

urgency about how the social sciences can be publically and politically engaged.

These books are the tips of an iceberg. We can glean the size of the body of ice resting below these prominent iceberg tips by reporting the frequency of inequality terms in academic journal output. Table I.1 uses the web of knowledge to identify the frequency by which academic articles address certain core topics over the past five decades. For each topic, I have listed the name of the leading discipline that uses such terms, and the extent of the lead that this discipline enjoys over its nearest rival.

Table I.1 shows the hold of the fractal split which I have discussed above: some terms—“economic growth,” “economic development,” and “globalization”—are dominated by economists, whereas the competing terms “modernity” and “neoliberalism” are dominated by research in history, sociology, political science, and education. “Economic inequality” is distinctive, because it hardly existed as a topic field until 2000, and its early proponents were from the humanities and sociology.<sup>12</sup> However, it was economists who came to champion the concept from the early years of the twenty-first century; but even though they drove the inequality charge, their position never became as dominant as that for the topic of “economic growth.” Table I.1 also shows that for every term chosen for examination, there was a decline of disciplinary dominance between 2000 and 2017. This is true for those terms (such as “economic development” or “growth”) that were part of the canon of economics itself. Inequality thus appears to be a Trojan horse for a wider breakdown of disciplinary specialization in the social sciences.

This splintering of the fractal divide in the social sciences extends beyond the take-up of the topic of inequality. Central categorical divides—notably race, gender, and class—which were previously taken up mainly by those in qualitative disciplines (sociology, anthropology, history, some geography, and political science), and which stood in tension with economics, have also become increasingly frequently used across the social sciences.<sup>13</sup>

I don’t want to overstate my case. Disciplinary framings in the social sciences remain powerful: We can see this from the rising numbers of references to such terms as “economic growth” in the web of knowledge. But the direction of traffic is nonetheless clear. So, the second element of my introduction sees the success of the inequality issue as challenging the disciplinary specialization of social scientific expertise itself.