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America Unequal. Sheldon Danziger and Peter Gottscshalk.

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Sheldon Danziger and Peter Gottschalk, *America Unequal*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995. \$26.00 hardcover.

Despite the connotation of its title, *America Unequal* is not only about social inequality, but about poverty, employment, economic growth and government social policy. The book is a rich brew of information and ideas about the complex interactions between these different phenomena. Indeed, it offers an incisive analysis of social conditions in contemporary America. Its analysis is effectively located within a historical framework which traces income and poverty trends over recent decades. These are related to the changing economic realities engendered by increased global competition, migration and employment opportunities. The book also makes extensive use of empirical data to support its conclusions.

The authors reach a number of important conclusions. First, they show that income inequality has increased significantly over the last two decades. Secondly, they reveal that this trend is the result of enhanced incomes for higher earners and stagnating incomes for many middle and lower income earners. Third, these trends are associated with a higher rate of poverty. Fourth, the authors refute the popular belief that government social programs are responsible for increases in poverty and inequality. Finally, they show that the problems of increased inequality, income stagnation and poverty are the result of an inability to ensure that economic growth raises levels of living for ordinary people. When the benefits of growth accrue primarily to the rich, and when growth fails to generate employment or improved standards of living for ordinary people, the long term results are catastrophic. Programs designed to promote growth, employment and participation in the economy are urgently needed. Social policies need to be harmonized with economic policies so that they support rather than detract from economic prosperity.

This is an important book. It makes a major contribution to unraveling the factors that contribute to heightened inequality and poverty in the United States. It is meticulously researched and should serve as an invaluable resource for policy makers. Its emphasis on policies that address the underlying causes of poverty rather than providing inadequate palliative relief, should be heeded.