



2023

## Introduction to Theme 2: Institutions, Structures and Power

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### Recommended Citation

Holmes, Alison R. (2023) "Introduction to Theme 2: Institutions, Structures and Power," *csuglobaljournal*: Vol. 1: No. 1, Article 4.

DOI: [\[https://doi.org/10.55671/2837-0619.1011\]](https://doi.org/10.55671/2837-0619.1011)

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/csuglobaljournal/vol1/iss1/4>

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## **THEME 2 - *Institutions, Structures and Power***

If California 'sprang' into existence, its remoteness was lost with equal speed – though its island mentality has arguably remained. California today has 39.2 million citizens making it the largest state in the country – 10 million ahead of Texas at 29 million and far out distancing Florida with 22 million.

As of 2020 census there was no dominant ethnic group in California with 39% of its residents being Latino (becoming the largest group in 2014), 35% are white, 15% are Asian American or Pacific Islander, 5% are Black, 4% are multiracial, and fewer than 1% are Native American or Alaska Natives.

There are now more Californians than Canadians, Poles and all of Scandinavia though over 10 million Californians are immigrants and 27% are foreign born - the largest proportion of any state and more than double the rest of the nation (though over 54% of those foreign born but US citizens).

California is aging, but remains young when compared to the rest of the United States. By 2030, 1 in 5 Californians will be 65 or older. Given its size and demographics, it is perhaps not surprising that Californians also lead the country in ownership of cars, cell phones and computers while consuming more petroleum, more water and more chemicals all while generating more trash.

The point here is simply that the peoples of California and their multiple identities have made it a challenge to govern California. Mark Baldassare, associated with the Public Policy Institute of California since 1996 and its President and CEO since 2007, argued in his book, *California in the new Millennium: The changing social and political landscape of California* (2000) that this is a state of regions – often to its detriment. “The north and south have struggled over political power and economic development. The coastal and inland areas have fought over the rights to

the water that flows out of the Sierra mountains...Policy discussions are often fragmented and incomplete, focusing on what's best for the regions as opposed to what's right for the state". He argues that these tensions are only intensified by the state's size as well as its unique geography. Almost more worrying for Baldassare is the underlying lack of faith (perhaps even distrust) Californians have in the political process, as historical wrongs and ongoing inequalities between peoples and regions have damaged the political process.

How California continues to build and rebuild its methods of self-governance - let alone project those values through its actions and presence around the world - remains a work in progress. Associate Editors Luba Levin-Banchik (San Bernadino) and Robina Bhatti (Monterey Bay) are taking the lead in this area. Bhatti specifically has made her career creating the space to study the processes of globalization and its impact on not only California, but the world. Taking the foundational pillars of Global Studies, she offers a wide range of questions and topics for examination under this theme as her opening contribution to **CSuglobal** and we look forward to hearing from scholars across the range of fields suggested under the theme of Institutions, Structures and Power.