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Book Review: Inequality in America: Causes and Consequences

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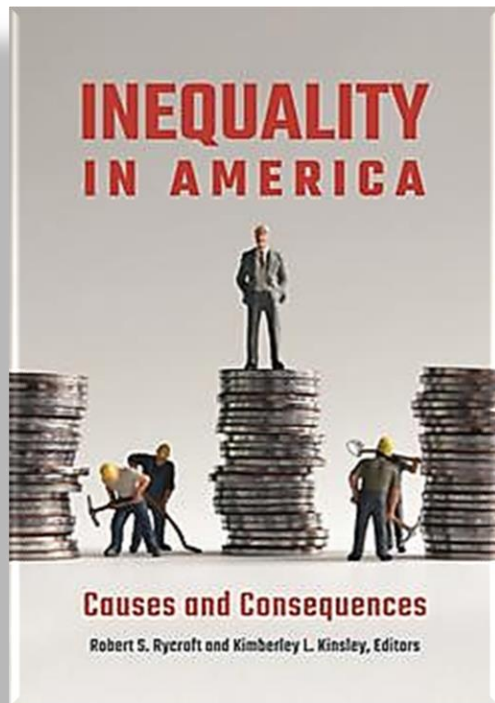


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Inequality in America: Causes and Consequences

— EYA MAHOUACHI, FREDERICKSBURG, VIRGINIA, U.S. (Reviewer)



Book Editors: Robert S. Rycroft, PhD & Kimberley L. Kinsley, JD, MA

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Abstract

Inequality in America: Causes and Consequences is a recent book authored by Rycroft (economics, University of Mary Washington, Fredericksburg, Virginia) and Kinsley (business law, University of Mary Washington, Fredericksburg, Virginia) and was written by scholars, advanced graduate students, and expert practitioners. Their book attempts to bridge the gap in scholarship and practice by incorporating the causes and consequences of history, the current state of inequality in the United States, and future consequences if left unresolved. This book is structured according to fundamental topics such as education, healthcare, housing, environmental issues, and the justice system. Using an effective approach to teaching the reader about the concepts, the book then teaches how to practically apply the concepts in real-world situations for optimal results. While the

book lacks specificity in the discussion of a global perspective or the impact of leadership approach styles on inequality through history until now, it does provide comprehensive explanations combined with practical instructions for students and practitioners.

Introduction

An important topic within the examination of leadership is the examination of followers and the impact of the leaders' decisions on the followers. The field of inequality in America has been explored for many years, in successive attempts to identify effective leadership, causes, and consequences to avoid possible ramifications if left unaddressed.

The material provided in this book is primarily geared toward individuals who are intrigued about inequality in America. The book was written by two scholars, Rycroft (economics, University of Mary Washington, Fredericksburg, Virginia) and Kinsley (business law, University of Mary Washington, Fredericksburg, Virginia) for advanced graduate students, and expert practitioners but will be interested even to those with limited background on the issues. This book can serve as a main resource or an activity book for an undergraduate or graduate course in fields such as business, leadership, sociology, educational administration, public administration, philosophy, or healthcare administration. Practicing managers, leaders, politicians, and consultants may also benefit since the text includes more than vague theories and superficial answers to critical situations. Thus, the text is an attempt to satisfy two different audiences: academics and general practitioners.

While the title of the book prompts readers to consider the causes and consequences of inequality in America that affect leadership, culture, and success, the authors address how global affairs may swiftly generate unforeseen complications — including the pandemic, climate change, and civil strife — and how achieving equality through leadership is greatly needed.

Overview

The authors provide a wide variety of topics that could be helpful for a country from a leadership perspective. The text begins with indicators of inequality in America and builds through research to help enable the reader to identify causes, analyze consequences, start the conceptualization process, and define leadership influences. Each chapter provides examples, percentages, and studies to help the reader gain a better understanding of the concepts and guidelines presented in the chapter. The majority of chapters describe events that have occurred in the United States.

The preface, introduction, and a preliminary overview of American history briefly summarize inequality in America, its determinants and results, and the leadership decisions that led to disproportionate growth in the U.S. Its three main parts distinguish between leadership and management and provide examples of each, including the government's introduction and integration of emergency procedures to minimize the public health and economic expenses of the COVID-19 crisis, along with the global warming debate, which shares weighty inequality extents (Rycroft & Kinsley, 2021).

Section 1 introduces the reader to a plethora of economic inequality variants, including technological change. *Section 2* discusses, in depth, access to educational services as well as the impact of early childhood education and unequal access to higher education opportunities. *Sections 3* and *4*, respectively, introduce how the maintenance of proper health and access to critical healthcare services, divergent housing and community opportunities are all relevant predictors for equality establishment. *Section 5* introduces the reader to different family environments and relationship stressors. *Section 6* primarily focuses on environmental factors while *Section 7* analyzes the justice system. *Section 8* covers consumer issues, including financial education and its impact on consumption trends.

Next, *Section 9* focuses on public policy and how attainment and retention of positions of power influence tactics and foments inequality. In addition, this part covers a variety of topics such as community development programs, education reform policies, and regulation of labor markets. Finally, *Section 10* examines the future of inequality and recognizes that decision-making, community and workforce empowerment, participatory leadership, and driving change and innovation all influence the quest for equality in America as well as the preservation of American democracy, specifically. In this regard, the authors present a wide variety of examples of the dimensions of inequality, their root causes, and their consequences.

The background information on all topics is supported by relevant research, key terms, review, discussions, and questions, supplemented by concrete examples and statistics. Readers can gain a better understanding of the models, concepts, examples, and guidelines from the chapters. The authors further present their expertise on the topic which emanates both from real-life situations as well as from accountings presented by various individuals, organizations, and, in some cases, nations. These studies help readers integrate their own diverse perspectives and analyze different situations, eliciting their own opinions depending on their background, education, and knowledge of the subject. In this manner, readers can grasp the basic concepts effectively. Importantly, the content is written in an academic way, which makes it valuable for students and scholars interested in the fields of politics, education, and health, generally, and in the field of leadership studies, more

particularly. The book describes major findings about the dimensions of inequality and provides guidelines and recommendations for improving managerial and leadership efficacy.

It is important to note, however, that the text is not a “manual” of simple techniques and secret recipes that guarantee instant success and magically result in the vanquishing of inequalities. What is unique is that every chapter has been written and revised by experts on the subject to provide better clarity and understanding. The text encourages reflection to help students or any reader to think critically and inspire readers to be effective leaders, committed to the amelioration of unequal standards in America.

Contribution to the Field

The abundance of information available make the book thorough and thought provoking, by covering a wide range of topics in a detailed manner. Each chapter has a concise and enlightening introduction about the subject matter, accompanied by an extensive list of recommended reading materials for further exploration.

This book enhances people’s understanding of the origins and outcomes of inequality in America, both historically and currently, as well as its potential future implications. The decisions made by leaders have a significant impact on how people treat each other and how future inequalities are shaped. The authors comprehensively cover various aspects of disparities such as education, health, and housing. They also delve into topics like decision-making, empowerment, the effectiveness of proactive tactics, and leading change and innovation. The insights provided are highly informative and valuable for anyone interested in leadership.

The book is a unique contribution to the field of leadership because, in addition to covering most causes and consequences of inequality topics, the authors attempt to teach the underlying concepts. This type of assistance is difficult to find in similar books as they are only meant to provide information. Someone will choose the book over another because the authors provide an opportunity for the readers to analyze the processes, identify the issues, determine effective and ineffective leadership decisions, and suggest ways to handle those issues that lead to inequality in America with the help of concurrent examples and current data. Readers will enjoy learning the concepts with this new way of learning. Moreover, the text is relevant for individuals interested in the subject and for students curious about decision-making techniques, specifically those who are interested in either research or aspiring to positions of leadership.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The authors provide a wide and relevant combination of concepts and practices in each chapter. Further, they extend the scope for research in different fields such as education and leadership. They provide an abundance of research and statistics along with references for each topic. The content is very rich in information due to thorough research. The authors effectively break down topics as sections and employ chapters that are easy to grasp and not too overwhelming for the reader. The authors’ purposes are clearly stated and further implemented in a very authentic way throughout the book. The book also provides both a retrospective and prospective approach about understanding inequities while looking ahead to survey the future of inequality in America.

Another strength of the book is that it does not provide theoretical research but attempts to inform the reader of concepts through specific examples and statistics. The authors are also very clear with regard to the intended audience and who can benefit from their work. In addition, the book can be used in a variety of different educational settings and levels. The book can help leaders, practitioners, and scholars in various fields such as leadership studies, which makes it unique.

Although the authors generalize about the book's contemplated beneficiaries, they do not specifically mention any level of benefits – whether it is potentially beneficial to only Americans or could be extended to global communities. While the book is written by experts in the field, designing each chapter to be accessible to those with limited backgrounds on the topics presented still require substantial time to learn and practice, possibly weakening the overall application for success. Leadership is often viewed as a means to enhance one's personal, social, and professional well-being. It is believed that leaders possess distinct qualities that can positively impact both their individual lives and society as a whole in the future. (Mahouachi et al., 2022). The book also does not describe many approaches to leadership and leadership styles, which are very important to understanding the ways different leaders engage in decision-making.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the book is a valuable asset for anyone who wants to learn about inequality in America, its causes and its consequences, as well as leadership outcomes and their impact on inequality concepts. The book provides key information useful for high school students, higher education educators, researchers, and practitioners. The book is a useful resource for different disciplines such as leadership studies scholars. The authors do not just provide information but also teach how to use the concepts in real-life situations. The amalgamation of examples, the history of inequality, the future of inequality, and supporting research reflects its usefulness for academics and practitioners. The book delves into over 25 issues that are commonly identified as causes for the growing socioeconomic divide in the United States. These issues include demographic factors like race and gender, as well as disparities in access to quality education, healthcare services, and favorable tax provisions. The book also offers tips on improving executive effectiveness, and leadership advice for a better understanding of the inequitable standards and policies. The book ends with two evaluations regarding the future of inequality. Students and practitioners can incorporate teachings from the book to think critically and apply leadership concepts in their everyday lives; it encourages reflection on the present financial and social disparities in American society, which if left unresolved, could lead to a significant exasperation of the problem.

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About the Reviewer

Dr. Eya Mahouachi received her Doctor of Education in Leadership Studies at the University of Lynchburg, Virginia. She holds an MBA in Management Information Systems from The University of Mary Washington. Her research interests include but are not limited to leadership (skills and styles), professional development, advising, diversity, equity, and inclusion, women leaders, e-leadership, and information and communications technology using quantitative and qualitative methods.

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