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The American Dream as *el Sueño Americano:* Lost in Translation?

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Give me your tired, your poor,
your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.
The wretched refuse of your teaming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

The Great Colossus
a poem by Emma Lazarus
engraved in the plaque of the Statue of Liberty

A Myth Long Gone?

If there has ever been a Promised Land on this Earth then for many, undoubtedly, it has been America. For the dozens of millions of settlers, refugees, and immigrants who since the foundation of the first colonies have been storming its shores regardless of the often formidable obstacles and hardships they were to face – from the sheer costs and life-hazards of the journey to the permanent loss of family ties – the land must have always been, apparently, a promise worthy of such sacrifices. And a promise it was – of a life in a society that always prided itself on being the very embodiment of meritocracy, in which people could feel free from the fear of political and religious persecutions and unbound by the constraints of aristocratic and caste systems. A promise of economic opportunities offered to them freely by a scarcely inhabited continent where lands were cheap and the soils fertile. A promise of a dream-come-true waiting for all those who would only venture and dare to reach for it; or so the popular myth has it. A myth, because now, at the dawn of the 21st century, much of what used to constitute the context in which the American Dream could proliferate already belongs in the museum.

First to go were the sacrifices. An unprecedented amount of Americans-to-be can now afford a fairly safe, short, and comfortable journey even from the farthest corners of the world. Severing ties with their homelands and the families they leave behind has practically become a non-factor in the times of instant and cheap Internet communication, affordable shuttling or even – as in the case of the overwhelming majority of illegal immigrants today,

Mexicans – just waddling across the shallow border river of Rio Grande. Even the attitudes of immigrants' homeland governments, often hostile in the past, have radically changed for the better. The Mexican émigrés, for instance, used to be looked down upon as traitors and renegades and derogatorily called *pachucos* or *pochos,* which literally means the fruit that has fallen from the tree and become rotten (Ureta). Since the late 1980s that attitude has transformed dramatically. The President of Mexico Vincente Fox described himself recently as the president of 123 million Mexicans – the 100 million in Mexico and the 23 million in the USA – embracing thus also US-born Mexican-Americans (Huntington 270). Consequently, for the hundreds of thousands of Mexicans and other Latin Americans pouring into the USA every year emigration no longer means burning all their bridges behind them, as it does not for a vast majority of immigrants from other corners of the world.

Most importantly for the (de)construction of the American Dream, however, also the promises that used to feed immigrants' imaginations seem to have lost much of their appeal. First to explode, already in the 19th century, was the myth of the largely vacant and cheap land. With the frontier long gone and hundreds of millions of Americans already there, the continent could no longer lure those craving for their own pieces of land, not to mention that in the post-industrial world of today mere landownership no longer constitutes a springboard for success. Furthermore, as an ever larger part of the world can now boast democratic governments (in 2003, of the 192 governments, 117 or 61% were considered to be electoral democracies, among them), political or religious persecution can hardly be quoted as a major motivation for migration, especially as in the case of the traditional source of immigrants to America, Europe, all of its 25 countries are considered today free and democratic (Karatnycky 3). Also aristocratic or caste societies in which vertical movements would be severely crippled are almost all long gone (except for India, Pakistan and some other countries in the region) and those driven by their desire to climb up the social ladder no longer feel they have to free themselves from cultural or political constrains of their own societies. Not to mention that the American society can no longer pride itself on being truly meritocratic – the past decades have witnessed growing inequality and diminishing vertical mobility up the social ladder (Special Report: Meritocracy). Only between 1979 and 2000 the real income of households in the lowest fifth grew by 6.4%, while that of households in the top fifth grew by as much as 70% (Mishel 2). Finally, also the importance of the ideological factor of the American Dream has been drastically downgraded. "Whether the enemy was German 'Kaiserism' in World War I, Japanese regimentation in World War II, or Russian collectivist

communism in the Cold War, a central component of the American definition of the adversary had to do with the enemy's embodiment of anti-individualist values" (Kennedy 355).

The end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union deprived the USA of its chief political and military enemy, though. As a result, "democracy was left without a significant secular ideological rival," which Islamist integration could only partially substitute in the post 9/11 reality because it does not aim at converting Western societies to its doctrines but at their annihilation instead (Huntington 262).

Does it mean that the American Dream is all but a myth long gone and that it belongs in history books, as some have already hastened to proclaim? Not necessarily so. The American Dream as it used to be known – or defined – may be slowly fading into oblivion but as long as the United States remains the most popular destination for immigrants and refugees whose streams do not betray the slightest inclination to cease some form of the Dream about life in America must be still holding a broad appeal. According to a UN *International Migration Report 2002*, only in the decade between 1990 and 2000 the number of immigrants in America, which absorbed 1.4 million of them per annum, grew by 13 million or 48%, making it thus the country with both the largest gains per year and the largest number of migrants in the world (35 million) (47) (Fig. 1).

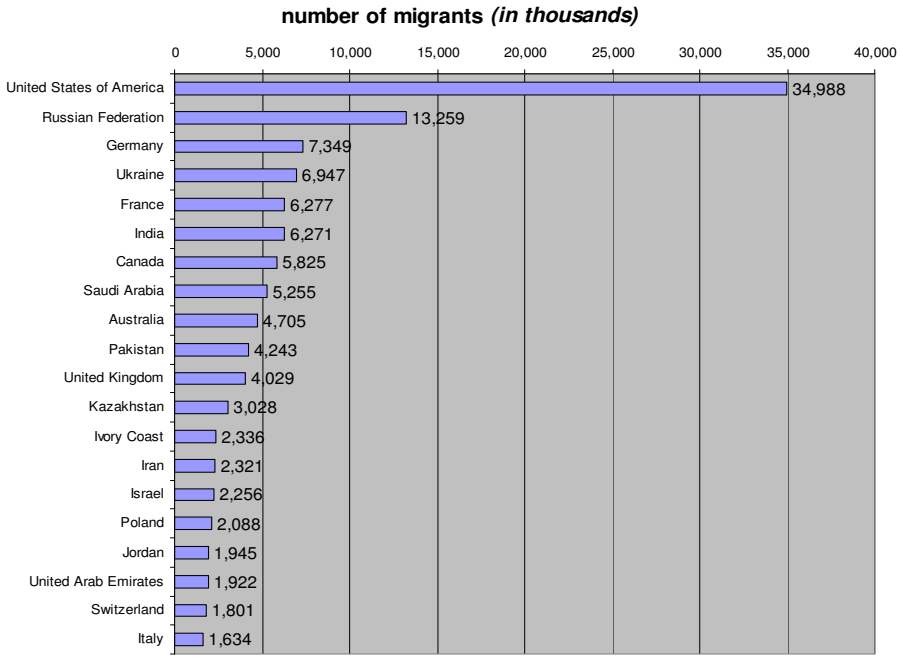

Fig. 1. Number of Migrants, in United Nations *International Migration Report 2002,* Figure I.

Since in a significant part it is immigrants who give substance to the American Dream – one must be, after all, dreaming the Dream, and not just be born into it, in order to give it its true essence – the question that should be asked is not whether it still exists but what is its contemporary construction. And that it may hardly resemble the traditional model is evident.

Until recently, identifying the immigrants' Dream with that of native-born Americans' could have been easily justified, given the common cultural factor. Until late 1960s a significant proportion of newcomers had consisted of Europeans who mostly shared their roots with the overwhelmingly Anglo-Protestant Americans. The principal five countries of origin for 9,738,091 foreign-born Americans in 1960 were Italy (1,256,999), Germany (989,815), Canada (952,500), United Kingdom (833,055), and Poland (747,750) (Gibson 34). The following decades, however, saw the emergence of new sources of immigration that today define, practically by themselves, the immigration patterns of the USA – Latin America and, to a much lesser extent, Asia (see Fig. 2).

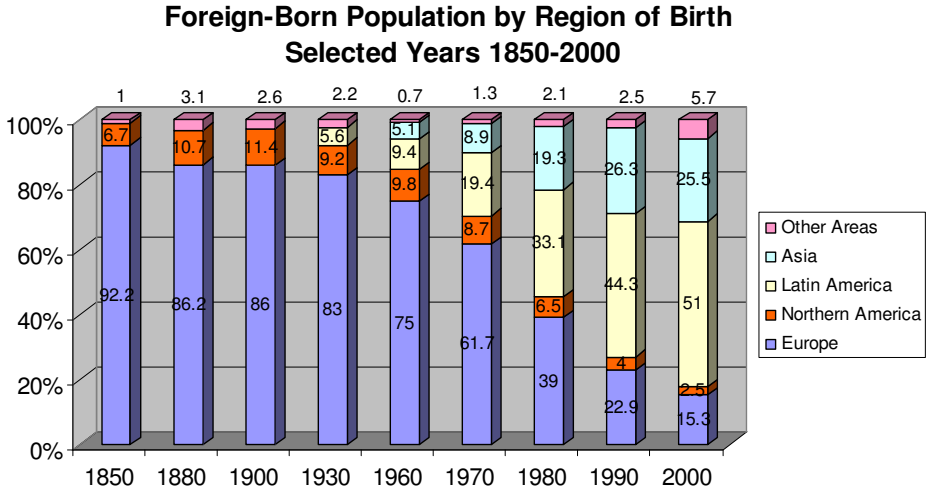

Fig. 2. Foreign-Born Population by Region of Birth. in US Census Bureau, 2001, Table 1-1.

Furthermore, since the 1970s it has been immigration rather than natural growth that has constituted the largest source of Hispanic population increase and it is the foreign-born, or first generation Hispanics who have become the single most numerous ethnic group in the USA. Consequently, many have expressed deep concern about the future of the core values that define not only the American society but partly also the Western civilization and which find their expression in the aspirations of the hundreds of

thousands of alien immigrants entering the USA every year. In his latest book, *Who Are We?*, Samuel Huntington points out three factors that strongly enhance the ongoing deconstruction of the American Creed.

First, as already mentioned, is the loss of a major ideological unifying element – the existence of an 'other' that can be clearly defined as the enemy of the American system of values and that has always functioned as a coalescent aid for the largely diverse American society. Along with the collapse of the Soviet empire the most recent and only 'other' disappeared. Second, it is the emergence of the multicultural approach in the 1960s in the USA and the resulting trend among American political and academic elites to describe the traditional efforts at Americanization and acculturation in largely derogatory terms, which has significantly weakened the desire of foreign-born immigrants to renounce their cultural heritage and identify with the mainstream American culture (Waltzer). Third, it is the unprecedented influx of a single non-English speaking ethnic group whose integrity, only enhanced by the new religion of multiculturalism, resulted for the first time in history in a real threat to one of critical unifying factors – single common language. 1950 was "the perceived zenith of American national integration. [Ever since] cultural and political fragmentation has increased [and] conflict emanating from intensified ethnic and religious consciousness poses the main current challenge to American national myth" (Citrin 3). And for the last decades Spanish has been successfully challenging English as a language of everyday communication between Hispanics and Americans of other ethnic groups (Huntington 17).

The existence of this "American national myth" is crucial for the (re)definition of the American Dream. To Huntington, without this vital unifying element 'the American people', consisting in an ever larger proportion of foreign-born immigrants from all over the world, would inevitably fall victim of "social polarization, cultural conflict, decline in trust and community, and erosion of traditional concepts of national identity" that would transform the USA into some kind of a United Nations of America (180). In such a scenario also the American Dream would be doomed to perish because it could not exist without an 'American' America where the otherwise multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural society could be united by sharing one and the same vision of their lives. In the words of Josef Joffe reflecting on his country's own problems with immigration from one country alone: "People [once] came to America because they wanted to become Americans. The Turks do not come to Germany because they want to become Germans" (Joffe 191).

It is thus crucial to ascertain whether Hispanics – the single largest, youngest, fastest-growing, and ethnically homogenous minority – can be still said to dream about becoming Americans; whether they recognize the existence of the American Dream, are willing to participate in it and identify themselves with the other Dreamers in America or whether they consciously reject the idea of Americanization, the American Creed and, by extension, the American Dream. In other words, whether there still exists anything in the like of *el Sueño Americano*.

The Self-Identification Factor

In a survey carried out in 1990 a considerable sample of the American public was convinced that Hispanics had consciously chosen to remain outsiders and viewed this ethnic minority as less patriotic than Jews, African-Americans, Asians, or southern whites (Ethnic Survey). Many social scientists and analysts of the Latino group shared that perception. The "strong resistance to acculturation among Spanish-speaking residents," Morris Janowitz argued as early as 1983, was bound to create "a bifurcation in the social-political structure of the United States that approximates nationality divisions" (128-137). A decade later Graham Fuller warned against the same peril, describing the Hispanics neighborhood as "an ethnic area and grouping so concentrated that it will not wish, or need, to undergo assimilation into the mainstream of American multi-ethnic English-speaking life" (Fuller 22). Today Huntington offers even a grimmer vision:

> Mexican immigration is leading towards the demographic reconquista [...] blurring the border between Mexico and America, introducing a very different culture, while also promoting the emergence [...] of blended society and culture [...] advancing Hispanization throughout America and social linguistic, and economic practices appropriate for an Anglo-Hispanic society. (222)

Some statistical evidence, however, suggests a somewhat greater degree of identification with the American Way and a higher level of optimism about achieving the American Dream among Hispanics than it would seem from the reading of the Cassandras. According to the 1990-1991 World Values Survey, 95% of Hispanics living in the USA were very proud or quite proud of their country (Morris 38). A higher percentage of Hispanic parents (92) than whites (91) or blacks (84) strongly or somewhat agreed in 1998 that "the U.S. is a better country than most other countries in the world" (Farkas 35). And even though a vast majority of Latinos (93%) say that it is very (66%) or somewhat (27%) important for them to maintain their distinct cultures

Hispanics do recognize, however, that being successful and prosperous in the USA requires assimilation (Fig. 3).

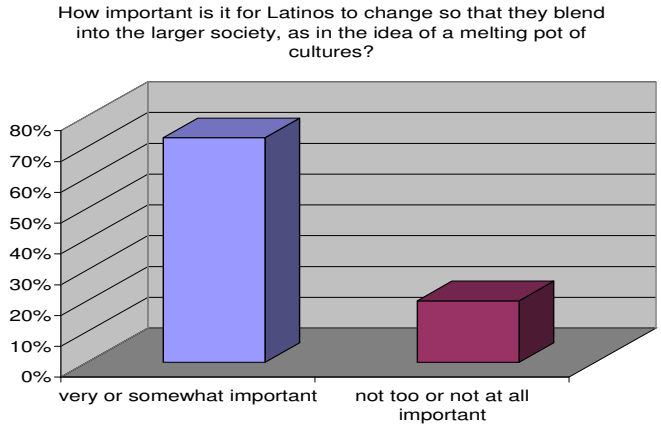

Fig. 3. Importance of Assimilation. Author's calculations on the basis of Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation National Survey of Latinos: Education, January 2004 (conducted August –October 2003)

Since identification with the mainstream Anglo-Protestant (white) culture can be regarded as an indicator of the level of acculturation and assimilation, another important aspect is the percentage of Hispanics who identify themselves as white rather than as any other race. Here again the findings of the 2000 Census do not justify too high a level of pessimism – the percentage of those who opted for American Indian, Asian, and Pacific Islander categories were all small fractions and Blacks amounted to a mere 2%. Interestingly, practically the whole population of Hispanics in America is almost evenly split between Hispanics who see themselves as white (48%) and those who have chosen "some other race" (SOR) (42%) (Census 2000 Redistricting, Tables PL1-4).

Since "race is a measure of belonging, and whiteness is a measure of inclusion," Hispanics who see themselves as white have distinctly different characteristics than those who say they are some other race (Tafoya 3). The findings of the Pew Hispanic Center demonstrate that Hispanics identifying themselves as white display more evidence of assimilation and identification with the mainstream American culture – they have generally acquired higher levels of education and income and reached greater degrees of civic enfranchisement: "Whiteness is clearly and consistently associated with higher social status, higher levels of civic participation, and a stronger sense of acceptance" (3). Such conclusions are also corroborated by the fact that when faced with the choice between the terms "American," "Hispanic or Latino," or a single national origin identifier, such as "Mexican," over a half

native-born Latinos who identify themselves as white chose "American" (55%), while only 36% of those who see themselves as "some other race" did so (7). In the words of one Cuban American:

> The white always has the highest social prestige and the darker skin always have the lower social prestige, because you have some very dark skinned people who earn a lot of money, and you tell them you're dark skinned…oh, no, I'm white. One thing has nothing to do with the other. (10)

It can be also concluded that self-identification as 'white' is not only an indicator of the level of Hispanics' identification with the American mainstream culture but also of their chances of achieving the American Dream. "SOR Hispanics are less educated, less likely to be citizens, poorer, less likely to speak English exclusively and are less often intermarried with non-Hispanic whites" (7) (Fig. 4).

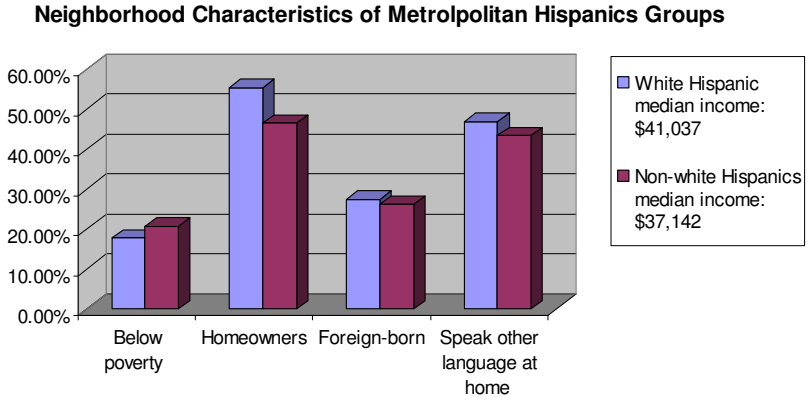

Fig. 4. Neighborhood Characteristics of Metropolitan Hispanics Groups. Author's calculations based on John R. Logan Lewis, *How Race Counts for Hispanic Americans,* Mumford Center University at Albany, 2003.

Also the degree to which the subsequent generations identify with America as their own country as well ads their view of the United States are directly related to their self-identification as white. When asked to compare their countries of origin with the United States, both white and SOR Hispanics believe that the United States offers more opportunities to succeed and that treatment of the poor is much better. While initially both groups overwhelmingly identify with their country of origin rather than with the USA – over two thirds of first-generation Hispanics says so, in the case of the third generation the level of identification with the USA as their country rises significantly – from less than one third to 68% and 51% for white and SOR Hispanics respectively, even though it temporarily drops to 29% in the case of the second-generation SORs (13) (Fig. 5).

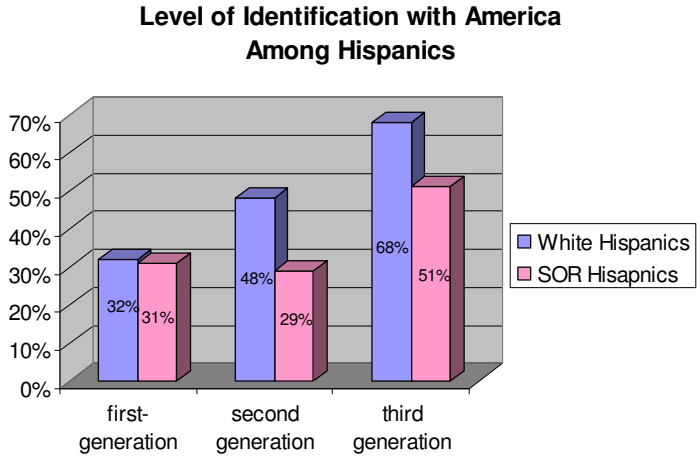

Fig. 5. Level of Identification with America Among Hispanics. Author's calculations based on data from Sonya Tafoya, *Shades of belonging,* Pew Hispanic Center Report, December 2004.

Finally, also a large number of Latinos express confidence in what has always defined America as the epitome of democracy – its political institutions. Asked whether they believe that citizens can have an influence at all levels of government by voting and engaging in other political activities, a substantial majority of Hispanics (73%), especially those registered to vote (81%), answered affirmatively (National Survey of Latinos, Chart 42). Moreover, when asked what an immigrant has to do to say they are a part of American society they overwhelmingly cited issues concerning self-identification as Americans rather than their legal status: almost four-fifths (79%) chose the belief in the US Constitution over simply being a US citizen (54%) (Chart 43).

Conclusions coming from the above data do not corroborate the supposition that as a consequence of Hispanics' exceptional situation in the USA – resulting, among others, from the territorial contiguity of the USA and Mexico, their illegality, regional concentration, historical presence in the region, adherence to their Latin ethnicity, and persistence of their influx – they have consciously chosen to opt out of the mainstream American society and to reject its values *a priori*. However, while such a rejection on part of Hispanics would practically exclude the possibility of their embracing the American Dream, its absence does not yet automatically prove that they do.

Hispanics and the American Dream in the Abstract

Equal opportunity has always been a key ingredient of the American Dream and for many it still is. According to one 'American Dream' survey carried out in 2004, 62% of Americans believe it is achievable for all or most of Americans and even a higher number believe they themselves have achieved the Dream (63%). Predictably, whites constitute the single biggest racial group to believe the former (64%), but they are fairly closely followed by Hispanics (59%), who are significantly more optimistic than African-Americans (47%). Moreover, among those who strongly believe that obtaining the American Dream has actually become more difficult for the average American, Hispanics make up the smallest ethnic group – 38% of them project strong pessimism, compared to 40% of whites and as much as 50% of African-Americans (The American Dream in 2004 34).

The same racial pattern transpires from the answers to the survey's questions about the distribution of money in the country. 74% of African-Americans are more likely to say that it is unfair than whites and Hispanics (59% for both). As much as one-third of Americans (34%) feel rejected and hence excluded from the American Dream. Contrary, however, to what is usually claimed by the leaders of Hispanic civil rights organizations and scholars and analysts alike, Hispanics do not constitute the single biggest group contributing to that number. It is again mostly African-Americans (53%) who say they are not living the American Dream, compared to 36% percent of Hispanics, who are themselves closely followed by whites (32%). Moreover, among the Hispanic-Americans who say they are not currently living the American Dream confidence runs high that the Dream still is achievable (66%), in which they are slightly more optimistic than African-Americans (63%) and considerably more so than whites (49%) (35).

For the alleged 'outcasts of society' the level of optimism among Latinos seems exceptionally high. The American Dream, at least from their own subjective perspective, seems fairly achievable, very often much more than to the supposedly more assimilated African-Americans and sometimes even more than to those who created the Dream themselves – whites.

Reality Bites

Positive as Hispanics may be about their achieving the American Dream, statistical data do not seem to justify such a level of optimism, though. The median net worth of Hispanic households in 2002 was $7,932, or less than one tenth of $88,651, which was the median wealth of white households at that time – a rise of 12% and 14% respectively since 1996 (Kochhar "The Wealth" 2). Not surprisingly, since Hispanics, and especially the largest single national group – Mexicans, have the highest poverty rates

and the smallest income of all foreign-born householders in the USA (Fig. 6 & 7):

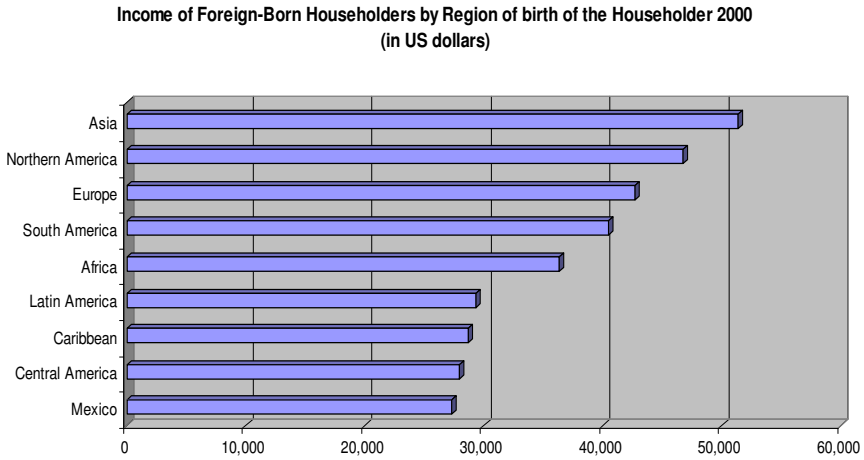

Fig. 6 Income of Foreign-Born Householders, in U.S. Census Bureau, 2001, Tables 18-1D.

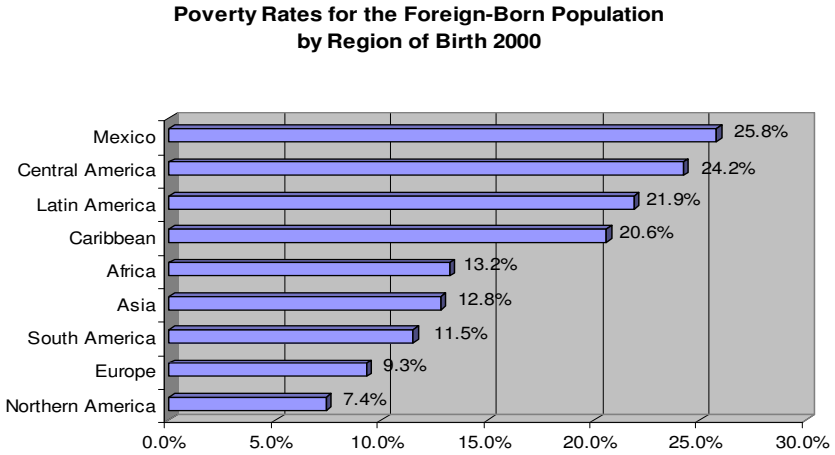

Fig. 7 Poverty Rates for Foreign-Born Population, in U.S. Census Bureau, 2001, Tables 19-1D.

Hispanics are not doing particularly well on the labor market either. Even though foreign-born Latinos usually capture the most jobs those are mostly menial so that does not translate into higher wages. What is more, the median wage for Hispanics has not only lowered considerably in recent years in absolute numbers but also in comparison to American national median wage. The situation does not look much better for native-born Hispanics either. Their unemployment rate, especially in the case of the fast-growing second generation, remains high and displays no signs of abating. What does not bode well for those aspiring to fulfill their American Dreams,

current rise in Hispanic employment is attributable practically in its entirety to recently arrived immigrants, while those who arrived earlier as well as third-generation Latinos actually display net decreases in employment. Especially, as gains are concentrated primarily among male workers in the construction industry, which in the year 2004 alone was responsible for 380,492 new jobs, or 54% of the total increase in employment for Hispanics (Kochhar "Latino Labor" 3). Low-paid, menial work may be easily achievable for the first generation Americans but it hardly ever constitutes a springboard to the middle class for the next generations – and getting there is often critical if the American Dream is to be fulfilled. No wonder thus that most Hispanics (69% in 2004) describe their personal financial situation as "fair" or "poor", and almost half of them (47%) expect economic conditions for the country to remain the same or get worse in the future ("Latino Attitudes" 3).

Consequently, this pessimistic view of Hispanics' progress is a prevalent one not only among Hispanics themselves but is also shared by many outside the Hispanic community. Its members are often perceived as "the dregs of society with little hope of participating in the American Dream" and who had benefited least from the American economy (Chavez 11). Why is it then that Hispanics – who in the American Dream survey displayed much more confidence and much more optimism about their own chances (in the abstract) of achieving the Dream than African-Americans, in which respect they scored not far behind whites, when it comes to their actual financial prospects display so reverse a trend? It is an especially interesting question as Hispanics are slowly but persistently climbing up the social ladder also in economic terms. Their median family income grew from 1995 to 2000 more than twice as fast as for whites – the annual rate for Hispanics was 4.6%, while that for blacks and whites 2.9% and 2.1% respectively (Mishel 2). A paradox whose roots may be embedded in what Huntington sees as the matrix for his 'clash of civilizations' – culture.

The *Mañana* Syndrome and the Self-Made Man Model

Undeniably, the American Dream has always been largely economic – a combination of the ideals of free enterprise, free markets, work ethics, and individual opportunity rooted in merit and mobility. In the land of endless opportunities with no traditional social hierarchy one is what one achieves, and that depends to a large extant on their determination, perseverance and hard work. To a large portion of American society this concept of the self-made man, articulated for the first time by Henry Clay in a Senate debate in 1832, still holds much currency. In the words of Bill Clinton: "The American Dream that we were all raised on is a simple but powerful one – if you work

hard and play by the rules you should be given a chance to go as far as your God-given ability will take you" (4).

Does such rhetoric appeal also to Hispanics? If Francis Fukuyama is right viewing economic performances of particular peoples from a Hegelian perspective, "roots of economic behavior lie in the realm of consciousness and culture" and it is thus cultural heritage, the ethic of work and saving, family, and deeply ingrained moral qualities that are crucial for their successful explanation (49). And Hispanics, predominantly Catholic and of Latin and South American descent, do not come from the same origins as the mainstream Anglo-Protestant American. As they suggest: "The biggest problem we have is a cultural clash, a clash between our values and the values in American society" because their "values remain quite different from an Anglo's" (Sosa 210).

Accordingly, it may be critically consequential that "it was Anglo-Saxon Protestants who created the gospel of wealth and the ideal of success" and that the American Dream, consequently, is deeply embedded in a distinctly European heritage (Bellah 76). Dissenting Protestantism – contrary to the hierarchical, communal Catholicism – always stressed the individual's responsibility for his own life and success, the work ethics, and equality of all people before God. Those who would venture the journey across the Atlantic would value those values over maintaining their family ties, familiarity of the land, culture, language, and the safety of the lives they led in their homelands. For a long time America and the American Way could be defined by those who wanted to free themselves from the constraints of the ossified social systems of the Old World. In the words of the French politician Henri Weber, today "Europeans are Americans who refused to take the boat. We do not take the same risks; we have a need for greater security" (Huntington 330).

The deeply Catholic Hispanics, for whom most of the actual risks and sacrifices are long gone, may be sharing with their 18th and 19th century forerunners the dream about economic prosperity, having decided to leave their much poorer countries and seek their fortunes in the USA, but they also come with the 'un-American' need for greater security that cripples their chances in the mainstream Anglo-Protestant ethics. They evidently display traits that are distinctly European-like and that appear to explain Latinos' incompatibility with the American Dream: mistrust of people that do not belong to the family, emphasis on family values and the belief that the demands and needs of the family should take precedence over those of the individual, lack of ambition, self-reliance and initiative, disinterest in gaining formal education, and the typically Catholic glorification of poverty as a

prerequisite for entrance into heaven (Sosa). In other words, Hispanics appear to follow what Fukuyama termed the 'Catholic' path of poverty and security, which in their case has taken the shape of the *mañana* syndrome – the belief that everything that needs to be done, no matter how important, can be postponed till tomorrow and that nothing is really worthwhile.

Recent statistics only corroborate such conclusions. Hispanics' attitudes towards the place of the individual and the role government in economy and politics evidently display more similarities to those typical for Europe rather than America. Hispanics – like Europeans, who are predominantly welfare state oriented than Americans – prefer more job security, more generous social welfare, and more government intervention. European solutions to education, health care, and social problems "feel more natural to Mexicans because they offer real solutions to real, and seemingly intractable problems," observed an advocate from Mexico City ("Special Report" 40). Accordingly, living in freedom is significantly more likely to top the list among 'genetically' individualistic white Americans (36%) than Hispanics (25%), who seem to prefer economic stability instead. Almost a third (31%) suggest that financial security best defines the American Dream, compared to less than a quarter of whites (24%). Also significantly more Hispanics (82%) believe the government should actually help people achieve the Dream than whites (68%) ("The American Dream in 2004" 27).

Most interestingly, however, for the future prospects of both Hispanics and the American Dream, it is not Hispanics who are most likely to fall back in line with the mainstream America, but vice versa. A decade ago Linda Chavez, President of Center for Equal Opportunity – realized that "many Hispanic advocacy organizations and [...] most politicians [...] rely too much on government programs of doubtful efficacy like affirmative action, welfare, and bilingual public education" – in an attempt to convince the Hispanic community that in order to succeed they needed to change their ways and try to embrace the concept of the self-made man (37). Like many at that time, she believed that it was the Hispanics who were lagging behind and who needed to joint the mainstream culture of American individualism. In the light of recent findings, however, it looks more like it was Hispanics who were then the vanguard of a new social phenomenon as it is the American Dream that is now becoming redefined.

Early 21st century Americans, once the most stalwart supporters of self-made manhood and individualistic values, are now themselves turning slowly towards what they used to deride as Old World's old values – state protectionism and interventionism. When asked in 2004 to personally define the American Dream, Americans – typically of affluent societies living in

reasonably peaceful times and resembling thus very much West European societies – were most likely to choose answers related to financial and social security. Values that mattered most for the immigrants in the 18th, 19th and the first half of the 20th century – such as having equal opportunities and rights, being free from political and religious persecution, and even the 'holy trinity' of American democracy, the 'life, liberty and pursuit of happiness' icon – are today all found at the very bottom of the list of priorities (Fig. 8).

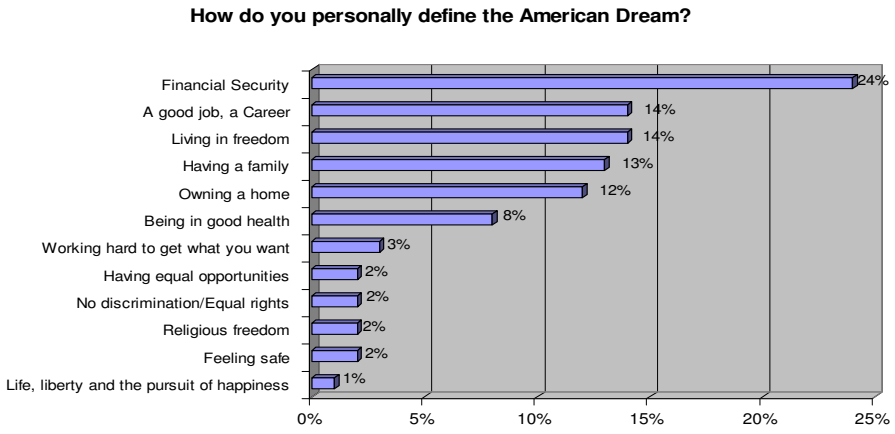

Fig. 8. Definition of the American Dream. Author's calculations made on the basis of data from *The American Dream in 2004: A Survey of the American People*, the National League of Cities.

The future looks especially bleak for the factor that used to constitute a fundamental component of the American Dream – living in freedom. Not only do Americans give little thought to that – practically taking it for granted – but evidence is strong that the future generations will care even less about one of their basic constitutional civil rights. When asked whether people should be free to express unpopular opinions, 95% of adults and 83% of high-school students agreed. A smaller number, 70% and 51% respectively, agreed with the statement that newspapers should be free to publish without government approval and an abysmally small number – 56% and 27% respectively – think about their right to free speech ("Kids in America"). Hispanics may still take the lead in polls and surveys when expressing such 'disinterest' but the population descended from the once dissenting Protestants that believed in individual hard work and in God helping those who help themselves is quickly catching up and their Dream has less and less in common with the lofty ideals that drove their ancestors across the Atlantic.

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