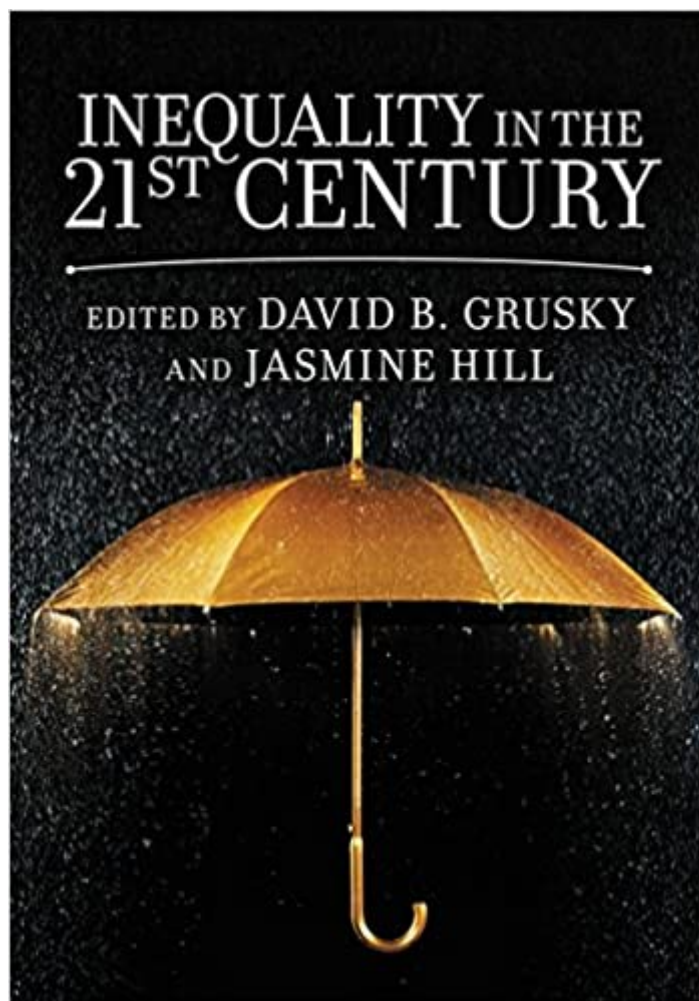


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# Inequality In The 21st Century: A Reader



## Synopsis

Why are so many types of inequality suddenly increasing? Should we be worried that we're moving into a "second gilded age" with unprecedented levels of income inequality? In this new collection, David B. Grusky and Jasmine Hill present readings that lay bare the main changes in play, what's driving these changes, and what might be done to reverse them. This reader delivers the latest and most influential contributions on economic inequality, social mobility, educational inequality, racial and ethnic relations, and gender inequality. Readers will encounter pieces from top scholars in a variety of fields, including Emmanuel Saez (Economist, UC Berkeley), Kathryn Edin (Sociologist, Johns Hopkins), Raj Chetty (Economist, Harvard), Florencia Torche (Sociologist, NYU), and Lucien Bebchuk (Law, Harvard). The readings spanning these fields are expertly excerpted to get readers quickly and immediately to the heart of the scholarship. In each area, Grusky and Hill also provide a concise introduction to the key questions, allowing readers to quickly understand the main forces at work, the debates still in play, and what's still unknown. The resulting collection is pitch-perfect introduction for undergraduates or anyone interested in learning why we're entering a new era of inequality and what can be done to change the tide.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"...I highly recommend this book. It is essential reading for anyone studying occupational segregation, and valuable for scholars in a range of fields including gender studies, work, social inequality, and comparative-historical sociology."--Canadian Journal of Sociology Online" This slim

volume offers ample food for thought to scholars with a serious interest in social or economic inequality. The star contributors—economists, sociologists, political scientists, and philosophers—present concepts, theories, and proposals that will stimulate those outside as well as within their home disciplines. While avoiding the circular reasoning characteristic of the 1960's 'culture of poverty,' these accessible essays enlarge the concept of poverty—and, I hope, of poverty research and policy—by elaborating the idea that social justice requires measurable equality of capabilities or opportunities, and not merely of economic resources." (Robert M. Hauser University of Wisconsin—Madison)"This impressive collection of essays brings together well-known economists, sociologists, and philosophers to discuss the pressing problems of inequality and poverty. Kanbur and Grusky recognize that these timely and difficult issues can only be dealt with by marshalling the intellectual power of our best minds, looking at poverty through the lens of multiple disciplines." --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

This volume brings together leading public intellectuals—Amartya Sen, Martha C. Nussbaum, François Bourguignon, William J. Wilson, Douglas S. Massey, and Martha A. Fineman—to take stock of current analytic understandings of poverty and inequality. Contemporary research on inequality has largely relied on conceptual advances several decades old, even though the basic structure of global inequality is changing in fundamental ways. The reliance on conventional poverty indices, rights-based approaches to poverty reduction, and traditional modeling of social mobility has left scholars and policymakers poorly equipped to address modern challenges. The contributors show how contemporary poverty is forged in neighborhoods, argue that discrimination in housing markets is a profound source of poverty, suggest that gender inequalities in the family and in the social evaluation of the caretaking role remain a hidden dimension of inequality, and develop the argument that contemporary inequality is best understood as an inequality in fundamental human capabilities. This book demonstrates in manifold ways how contemporary scholarship and policy must be recast to make sense of new and emerging forms of poverty and social exclusion. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

The book starts with a credible observation that there is a resurgent interest in problems of poverty and inequality due to any one or a combination of the following: (1) globally economic inequality is on the rise, (2) the distances between geographical areas have diminished with newer and faster communications so that contrasts are now more vivid than before, (3) new definitions emphasize economic wellbeing as entitlements to freedom from deprivation, and (4) poverty and inequality

produce externalities such as international terrorism. Despite this interest, academic research has lagged behind the problems of poverty and inequality. "The present book therefore provides an unabashedly academic approach to poverty and inequality reduction that proceeds from the radical assumption that more in the way of careful reflection and conceptual ground clearing might serve us all" (p.2). From the literature review in the first chapter of the book the clearing of the ground involves defining the dimensions, characterizing the space, and remedying the world of poverty and inequality. Conceptually the book relies on Amartya Sen's entitlement approach, which considers per capita income alone as a poor measure of equity and social status. Sen argues, "Whereas income is merely one of the means of good living, we have reason enough to look directly at the quality of life that people are able to lead, the freedom they enjoy to live the way they would like. If life consists of various things that people are able to do or be (...), then it is a capability to function that has to be put at the center stage of assessment" (p.34). The Gini coefficient is a defective measure of poverty and inequality. Chapter 3 picks up on Sen. It argues that a central social goal ought to be the equality of capability. Capability is a dynamic set of human fundamental rights like political rights, freedom of choice, and so on, and the right not to be poor and deprived should be an essential element of the set. In fact the fourth chapter is more direct than the third in trouncing the "income poverty paradigm" for "not permitting a satisfactory analysis of all relevant issues related to poverty and inequality" (p.76). Income poverty can, and does sometimes, go down with increased per capita income, but "social exclusion" may remain unchanged or even increase. Consequently limiting poverty simply through income redistribution policy may not be enough to eliminate the "feeling of poverty". Human wellbeing has many determinants, key among them assets, initial conditions, tastes and preferences. Changing the flow of income without addressing the stock of wealth is a poor band-aid for poverty and inequality. The fifth chapter deals with the spatial dimension of poverty and inequality in U.S. inner cities. Here the problem is dual: detachment from economic sources of income increases the probability of income poverty. Since the surrounding environment encourages social isolation, it thus reinforces poverty and leads to the emergence and growth of the underclass. The last two chapters focus on socio-biological determinants of poverty and inequality. For Chapter 6 poverty is a function of race, class, and markets. Each one of these can be influenced through public policy. In situations where "free markets" do not exist, are weak, or malfunction this chapter calls for government to create markets, finance infrastructure, ensure equal access to various markets, enforce fair competition, and protect the poor from market failures. The final chapter stresses the role of the family in poverty and income. The public seems to expect families (mainly women) to raise good citizens and do it independently (without government

support). "The illusion that independence is attainable for some leads to increased resistance to responding to the obvious dependency of others, as the better off taxpayer detaches himself from the poor and struggling in society." (p. ) Families become poor because they have to keep up to raise children for a society that wants good children but does not want to pay for their upbringing. Amavilah, Author Modeling Determinants of Income in Embedded Economies ISBN: 1600210465

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