Thin Social Equity

- Social equity in public administration grew out of the social and political turbulence of the 1960s.
- Social equity rejected the policy-administration dichotomy.
- Social equity rejected the logic of objectivity and neutrality.
- Social equity claimed a place equal to efficiency and effectiveness in public administration values—the third pillar.
- Social equity was primarily normative and deductive; a moral claim.
- Social equity was far less influential than the economic and market perspective in public administration from the 1960s to the turn of the century.
‘Miss Smith, buy up the rights to the Bible and get that part changed about the rich man and the eye of the needle.’
Thick Social Equity

• Social equity now more broadly defined and understood.

• A burst of social equity research, scholarship and literature in the last 15 years.

• Four perspectives on thickened social equity…
I just got a $200,000 tax cut... I love this country!... but why is it such a dump?!
The “Discovering Inequality” Perspective

• The “one percent” argument in politics

• Now a very wide gap between the haves and the have nots

• Increased poverty worsened by the recent recession

• Poverty is closely correlated with race

• “It does the cause of social equity little good to be able to know exactly how poor the poor are.”
"It goes in cycles, junior. Sometimes the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Sometimes the rich get richer and the poor stay the same."
The “Correlates of Social Equity” Perspective


- Economic growth in rich countries has largely done its work

- Human and social wellbeing is influenced far more by income differences within a country or state than by differences in average income between states or rich countries

- Health and social problems are worse in more unequal countries or states, including: (1) life expectancy; (2) math and literacy; (3) infant mortality; (4) homicides; (5) imprisonment; (6) teenage births; (7) trust; (8) obesity; (9) mental illness, including drug and alcohol addiction; (10) social mobility.
LOITERING WITH
INTENT TO HAVE A
CHAT WITH ONE OF
MY MATES, WHAT
ABOUT YOU?

STANDING IN A
THREATENING
MANNER!
The “Intergenerational or Sustainable Social Equity” Perspective

• Rob Nixon. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*

• Slow violence is delayed destruction dispersed across time and space including deforestation, acidifying oceans, global warming, the radioactive and explosive aftermaths of war, etc.

• The role of corporate “shadow kingdoms” engaged in a twenty-first century form of colonialism

• Positive forms of intergenerational social equity include forms of bonding over time, Social Security, and even the preservation of art, music and literature
The “Street Level Social Equity” Perspective

- Steven Maynard-Moody and Michael Musheno, *Cops, Teachers, Counselors: Stories from the Front Lines of Public Service*

- the logic of scarce resources and rationing

- client worthiness

- the morality and ethic of choices

- agents of the state

- “small acts of normative improvisation by forgotten streetwise workers sustain the state; they are acts of statecraft on which the institutions of governing depend.”
Conclusions

• A much thicker social equity has now taken its place in the foundations of public administration.

• Thickened social equity comes at a time of growing inequality.

• The evidence is now in—high levels of political, economic, and social inequality is bad policy and administration.

• Greater equality makes societies stronger and more fair, populations more healthy, politics more just, and people more free.