., 2021). As Trump himself said: “Our borders have been erased, we have no border any longer, drugs, criminals, gang members and terrorists are pouring into our country, they’re running wild and are democrat run cities while Christians and conservators are persecuted.” (AMANPOUR, 2024, 33:11-33:26<sup>8</sup>). Looking back at the History of the USA, White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPS<sup>9</sup>) were seen as the representation of the country.<sup>10</sup> Trump rekindled this foundational mindset, namely by reinforcing the construction of a wall in the frontier between Mexico and the USA (THE DONALD TRUMP..., [20--]) and/or the “Muslin ban”, or the travel-ban policy (THE TRAVEL BAN..., [20--]). These policies on immigration countered the ideas proposed by the aforementioned Act (ABRAMS; ABRAMSON, 2019) in order to privilege the foundational conception of the ‘true American’. Nevertheless, this nationalist discourse is rendered baseless due to recent surveys which revealed that the white population, meaning the WASPS, in the USA declined in favor of the growth of other ethnic groups, such as Hispanics or Latinos<sup>11</sup> (FREY, 2021). As such, Trump’s discourse may also

---

<sup>7</sup> Cf. SAUCEDO (2015) for more details about the disadvantages brought by the Immigration Act of 1965 to Mexican immigrants living in the USA.

<sup>8</sup> Even though this references a speech at the present time, Trump’s words are just a reformulation of his 2016 ideas.

<sup>9</sup> According to Benshoff and Griffin, WASPS are “historically the dominant population group in the United States” (2021, p. 402).

<sup>10</sup> According to Heike Paul “Many scholars have considered the New England Pilgrims and Puritans [a branch of Protestantism] as the ‘first Americans’ in the spirit of what would later develop into the full-fledged notion of American exceptionalism.” (2014, p. 137)

<sup>11</sup> “Hispanic and Latino are increasingly seen as outdated terms to refer to people of Latin American heritage for several reasons. Hispanic is often insulting to many people of Latin American heritage, as it centers the heritage of the colonial powers responsible for the slaughter of Latin America’s 56 million Indigenous people during the largest genocide in history. Latino, on the other hand, refers to everyone from Latin

symbolize taking back control over this population, a show of oppressive power meant to diminish these people, even though they never asked for this confrontation (HALL; EVANS; NIXON, 2013). Typically, power is directly associated with physical coercion or economic exploitation, however, symbolic power can be as harmful, or even more, with practices such as stereotyping playing a pivotal role (HALL; EVANS; NIXON, 2013).

A fundamental tool for the propagation of micro-aggressions towards immigrants is media, a means through which representation of this minority reaches every household, thereby shaping perceptions about these people. By twisting, by exaggerating, by diminishing or eliminating their images, media controls almost invisibly the way people think. Dani, for example, reminisces about the superheroes she admired growing up and about how they were all white (FERNANDEZ, 2019). Even though this does not reference immigrants at all, their absence speaks volumes: heroes, for Dani, were and could only be white (FERNANDEZ, 2019). This silent process of stereotyping infers that being a superhero, having superpowers, is only reserved to white people and that achieving exceptionality is not possible for immigrants.

However, their presence in media also speaks volumes when their images are presented via stereotyped roles who denigrate them. Thinking back to Dani's experience, a colleague of hers reacts to her last name by saying that her dad must be their gardener (FERNANDEZ, 2019). Later in her account, she reflects on an opportunity that she had to play the role of two white men's Mexican maid (FERNANDEZ, 2019), "noting that the one Latina in the script was serving white people." (FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 343). On the one hand, the idea of "serving white people" (FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 343) reignites colonial roles and/or forces a position of a subaltern, that is "the racial, cultural, gendered and ethnic subordinate of the white colonial, the product of colonial hegemonic practices and discourses." (NAYAR, 2015, p. 143). On the other hand, both examples constitute stereotypical images of Mexican immigrants as only working in non-qualified jobs, which perpetuates a reductionist perception of these people's capabilities as a whole (HALL; EVANS; NIXON, 2013). In fact, according to Benshoff and Griffin, in Hollywood many Latinx characters have been treated as racialized stereotypes (2021) ("in a screenwriting class I took in Hollywood. [...] I realized they saw Mexicans only as poor laborers. And that was it." FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 342), reinforcing a vicious cycle of harmful

---

America." (MÉNDEZ, 2023, np). For that reason, this essay will refer to this community as Latinx, a more inclusive term, as Fernandez herself uses.

preconceptions about immigrants and preventing them from obtaining other jobs as easily, because the prejudiced mentality of employers boycotts their efforts. As such, the upward mobility is cut short by stereotypes that media perpetuates and which inevitably infiltrate the American mindset.

Even these immigrants, in their search for the American Dream, succumb to these stereotypes about themselves, a self-inflicted process of ‘Othering’, since they can only be self-made as long as they stereotype their own identities. This is showcased in Dani’s own narrative when she falls into the trap of stereotyping Mexican immigrants, as exemplified by the following passage:

The first year I did stand-up, I told jokes about all this stuff, about not being Mexican enough to white people. This set of jokes normally got a ton of laughs, mainly from white people. And when I was new in Hollywood, I thought, This is good. People are laughing! But they weren’t laughing with me. And I noticed sometimes when I would do this routine, some of the Latinx people in the audience weren’t laughing at all. (FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 340)

The myth of the self-made immigrant is deconstructed in this passage as it poses questions regarding its credibility: Dani is in Hollywood, the epitome of the American Dream, apparently well-established on the social ladder, however, her rise to the top is at the expense of her own community, who is the target in her gigs. Even though she does not do it on purpose, it is something she adheres to because of systemic faults in which she is unconsciously involved. It is when she makes a joke about Mexicans and no Latinx people laugh that she realizes that she has not created the spectacle, but rather she is the spectacle; Latinx people are the spectacle who allow Dani to reach success. The self-made man myth is accomplished, thus, when immigrants have assimilated the American mindset, which Dani herself embodies when she capitalizes on her own community.

But she is not to blame. The Hollywood industry where she stands, which can be considered a microcosm of American society (cf. CHRISTENSEN, 2014), is where representation reaches more people. However, as Dani herself points, representation of Latinx people is still “5.8 percent of all speaking roles in television and film” (FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 343), a derisory percentage having in mind the sizeable population of Latinx in the USA, as mentioned previously. The problem lies not only in the amount of representation, but also on the representation itself – linguistically, this term refers to the usage of language and signs to present an empirical reality; according to critical theory, this term also represents the construction of the subject as it forms identities within discourses (NAYAR, 2015). And, in Hollywood, this is mostly done via stereotypes that target not just immigrants’ capabilities, but their heritage as well, or, like

Dani says, “what they think a Latinx person is” (FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 341). This conception of what a Latinx is is a complete construct, because every single one of them has their own characteristics; Latin America is not even a country identified by a specific culture or even a specific national heritage. In Hollywood, if someone does not correspond to these “symbolic categories” (PORTES; MACLEOD, 1996, p. 528) created by the power structures, or these stereotypes that have come to define in this industry their identity (“‘No, just act more Latina.’ Which likely to him meant being loud and having an attitude and a quick temper.” FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 340), they are not enough, *ellos no son suficientes*.

To make it as a self-made immigrant, then, one has to fit into a specific box of stereotypes fed by media, otherwise they will be outcasted. Being different from these stereotypes would essentially be a threat to these power structures that weaponize the stereotyping of immigrants, in the form of apparent diversity, which is meant to control their images and perpetuate a vicious cycle of oppression.

In Dani’s narrative this weaponizing reaches an extreme when white people, who believe that Latinx immigrants are ‘job stealers’, ‘cosplay’ as Latinx themselves in order to guarantee, they think, an acting job. To do this they change their identities according to stereotypes they believe to be accurate:

‘Just the fact that your name is Rosa Ramirez is gonna get you a meeting...So you might try it...Go to the head-shot shop and tell them you’re Latin. Wear something fucking red. Wear some fucking sparkly earrings. Change your goddamned name, and let’s just do an experiment.’

That’s what white people think our culture is. Just some hat to try on! And if it doesn’t work, they can toss it and try on another. (FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 344)

Even the slightest opportunity for success is robbed from immigrants by people who colonize their spaces and the few roles they are allowed to play. Unlike immigrants who have no choice but to succumb to this, white people such as the ones mentioned in the quote above, are able to pick and choose the ethnicity that is most convenient to them at the time, almost as if identity is just “a hat you can try on” (FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 344).

In a way, the myth of the self-made man parallels this idea, since in their upward mobility immigrants are always fighting for places which can be taken from them at any time by white people, who are generally benefitted and do not carry the weight of prejudice the same way Latinx do. This makes Latinx peoples’ journey infinitely harder to navigate; it makes Latinx people’s social ladder way harder to climb.

### 3. Language: a Key to Success or a Lock to Identity?

It is not just stereotyping that difficult immigrants' journeys. Language too is an important "symbolic category" (PORTES; MACLEOD, 1996, p. 528). Immigrants in the USA live in a constant limbo, as they have to reject or reinvent their inherited identities in order to fit in a society that will never accept them fully, irrespective of their efforts. Latinx, for instance, feel compelled to adopt English as a second language, since they believe that language is a vehicle for their success (Pew apud CAMPBELL; KEAN, 2016). In fact, what attracts Mexican immigrants to the United States is the apparent possibility of prosperity and a better life (HISPANIC AMERICANS..., [2024]), that is, the American Dream, being the language an obstacle that they need to overcome in order to reach it. To reach it one has to be a true self-made man and work hard to learn English.

To a certain extent these ideas can be proved by Dani's own father who, despite having learned English, still had to make sure to not have any remnants of Spanish when he spoke with clients: "People say my father sounds white. I always figured that helped him close business deals on the phone. I would watch as my father slipped back into his Mexican accent around his family and then bounced over to sounding "white" around his business colleagues." (FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 335). This need of "sounding white" (FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 335) highlights the idea that the self-made man myth belongs only to white people, thus forcing immigrants to adapt as well as they can in order to achieve success. And it is probably having this in mind that Dani's parents did not teach her nor her brothers Spanish while growing up (FERNANDEZ, 2019), so that, on the one hand, they would not carry the burden of living in this limbo and, on the other hand, they would have an easier future and a possibility of upward mobility.

According to Portes and MacLeod, in this second-generation of immigrants, the clash of new and traditional ethnic labels is even more evident (1996). Children of immigrants in the United States, like Dani, grapple with mainstream influences, lacking contact with their parents' cultural heritage ("Throughout the house, I would often sing the songs my father played, without ever fully knowing what they meant." FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 337). Hence, acquisition and familiarity with the American culture and language play a crucial role in shaping second-generation immigrants' identities, even more so due to the limited impact of their parental language (PORTES; MACLEOD, 1996). The reasons why these people have to opt, even if passively, for one cultural code is one of the main questions explored by Dani on her narrative.

In the American context, the Spanish language, despite being widely spoken by the USA population, can still be perceived as a marginalized language. The American

social pressure for linguistic unity, where English takes primacy over this marginalized language, can be seen as a form of cultural imperialism. Therefore, following Nayar's concept, cultural imperialism, in this context, aligns with the assertion that a singular language, in this case English, will dominate to promote a unified national identity (2015). Within this vision, then, this identity becomes a privilege associated with a particular cultural and linguistic norm, excluding anyone who does not adhere to it. This in itself demystifies the self-made man myth and the American idea that anyone can make it. The struggle between languages becomes a manifestation of power dynamics, where English represents the language of conquest and standardization, suppressing the rich linguistic diversity of ethnic communities (NAYAR, 2015).

In this sense, the American society is both a system that offers the prospect of a better life and the continuous oppression of an ethnic group, and simultaneously a manipulative form of imperial power. As well as with stereotypes, language reinforces controlling images of immigrants who “speak broken English. Which we know to them means uneducated.” (FERNANDEZ, 2019, p. 342), aggravating the dichotomy between an American-Self and an Immigrant-Other, the consequences of which have already been discussed in previous topics.

Adhering to these “oppressor's language” (HOOKS, 1994, p. 168) entails the strengthening of power structures, which paradoxically constitute the only viable option for these people if they do not want to risk downward mobility or be excluded from society. The self-made man myth is just another narrative that feeds from and feeds into this struggle. The steps towards achieving success are completely dominated by this American mindset and language may be one of these steps, but it represents the conundrum between maintaining one's identity or becoming a self-made man, which is not a blank canvas on which anyone, no matter their gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, and language, can imprint their own story.

## Conclusion

*The Good Immigrant: 26 Writers Reflect on America* weaponizes the nationalist and/or Trumpist ideas that the only worthy immigrants are the ones who contribute to the American society and allow themselves to be objectified. As mentioned before, this book is published during Trump's Administration, in 2019, being already of extreme relevance at this time for its representation. Today, in 2024, this relevance resurfaces in the face of

the probable reelection of Trump who, with it, would likely bring back policies against immigration and discourses of hatred and bigotry towards immigrants.

In this context, Dani Fernandez's narrative acquires a new importance. As she recounts her experiences as a second-generation immigrant, she explores the prejudice that Mexican Americans face in school, their very first contact with other social circles; she discusses how stereotypes are one of the most harmful forms of aggression towards immigrants; she analyzes the importance of language for one's cultural identity, but also as a highly powerful force of oppression and colonization. She navigates these issues in a very factual, almost journalistic way, possibly trying to eliminate any kind of ambiguities that could lead to misreads or misinterpretations. By doing this, Dani Fernandez is perhaps guaranteeing that speeches of hatred do not permeate empty spaces and shape her narrative, like these usually do when establishing a relationship of Alterity between her and white people. She is, then, ensuring as well that her agency as a Mexican American remains intact.

And returning to the initial research question of this essay, – in what way does Dani Fernandez demystify the self-made man myth in her account of her life as a second-generation immigrant – through the aforementioned topics, Dani Fernandez explains how this myth is directed towards white people. For immigrants, trying to follow this same idea means distancing themselves from who they are and moving closer to whiteness. Even then they are always at a risk of downward mobility. Immigrants' experiences in America are an every-day example of how this myth does not work the way it promises: simply by existing, these people are fighting enemies or hardships bigger than white people would ever have to encounter, with a society that antagonizes them, instrumentalizes them and does not provide them with the necessary conditions to have the same opportunities as everyone else.

The title of Dani Fernandez's narrative – “No es suficiente” – precisely problematizes these issues. The title could be reclaiming Fernandez's Mexicanness through the language that had been taken away from her for social reasons and creates a space of discourse that just belongs to her and Latinx people, a space that is not infiltrated by English, the colonizer's language. The title could also be referring to the fact that, while being an immigrant, one will never be enough, because of their imposed position as an Other in the American society. Additionally, it may hint at a generalized flaw in the American Dream: that the individual is never really enough on their own to be truly self-made.

## References

- ABRAMS, A.; ABRAMSON, A. Trump's Immigration Plan Won't Pass Congress. But It Could Be the Future of the GOP. *Time*, 16 maio 2019. Disponível em: <https://time.com/5590730/trump-immigration-plan-congress/>. Acesso em: 7 jan. 2024.
- AMANPOUR: Freed Israeli Hostage Speaks Out. [Anfitriã]: Cristiane Amanpour. CNN, 05 jan. 2024. Podcast. Disponível em: <https://edition.cnn.com/audio/podcasts/amanpour/episodes/8aa00328-8e21-11ee-b7ec-9f72e3e9d83b>. Acesso em: 09 jan. 2024.
- ANDERSON, B. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Londres: Verso, 1991.
- ANDERSON, K. L. *Immigration in American History*. Londres: Routledge, 2021.
- BENSHOFF, H. M.; GRIFFIN, S. *America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality at the Movies*. 3ª edição. Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2021.
- CAMPBELL, N.; KEAN, A. *American Cultural Studies: An Introduction to American Culture*. 4ª edição. Londres: Routledge, 2016.
- CHRISTENSEN, D L. *The Hollywood Dream: A Nightmare in American Literature*. 2014. Dissertação (Programa de Mestrado em Artes em Inglês) – California State University, Chico, 2014. Disponível em: <https://scholarworks.calstate.edu/downloads/hx11xf73g>. Acesso em: 10 de jan. 2024.
- FERNANDEZ, D. No es suficiente. In: SHUKLA, N.; SULEYMAN, C. (Eds.). *The good immigrant: 26 writers reflect on America*. Nova-Iorque: Little, Brown and Company, 2019.
- FREY, W. H. What the 2020 census will reveal about America: Stagnating growth, and aging population, and youthful diversity. *Brookings*, 11 jan. 2021. Disponível em: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/what-the-2020-census-will-reveal-about-america-stagnating-growth-an-aging-population-and-youthful-diversity/>. Acesso em: 10 jan. 2024.
- FRIEDMAN, J. N. School is for social mobility. *The New York Times*, 01 set. 2022, Disponível em: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/01/opinion/us-school-social-mobility.html>. Acesso em: 10 jan. 2024.
- GARNER, S. *Whiteness: an introduction*. Londres: Routledge, 2007.
- HALL, S.; EVANS, J.; NIXON, S. (Eds.). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices (Culture, Media and Identities Series)*. 2ª edição. The Open University & Sage, 2013.
- HAO, L.; PONG, S. L. The Role of School in the Upward Mobility of Disadvantaged Immigrants' Children. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social*

Science. Vol. 620, p. 62-89, 2008. Disponível em: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4239705/>. Acesso em: 10 jan. 2024.

HISPANIC AMERICANS. In: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 01 abr. 2024. Disponível em: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hispanic-American>. Acesso em: 01 abr. 2024.

HOOKS, b. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Londres: Routledge, 1994.

LUKES, S. M. Individualism. In: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 01 mar. 2024. Disponível em: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/individualism>. Acesso em: 10 Janauary 2024.

MÉNDEZ, L. A Brief Explainer on Latine and Latinx. *Hispanic Executive*, 05 jun. 2023. Disponível em: <https://hispanicexecutive.com/latinx-latine-explainer/>. Acesso em: 05 jan. 2024.

NAYAR, P. K. *The Postcolonial Studies Dictionary*. Hoboken: Willey-Blackwell, 2015.

PAUL, H. *The Myths That Made America: An Introduction to American Studies*. Bielefeld: Verlag, 2014.

PEREIRA, T. (Un)Making It in Rapture: The Critique of the Myth of the Self-Made Man, of Ayn Rand, and of Objectivism in BioShock (2007) and in BioShock: Rapture (2011). *Via Panoramica: Revista De Estudos Anglo-Americanos / A Journal of Anglo-American Studies*. Vol. 12, N. 1, p. 138-158, 2023. Disponível em: <https://ojs.letras.up.pt/index.php/VP/article/view/13310>. Acesso em: 01 dez. 2023.

PORTES, A.; MACLEOD, D. What shall I call myself? Hispanic identity formation in the second generation. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Vol. 19, N. 3, p. 523–547, 1996. Disponível em: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.1996.9993923>. Acesso em: 05 de jan. 2024.

PROTESTANT ETHIC. In: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, [20--]. Disponível em: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Protestant-ethic>. Acesso em: 01 abr. 2024.

SAUCEDO, L. M. The Impact of 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act on the Evolution of Temporary Guest Worker Programs, or How the 1965 Act Punted on Creating a Rightful Place for Mexican Worker Migration. In: CHIN, G. J.; Villazor, R. C. (Eds.). *The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965: Legislating a New America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

SECOND-GENERATION MIGRANT. *Migration and Home Affairs*. [20--]. Disponível em: [home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/second-generation-migrant\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/second-generation-migrant_en). Acesso em: 04 jan. 2024.

SHUKLA, N.; SULEYMAN, C. Editor's Note. In: SHUKLA, N.; SULEYMAN, C. (Eds.). *The good immigrant: 26 writers reflect on America*. Nova-Iorque: Little, Brown and Company, 2019.

THE DONALD TRUMP administration. In: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, [20--]. Disponível em: <https://www.britannica.com/place/United-States/The-Donald-Trump-administration>. Acesso em: 01 abr. 2024.

THE TRAVEL BAN. In: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, [20--] Disponível em: <https://www.britannica.com/place/United-States/The-travel-ban>. Acesso em: 01 abr. 2024.