

THE POLITICS OF INEQUALITY

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THE POLITICS OF INEQUALITY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Perry also served as a member of the Board of Directors and Affiliate Equity Officer for the ACLU of Mississippi and was also one of the first openly gay branch presidents of color in the history of the NAACP in Worcester, Massachusetts.

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FOREWORD

When I proposed the theme “Politics of Inequality,” we were living in very different times. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic – an exogenous shock to structures and systems – has shined light on extant disadvantages and inequalities as well as cracks and fault lines in policies meant to mitigate inequality.

I cannot think of a better time to talk about the cultural and institutional dimensions of inequality – especially the interplay between these arrangements that perpetuate unequal outcomes in a variety of domains – from work, to education, to health, to climate change, to criminal justice. Equally important to political sociologists is how inequality is challenged via both institutional and extrainstitutional means. Inherent in this volume are recurring subthemes of power, elites, agenda setting, neoliberalism, capitalism, collective action and activism. Contributors to *The Politics of Inequality* address core issues and concerns in political sociology using a variety of theoretical frameworks and methodological tools.

The volume begins with a discussion about how issues of inequality make it onto the policy agenda. Keith Bentele’s chapter directly engages with how Democratic and Republican Party politics coupled with the rise of the Occupy Wall Street movement shaped the politics of inequality. Specifically, he examines how antiinequality positions were woven into mainstream Democratic partisan identity. Similarly, Joshua Basseches and co-authors’ piece analyzes the political struggles in California when it comes to climate change, particularly the interplay between policymakers, interest groups, activists, and the business community. They show how California became a “climate change leader” by adopting an approach that relies heavily on market-oriented, neoliberal logics.

The next section of the volume focuses on the politics of welfare state retrenchment – an area that has received considerable attention by sociologists and political scientists over the years. Agnes Blome analyzes the role of public attitudes, especially polarization, on the timing and differing approaches to welfare state reforms in France and Germany. Didem Türkoğlu investigates a specific case of welfare state retrenchment: university tuition. Türkoğlu shows how media in Turkey and Germany covered protests that led right-wing governments in both countries to ultimately abandon their efforts in implementing tuition. Marco Brydolf-Horwitz and Katherine Beckett turn to the interconnected ways in which welfare and punishment serve to govern poor and marginalized peoples. They suggest a continuum of state management where marginalized peoples are subjected to varying degrees of support, surveillance, and sanction.

The third section expands on the ways in which inequality affects already vulnerable and marginalized groups. Julisa McCoy, Jessica Moronez, Evelyn Pruneda, and Ellen Reese use an intersectional feminist lens to examine the impacts of neoliberal policy trends in the United States when it comes to family planning, public infrastructure, and criminal justice particularly on women of color. Ravi Perry and Aaron Camp shed light on the intersections of race, sexual identity, and health status in shaping inequalities both within and outside of the LGBTQ community. Perry and Camp point to how racism, social and political exclusion, and barriers in accessing health care further marginalize HIV+ Black MSM in the Southern United States. Dana Moss sheds light on how diaspora mobilization facilitates immigrant voice and visibility especially in a context of “a war against immigrants and refugees” in democratic countries worldwide. More specifically, Moss focuses on different approaches between Syrian and Yemeni diaspora mobilization and their impact on host-country discrimination.

Expanding on the theme of collective action and mobilization, the volume concludes with a discussion of the ways in which everyday citizens challenge inequality. In “Occupying Against Inequality,” Jacqueliën van Stekelenburg and Teodora Gaidyte compare Occupy protests with other contemporaneous anti-austerity protests. Although protests in both movements targeted stark inequality following the financial meltdown, they note key differences among them, that Occupiers were much less involved in formal organizations and more dissatisfied with democracy. Eric Blanc and Barry Eidlin use the 2018 teachers’ strike wave to pinpoint mechanisms associated with how unions shape moral economies. As they demonstrate, strikes helped reshape individuals’ understandings of educational and economic inequality. In their chapter, Thomas Maher and Jennifer Earl investigate age inequality in political participation and the role generalized expectations that youth are “not old enough” to engage politically have on activism. Concluding the volume, John Markoff, Hillary Lazar, and Jackie Smith examine inequalities within democratic movements and how activist disappointments lead to efforts to change movement organizations. They focus specifically on transnational activism that links social justice with environmental concerns and the Occupy Movement.

David Pettinicchio

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David Pettinicchio