

## Call for Workshop Proposals: How Does Political Equality Affect Economic Equality?

Economic inequality and immobility are high in many rich democratic countries, and notably in the United State. The COVID-19 pandemic appears to have exacerbated income gaps still further. While the research literature has focused on measuring levels and changes in inequality and social mobility, it has had difficulty pinning down the causes of inequality and intergenerational immobility within and across countries.

Competing accounts of this inequality have included economic explanations (e.g. globalization and technological change), policy-related reasons (e.g. tax policy, collective bargaining laws), and political dynamics (e.g. access to opportunities and markets and control over competition). Beyond empirical studies, normative debates in philosophy and political theory about which types of equality matter most for a just society have yet to be resolved. Progress in reaching a consensus will require research and insights across countries and disciplines.

The goal of this interdisciplinary workshop is to discuss, inspire, and promote novel research into the causes of economic equality and social mobility, with a view to developing optimal policy solutions grounded in sound ethical reasoning. The workshop aims to bring together social scientists—especially those specializing in political economy, power dynamics, fairness, labor economics, and public economics—and philosophers and historians with an interest in ethical issues related to social status, income dynamics, and institutional development.

We will sponsor up to 12 research papers to address various angles of this work, and selected scholars will participate in a tentatively in-person papers workshop, hosted in partnership with the [Institute for Humane Studies](#) (IHS) in Manchester, New Hampshire on Aug. 27-29, 2021. For participation in the workshop, the Center will offer a \$750 honorarium and a generous travel stipend, and IHS will provide hotel accommodations for two nights. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this program may be held online on the same date with a similar format if necessary.

Accepted papers may subsequently be invited to a special journal issue or book proposal edited by social scientist Jonathan Rothwell of Gallup and the Brookings Institution. Papers should focus on one or more of the following topics:

### Social science questions

1. What is the impact of industry or occupation-specific rules and regulations on income disparities? How can measurement of these institutional features be improved?
2. How well do the standard explanations for income inequality hold up when tested against new international and historical data?
3. What roles do sub-national governments, professional organizations, and labor and employer associations play in regulating access to markets?
4. What is the relationship between equal access to skill-generating opportunities and observed skills as adults, including non-cognitive skills?



5. What are the causal factors that explain variation in upward social mobility, such as the features of neighborhoods that affect future outcomes for children?
6. How do institutions regulating housing, capital, and labor markets affect wealth gaps, particularly between racial or ethnic groups?

#### Inter-disciplinary philosophical questions

1. Under what conditions are market transactions fair and unfair? What kinds of “background conditions” make a difference?
2. What is the relationship between inequality in political power and economic inequality?
3. What income distribution could we expect from a politically egalitarian society with open markets?
4. How does variation in ability translate into variation in incomes across different political systems?
5. Is intergenerational social mobility an end in itself, or is it merely instrumentally valuable, and if so, how?

#### Historical questions

1. How did market-shaping institutions and professional organizations develop in the United States and elsewhere?
2. How did restrictions on housing markets evolve to exclude African-Americans and low-income families?
3. How did the opportunities afforded by the end of slavery affect African-American living standards and social status, particularly in the North before the onset of Jim Crow?
4. To what extent are interethnic disparities internationally attributable to private discrimination or to state action?

Proposals of no more than 250 words should state a research question and a tentative thesis or hypothesis to be explored, and identify all co-authors. **Please send proposals to [ethics@anselm.edu](mailto:ethics@anselm.edu) by April 1, 2021 to be guaranteed consideration.** Successful applicants will be notified by April 23, 2021.