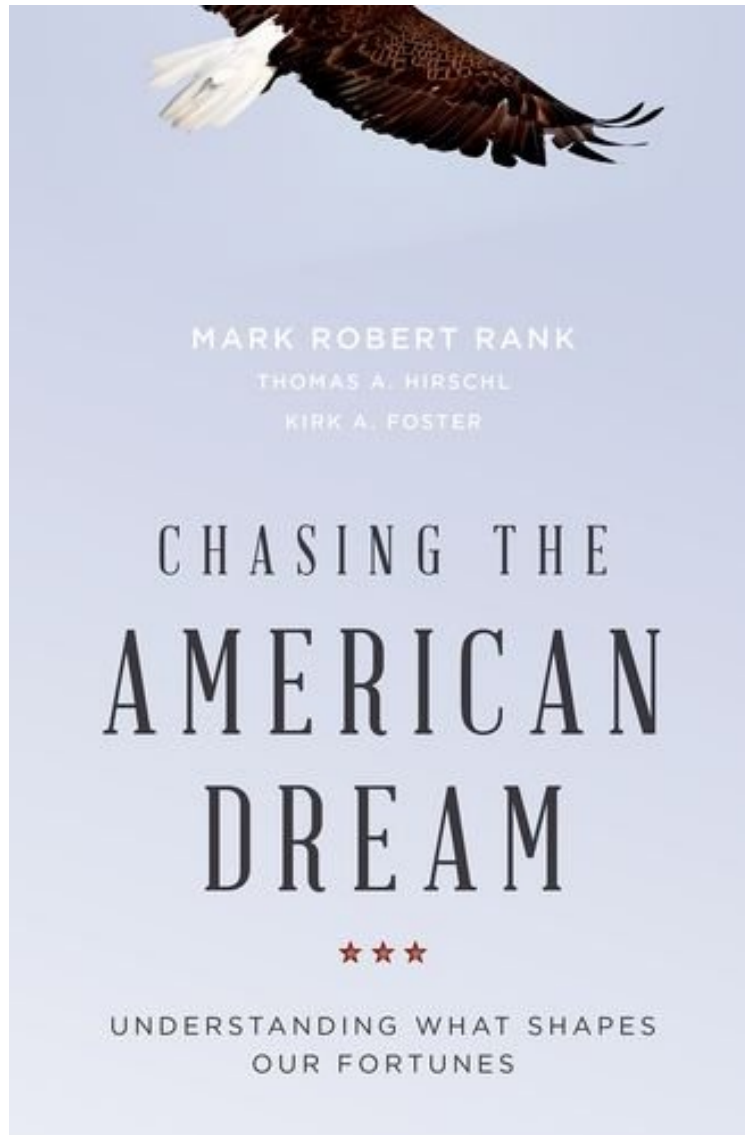


Chasing the American Dream: Understanding What Shapes Our Fortunes

Mark Rank, Thomas Hirschl, Kirk Foster
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Mark Rank, Thomas Hirschl, Kirk Foster : Chasing the American Dream: Understanding What Shapes Our Fortunes before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Chasing the American Dream: Understanding What Shapes Our Fortunes:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. These meaningful personal stories of lives in struggle and in

privilege highlight and enhance the very good data used by the authors. By Anna A. Shabsin Many write about the American Dream, but for Mark Rank and his co-authors, writing wasn't enough. To get to the true understanding of the Dream, they traversed the United States, talking with Americans from all rungs of the socioeconomic ladder, collecting their stories. And it is through their stories that this book takes life. In reading the book, we meet Matt, a minor league baseball player, Jim, an auto assembly worker, Rachel, an attorney and judge, and many more Americans working daily to achieve the Dream. These meaningful personal stories of lives in struggle and in privilege highlight and enhance the very good data used by the authors to demonstrate trends in all aspects of the Dream. While this book should be required reading for high school, college and graduate students, it is also perfect for a non-academic audience. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A well written thoughtful book of the USA income distribution problem. By Jay Rank and his team do a great job of giving you lots of data and some analysis. They make the case that in the USA, wealth is more concentrated in the hands of fewer people. But, they also point out that all groups have become wealthier. It's just that relatively the rich have become even richer. The poor and middle class became richer, so not so much so. The real issue is that Rank and team give us no way forward: taking from the rich and just giving to the poor will just cause class conflict and encourage the wealthy to leave the country (check out what is happening in France over this issue). A better way forward is to create more growth and competition: we did that twice before to great benefit. We broke up steel and Oil and it helped. We again broke up AT&T to great benefit and trucking was deregulated as well. GM should have been broken up and not saved as one company; Microsoft is too big and I suspect that Google is as well. We want creative nimble companies and not large monopolist ones. But large co's give great donations to politicians don't they! 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The American Dream is more of a myth and guiding light than a reality. As income and wealth inequality continues to increase, the American Dream becomes more elusive to more people. This book is a thorough piece of scholarship that illuminates and convicts. There is a sense of urgency in this book that seemed fitting to this reader.

The United States has been epitomized as a land of opportunity, where hard work and skill can bring personal success and economic well-being. The American Dream has captured the imagination of people from all walks of life, and to many, it represents the heart and soul of the country. But there is another, darker side to the bargain that America strikes with its people -- it is the price we pay for our individual pursuit of the American Dream. That price can be found in the economic hardship present in the lives of millions of Americans. In *Chasing the American Dream*, leading social scientists Mark Robert Rank, Thomas A. Hirschl, and Kirk A. Foster provide a new and innovative look into a curious dynamic -- the tension between the promise of economic opportunities and rewards and the amount of turmoil that Americans encounter in their quest for those rewards. The authors explore questions such as: -What percentage of Americans achieve affluence, and how much income mobility do we actually have? -Are most Americans able to own a home, and at what age? -How is it that nearly 80 percent of us will experience significant economic insecurity at some point between ages 25 and 60? -How can access to the American Dream be increased? Combining personal interviews with dozens of Americans and a longitudinal study covering 40 years of income data, the authors tell the story of the American Dream and reveal a number of surprises. The risk of economic vulnerability has increased substantially over the past four decades, and the American Dream is becoming harder to reach and harder to keep. Yet for most Americans, the Dream lies not in wealth, but in economic security, pursuing one's passions, and looking toward the future. *Chasing the American Dream* provides us with a new understanding into the dynamics that shape our fortunes and a deeper insight into the importance of the American Dream for the future of the country.

"This engaging and thought-provoking combination of thorough scholarship, narrative journalism, and policy analysis will resonate with readers interested in understanding American poverty and opportunity." - *Library Journal* "Rank and his colleagues achieve two important tasks in this book. They describe, in the words of average Americans whom they interviewed, what the 'American Dream' means. And then they show, through creative analyses of the hard data, how much that dream is being thwarted by the political economy of 21st century America. It makes for a poignant contrast." --Claude S. Fischer, PhD, Professor of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley "Over the last generation, the ideal of the American Dream and the reality of the American economy have increasingly clashed. In this informed, and engagingly written book, Mark Rank takes us deep into the minds and lives of Americans of all walks of life as they build-and sometimes watch crumble-their own dreams. A powerful portrait of the ups and downs of a riskier and more unequal economy." --Jacob Hacker, PhD, Stanley B. Resor Professor Political Science; Director, Institution for Social and Policy Studies; Yale University "In his exceptionally important new book, *Chasing the American Dream*, Mark Rank shows how rising economic inequality has distorted the meaning of the American dream and circumscribed the opportunities of ordinary Americans. Rank combines interview and focus groups with the life history method he pioneered in earlier work to show the astonishing rate at which individuals move in and out of poverty and affluence and how initial advantages and disadvantages translate into patterns of cumulative inequality which define their lives. Written with exceptional clarity, illustrated with vivid individual stories, this book will

engage scholars, students, and non-specialist readers who want to know what is happening to the elusive American dream." --Michael B. Katz, PhD, University of Pennsylvania, author of *The Undeserving Poor: America's Enduring Confrontation with Poverty*"Rank, Hirschl, and Foster have written an important book that needs to reach a wide audience because, as they so clearly demonstrate, access to the American Dream has been eroding over the last 40 years. Their unique life course statistical analysis of the longest running panel study in the world is as close to convincing proof as is possible using social science research. Their analysis of cumulative disadvantages rooted in geography and poverty rather than racial discrimination was both refreshing and illuminating." --Peter A. Kindle, PhD, CPA, LMSW, *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*About the AuthorMark Robert Rank is the Herbert S. Hadley Professor of Social Welfare at Washington University in St. Louis. He is widely recognized as one of the foremost experts and speakers in the country on issues of inequality, poverty, and social justice. He is the recipient of numerous awards, and his research has been reported in a wide range of academic and media outlets.Thomas A. Hirschl is Professor of Development Sociology at Cornell University. He is the Director of the Population and Development Program, coordinator of the Program Work Team on Poverty and Economic Hardship, and Director of the Teen Assessment Program. His scholarly focus is on social class differentiation in contemporary society.Kirk A. Foster is Assistant Professor of Social Work at the University of South Carolina. With a background in social work and theology, he researches how people with little or no income can use the resources available to them to make systematic change.