Status and Development: How Social Hierarchy Undermines Well-Being

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Although social status has been shown to be a fundamental motive for individuals, theories of development have largely overlooked the role of status in shaping economic and social outcomes. In tracing the historical roots of social hierarchy through the cases of race, colonialism, and caste, this article outlines the specific mechanisms through which status inequality exacerbates economic disparity between groups and challenges redistributive politics. Whereas mainstream scholarship on identity has focused on cultural representation, I argue that status is fundamentally tied to economic systems and connects cultural injustice to economic exploitation. I propose that representation of low-status groups in public institutions can reduce the real and imagined social distance between groups, which can in turn have positive implications for redistributive politics.

Keywords: status; development, redistribution, inequality, ethnic politics, discrimination

We are at a unique historical moment. Black Lives Matter (BLM) is the largest social movement in American history. What might have been considered unimaginable a few years ago, mainstream businesses proudly endorse the BLM sign on their storefronts and websites. At the same time, the rise of the Alt-Right and the attack on the U.S. Capitol has few historical precedents. A Confederate battle flag was displayed inside the Capitol for the first time. These paradoxes are not just an American phenomenon. The Donald Trump presidency came months after Brexit, motivated by the fear of immigration and globalization (Freedman 2020). Working-class voters in the West have steadily shifted away from Left parties over the last few decades as anti-immigration movements have gained strength (Gethin, Martínez-Toledano, and Piketty 2021). Right-wing populism is on the rise even in developing countries, as seen in Brazil, Bolivia, and India, reflecting backlash against socialist policies that empowered marginalized groups (Heller 2020). At the other end of the political spectrum, mobiliza-

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tions for the "struggle for recognition" under the banners of nationality, ethnicity, and race have become the paradigmatic form of social movements since the end of the twentieth century (Fraser 1995). The desire for status has been shown to be a fundamental and independent motive for people that cannot be reduced to other powerful incentives (Anderson, Hildreth, and Howland 2015). Yet theories of development largely overlook the role of status in shaping economic and social outcomes.

One of the reasons for this oversight is the compartmentalization of research on inequality across social sciences (Jackman 1994). The cultural and linguistic turn in the social sciences and humanities has led scholars to focus on the politics of representation, culture, and identity, but in the process, bracketing the underlying concerns of distribution of material resources across groups. This duality in symbolic and material deprivation has generated a debate between what Nancy Fraser calls the "politics of redistribution" versus the "politics of recognition" (1995). The politics of redistribution, she argues, is rooted in the political-economic structure of the society, whereas the politics of recognition relates to social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication. Research in political science, sociology, and economics that use social group as a unit of analysis, on the other hand, have engaged with themes of exploitation and redistribution, but without linking them to identity and recognition explicitly. Although the core idea of recognition has a wider appeal,[1] the mainstream scholarship on multiculturalism frames recognition as largely a cultural issue (Taylor 1994; Kymlicka 1995). This may translate to recognizing the cultural rights of minorities, through recognition of their language in government, school curriculum, and so on.

But because of the legacies of caste, slavery, colonialism, or apartheid, some groups find themselves at the bottom of both the cultural and economic hierarchy. Blacks in the United States and Dalits in India are more likely to be employed in low-paying and low-status occupations.[2] Moreover, outside North America and Europe, low-status groups are not necessarily minorities. In several countries in Latin America, South Asia, and Africa, indigenous groups, lower castes, and black and colored people have been historically marginalized despite being demographic majorities. The overlap between class and ethnicity in these societies is not a coincidence. Most identity-based movements grapple with questions of recognition. I argue, though, that status is fundamentally tied to the economic structure of the society. Status connects cultural injustice with economic exploitation.

This article draws on research across social sciences and humanities to examine the implications of social status on human development and redistributive politics. I take a global and interdisciplinary theoretical approach to identify commonalities across types of social hierarchies, focusing in particular on race, colonialism, and caste. By tracing the historical roots of status in hierarchical societies, I show that contemporary beliefs about low-status groups are rooted in elaborate ideologies that questioned their capacity for reason. Ideologies like scientific racism and civilizational progress dehumanized low-status groups and provided the moral justification for their subjugation. Even after institutions like slavery and untouchability are outlawed, the beliefs that legitimized social hierarchies continue to endure.

I argue that status is based on widely shared beliefs about the innate differences in the ability and worth of different groups. Since these beliefs are endorsed by members of both the dominant and marginal groups, it contributes to the stability of exploitative social systems. Status exacerbates economic inequality between groups through three distinction mechanisms—by providing the implicit intellectual justification discrimination, by shaping expectations of self-worth, which results in self-discrimination, and through exclusionary social networks and institutions. A robust welfare

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1. Multiculturalism advocates for group-based rights within the framework of liberalism. Charles Taylor (1994) argues that equality does not require identical treatment across social groups, but the ability to accommodate diverse needs.

2. Dalits are castes previously considered untouchable.

state can mitigate the effects of social exclusion, but status inequality also influences redistributive politics. The two major factors associated with poor public goods provision—economic inequality and segregation between groups—are rooted in status differentials in hierarchical societies. The social distance between groups generates structural barriers for forging cross-class alliances that is needed for redistributive politics.

How can status inequality be reduced? I depart from the mainstream scholarship on identity that valorizes cultural representation. Symbolic representation, I argue, is endogenous to political representation and suggest that the transformation of the social bases of power can potentially reduce social hierarchy by changing the norms of intergroup behavior, weakening elite patronage networks, and improving the accessibility and legitimacy of public institutions. Over the long term, these processes reduce the real and imagined social distance between groups, which in turn generate conditions for redistributive politics. Although this article is largely a theory-building exercise, I draw on the experience of the United States and India. The legacy of slavery in the United States, and of colonialism and the caste system in India, makes these cases particularly useful in understanding the role of social status in development.

DEHUMANIZATION AND THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF STATUS

Status has been defined as "a comparative social ranking of people, groups, or objects in terms of social esteem, honor, and respect accorded to them" (Ridgeway 2019, 1). Status rankings relate to social identity groups such as gender, race, and class, as well as objects and organizations, occupations, and consumer products. In this article, I focus on social hier-

archy due to ethnic identity. Ethnicity refers to descent-based attributes that are acquired genetically or through cultural and historical inheritance (Chandra 2006).[3] This includes group identities such as race, language, religion, tribe, and caste.

Scholars of ethnic politics distinguish between two types of multiethnic societies—*ranked* and unranked (Horowitz 1985). In ranked ethnic systems, class and ethnicity coincide, that is, Groups A and B are stratified by class (see figure 1). Such societies are marked by clearly understood conceptions of superordinate or dominant and subordinate or marginal groups. The distinction between dominant and marginal groups is less clear in unranked societies (that is, groups A and B are parallel). The two ethnic systems can exist within the same society. In India, for example, Hindus and Muslims are unranked but the caste system within the Hindus society is ranked. In Canada, the relation between Anglophones and Francophones can be conceptualized as unranked, but the legacy of settler-colonialism makes the relations between indigenous groups and European-Canadians ranked. Donald Horowitz (1985) argues that ranked societies can be identified by three characteristics: lack of an acknowledged upper class, lack of autonomous leadership, and ritualized modes of expressing lower status or contamination of the dominant group.[4] Ranked and unranked systems are conceptualized as ideal types. The relation between ethnic groups is complex and dynamic. Historically, social hierarchies have transformed in many places over time. But social status has important implications for contemporary political and economic outcomes in ranked or hierarchical societies.[5]

I argue that the idea of *dehumanization* is key to understanding the nature of intergroup rela-

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3. Descent-based attributes are defined by two properties—constrained change and visibility (Chandra 2006). Relative to other social identities, such as class, ethnic categories are less malleable in the short term. A black person, for example, can overcome the class barrier, but norms related to ethnicity are harder to change during a person's lifetime.

4. He suggests that unranked ethnic systems are produced through migration and that ranked systems are a result of conquest or capture.

5. I use the terms *ranked* and *hierarchical,* *low-status* and *marginal,* and *high-status* and *dominant* interchangeably.

Figure 1. Ranked versus Unranked Societies

Ranked System   Unranked System
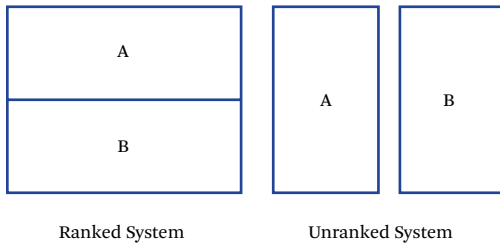
Source: Author's tabulation.

tions in both ranked and unranked societies. Herbert Kelman (1973, 48–49) argues that to perceive a person as fully human, one needs to recognize their identity and their community, that is we have to perceive a person as an "individual, independent, and distinguishable from others, capable of making decisions based on his own goals" who is "part of an interconnected network of individuals, who care for each other." Dehumanization is a psychological process that deprives a person of identity and community. When people's humanity is stripped away, they only appear human on the surface, but are devoid of the virtues of what it means to be human. Recent studies draw a distinction between blatant and subtle forms of dehumanization and find that people tend to attribute more emotions and traits associated with full humanity to members of their in-group (Kteily and Landry 2022).[6] This process of "Othering" makes violence and subjugation morally acceptable by excluding certain types of people from the system of moral rights and obligations that binds humankind together (Smith 2011). Dehumanization is a tool to justify both mass violence and social hierarchy, but the mechanism through which it operates seems to be different for unranked and ranked groups.

Unranked groups may be disliked and mis-

trusted, but they are not denied *prestige*. These groups reaffirm the superiority of their own culture, even while conceding limited spheres of cultural superiority to other groups (Horowitz 1985). In the case of genocide and war, the "Other" is generally depicted as a dangerous but *rational* parasite. Although by no means the only one, the Holocaust is perhaps the single most destructive event in recent history that relied on an identity-based ideology to justify the killing of millions of people. The Nazis labeled Jewish people as Untermenschen or "subhumans" that posed a deadly threat to humanity. The notorious propaganda film, *Der Ewige Jude* or *The Eternal Jew*, depicted them as an undifferentiated swarm of rats. The Jews were believed to be powerful and cunning. The Nazis feared that they would use their control over the national governments of Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States to destroy the Aryan race. But before they were forced into camps, the Nazis systematically excluded and humiliated Jewish people—their businesses were boycotted, they were barred from the civil service, or Berufsbeamtengesetz. The Nazi public culture was constructed on the mantra that "Not every being with a human face is human" (Koonz 2003, cited in Smith 2011). Depriving Jews of their humanity made it possible to reduce public sympathy for their persecution. Dehumanization enables elites to orchestrate mass violence through the indifference of observers (Rai, Valdesolo, and Graham 2017).[7]

In the case of ranked systems, status hierarchy is maintained through norms of intergroup interaction and social segregation. These norms serve as a tool to dehumanize marginal groups and, in the process, internalizes hierarchy in the minds of members of both the dominant and marginal groups. Historically, intergroup norms were enforced through restrictions on sex, marriage, social contact, and

6. This includes agency or capacity to think and act, and experience or capacity to feel (Kteily and Landry 2022).

7. Tage Rai, Piercarlo Valdesolo, and Jesse Graham (2017) draw a distinction between instrumental and moral violence. They demonstrate that dehumanization increases violence committed for instrumental reasons by making people indifferent to the victims' suffering. Morally motivated perpetrators, by contrast, humanize victims to justify violence against them. For example, the mechanism of neglect, caused by the dehumanization of Muslims, may allow for public support or indifference for the ban against immigration from several Muslims countries in the United States. A Muslim terrorist, in contrast, may be conceptualized as completely human and instead invites the impulse of moral outrage.

spatial separation of occupation and residence (Horowitz 1985). Low-status groups are often depicted as dirty. Dalits in India, for example, were considered "polluting." The Burakumin in Japan, called Eta earlier, means "full of filth." Samal Luwaan in the southern Philippines comes from the word *luwaan,* which means "that which was spat out" or "rejected by God." B. R. Ambedkar, India's most prominent Dalit leader and the principal architect of its constitution, described the caste system as an "ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt" (Jaffrelot 2003, 20). The rate of inter-caste marriages in India, even as recently as 2011, was less than 6 percent (Ray, Roy Chaudhuri, and Sahai 2020).

While the "Other" is also represented as subhuman, in contrast to unranked societies, low-status groups are not believed to be rational or necessarily threatening. In the case of race, for example, "scientific theories" of racial difference constructed by Enlightenment thinkers used a combination of biblical concepts and prevalent medical knowledge on anatomy to construct hierarchical models of mankind. Caucasians were at the top of the racial hierarchy because of their perceived capacity for reason and virtue. East Asians or "Mongolians" were a step lower, but still capable of civilization. African races were believed to be "animal-like," possessing thick nerves, and hence lacking the capacity for reason or experiencing pain and emotion. The words "*race*" and "*species*" were interchangeable during this period (Boyle 2010). These beliefs were supported by racial theories by physical anthropologists from mid-nineteenth century until World War I. Samuel Morton, known as the father of scientific racism, studied human skulls to develop a theory of human races. Shortly before the theory of evolution by Darwin and long before the discovery of DNA and the human genome that has proved that the concept of race has no genetic basis, theories of race were consumed as established scientific fact and common knowledge (Kolbert 2018).

Violence has been and may be used to enforce hierarchy in ranked systems, but the central tenet of social hierarchy is the belief about difference in intellectual capacity across groups. This belief served as the moral justification for slavery and subjecthood. Thomas Jefferson, a politician, philosopher, scientist, and a proponent of individual rights, was also a slave owner. In "Notes on the State of Virginia," Jefferson argues that blackness is inherent and comes "from the color of the blood," which makes them "inferior to the whites in the endowments of body and mind" (Finkelman 2012). His ideas of equality as reflected in the Declaration of Independence are at odds with his view of slavery, but Jefferson was by no means an exception. The U.S. Supreme Court, in its judgment of *Dred Scott v. Sandford* in 1857, noted, "[Negroes] had. . .been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect"(quoted in Darby 2009, 109). This opinion was at the time regarded as indisputable. Even after the abolition of slavery in 1865, leading thinkers continued to assert that black people were a lower race that was incapable of reason.

The implications of racial theories and the apparent contradictions between liberalism and servitude are further reflected in justifications of colonialism. By the end of the eighteenth century, Britain had begun to consider itself a democracy. Yet the idea of the empire not only was endorsed by the British state, but also found legitimacy from leading liberal thinkers such as John Stuart Mill, Jeremy Bentham, and Lord Macaulay. The idea of race, though not always overt in rhetoric, manifested itself through the metaphor of infancy to describe the colonies. Uday Mehta (1999) argues that these thinkers believed that nonwhite colonies were primitive societies and lacked the maturity for self-governance. This belief rested on the notion of "progress" as societies transition from barbarism to civilization. Colonialism was hence seen as a positive, and even a moral intervention to bring the rest of the world at par with the West through the spread of modern institutions and education. Lord Macaulay, for instance, described the goals of English education in India as a tool for this civilizing mission: "We must at present do our best to form a . . . class of persons, Indians in blood and color, but English in taste, in opin-

ions, in morals, and in intellect" (quoted in Mehta 1999, 15).[8] Liberal ideas of equality hence developed alongside nonrecognition of other cultures. John Stuart Mill argued that "despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with *barbarians*, provided the end be their *improvement*." (Mill 1865, 6, emphasis added).

The belief linking the capacity for reason to slavery is not unique to modernity or the West. Theories of democracy, interestingly, precede theories of equality. Martha Nussbaum (2000) argues that Aristotle's conception of *politeia* is closer to the democratic principles than any other ancient form of government because it involves an idea of "free and equal citizens," but not everyone was considered fit to be a "citizen." Aristotle believed that some people—women, manual laborers, farmers, and sailors—were inherently incapable of reason and therefore qualified as "natural slaves." The theory of natural slavery remained influential in Christian Europe as well as the Islamic world during the medieval period.[9] Outside the West, the caste system in the Indian subcontinent is an example of social stratification based on occupational segregation.[10] Social inequality and economic exploitation was justified through an elaborate ideology according to which those born into lower castes were being punished for their sins in their past lives (Galanter 1984). Since endogamy led to separation between groups for centuries, it supported the belief that lower castes had inherently less intellectual capacity (Saini 2019).

To summarize, a closer inspection of ranked and unranked societies shows that though most non-coethnics are "Othered," the elements of dehumanization in the two contexts are distinct. Unranked groups are not denied status or prestige. The myths surrounding marginal groups in hierarchical societies are rooted in elaborate ideologies that questioned their capacity for reason. Scientific racism and civilizational progress, for example, dehumanized low-status groups and served as the moral justification for their subjugation. Scholars of racial capitalism have highlighted the role of racist ideology in economic exploitation in transatlantic slavery (Ince 2022), but the link between cultural beliefs about groups and economic occupation extends to all forms of social hierarchy.

WHY STATUS MATTERS FOR ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

Globally, ethnic subordination as a way of organizing social relations lost its legitimacy with the spread of liberalism and norms of equality in the twentieth century. Decolonization was the largest scale exercise in self-determination that had reverberations across Western democracies and newly independent countries (Horowitz 1985). With it, the idea of dignity replaced traditional norms of honor. Dignity is based on the premise that all humans are equally worthy of respect (Taylor 1994). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, begins with the "recognition of the inherent dignity . . . of all members of the human family." Most countries enacted laws against discrimination. In India, untouchability was criminalized in 1949. The practice of eugenics as practiced by the Nazis or the idea that black people do not have souls is not just gruesome and offensive but considered absurd by most people today. Yet ethnic inequality persists. Unequal social systems are surprisingly resilient. Why?

Status offers a useful perspective to uncover the roots of group-based economic inequality. Status is based on widely shared beliefs about the innate differences in the ability and worth of different groups. These beliefs may be traced to, say, theories of scientific racism, patriarchy, caste ideology, or civilizational progress and

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8. Travel to client countries at the World Bank (where I worked for a few years) is still referred to as "mission."

9. David Smith (2011) argues that Muslim thinker Ibn Sina and jurist al-Andalusi justified the trans-Saharan slave trade by invoking the idea that some groups are naturally suited for slavery.

10. The caste system divides the Hindu society into the following hierarchical order: Brahmins (priests), Kashatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (merchants), and Shudras (workers). Dalits, or former untouchables, were considered outside society.

are shared by members of both dominant and marginal groups. Cecilia Ridgeway (2019) argues that the consensus on status rankings among high- and low-ranking actors is what makes status powerful in shaping social relations. Even after formal legislations dismantle institutions like slavery and untouchability, the beliefs that legitimized these hierarchies continue to endure. Though research on social status is relatively novel in political science, the literature on "system justification theory" (Jost and Banaji 1994; Jost, Banaji, and Nosek 2004) and "social dominance theory" (Sidanius and Pratto 1999) in social psychology shows that status beliefs contribute toward the stability of exploitative social systems. Summarizing the claims of the theory, John Jost, Mahzrin Banaji, and Brian Nosek (2004, 885) note, "hierarchy is maintained not only through mechanisms of in-group favoritism and out-group derogation exercised by members of dominant groups, but also by the complicity of members of subordinated groups, many of whom perpetuate inequality through mechanisms such as out-group favoritism."

Some of the most interesting explanations of colonialism are not economic or political, but psychological. In examining British colonization of India, Ashis Nandy (1983) argues that technological and military might alone cannot explain Britain's occupation over a continent-sized polity. British rule was based on an ideological consensus where Indians saw the *Raj* as an agent of progress. Cultural representation of colonized subjects in metropolitan discourses is relevant to understand the construction of subjecthood (Mehta 1999; Satia 2020). The "civilizational mission" is at the heart of colonialism. Nandy (1983, xvi) notes that, "Modern oppression is a battle between dehumanized self and the objectified enemy, the technologized bureaucrat and his reified victim, pseudo-rulers and their fearsome other selves projected onto their subjects." The logic of system justification extends to several forms of social hierarchy. Studies repeatedly find that low-income groups are rarely more likely than high-income groups to support economic redistribution (Fong 2001). Rebellion is surprisingly rare in human history. Howard Zinn (2014, 16, emphasis added), argues, "we have infinitely more instances of forbearance to exploitation, and submission to authority, than we have examples of revolt. . . What we should be most concerned about is not some natural tendency towards violent uprising, but rather the inclination of people, faced with an overwhelming environment, to *submit* to it."

Status beliefs dictate social relations, and in the process, reinforce inequality between groups in three ways—societal discrimination, self-discrimination, and social networks and institutions. First, status beliefs shape societal perceptions of competence of different groups, hence providing an implicit intellectual justification for discrimination. Discrimination against low-status groups in employment, housing, and the criminal justice system is well documented across different contexts. Recent field experiments demonstrate the causal link between labor market discrimination and ethnicity (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004; Thorat and Newman 2007). White applicants in the United States, for example, received 23 percent more callbacks than black applicants with the same resumé (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004).

Although not in their original form, remnants of status beliefs continue to shape individual behavior and attitudes. Scientific racism has long been discarded but a recent study finds that black Americans are undertreated for pain because white medical students and residents hold false beliefs about biological differences between black and white people—that black people's skin is thicker and their blood coagulates more quickly (Hoffman et al. 2016). Maya Dusenbery (2018) finds that women's pain is taken less seriously by the medical community, not just because of inadequate research on conditions that disproportionally affect women, but also because of viewing women as prone to "hysteria" and hence not believing that their pain is real. In another study Sarah Cotterill and her colleagues (2014) find that belief in the ideology of karma and caste—that being born into a lower-caste family is a reflection of sins in the previous life—has a strong and independent effect on individual support for caste-based inequality and opposition to a host of affirmative action policies in India, even

after accounting for generalized prejudice.[11] It should therefore not be surprising that almost 30 percent of the respondents in a major nation-wide survey, including the educated urban middle class, practice forms of untouchability in their homes (Thorat and Joshi 2015). In another survey, 40 percent of respondents in the capital city of Delhi supported laws against inter-caste marriage, an institution seen as threatening to upper-caste dominance (Coffey et al. 2018).

Second, status beliefs operate at a social-psychological level by shaping an individual's expectations of self-worth, which in turn affects their behavior. Based on the Hegelian idea of Anerkennung that identity is constructed dialogically, recognition from others is essential to the development of a sense of self. Nonrecognition, Charles Taylor (1994) argues, can inflict its victims with crippling self-hatred. Political theorists point to the unique dichotomy of lack of recognition, by marking out members of marginalized groups as stereotypes and rendering them invisible at the same time. W.E.B. Du Bois, for example, described this state as "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (quoted in Lukes 1997). This "double consciousness" (which Gramsci also notes) leads members of low-status groups to conform to their stereotype in conscious and subconscious ways. The expectation of self-worth in turn influences their behavior and performance.

In recent years, this philosophical claim has found empirical support through experiments on identity-based stereotypes. In what became a landmark study, Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson (1995) find that differences in performance between black and white participants in scholastic aptitude tests resulted from participants' fear that they might conform to a negative stereotype about their group, which in turn reduced their performance. Women perform worse in math when reminded of their gender (Steele and Ambady 2006), black athletes un-derperform when the task is framed as "sports intelligence" and the performance of white athletes drops when it is framed as "natural ability" (Stone et al. 1999). Field experiments in India show that publicly revealing the caste of middle-school boys reduces the performance of lower-caste individuals (Hoff and Pandey 2006).

Finally, status beliefs have enduring effects through social networks and institutions, long after laws against discrimination are enacted. This bias extends to social networks in employment, residential patterns, marriage, and friendships, which further contributes to group-based inequality (Ridgeway 2014). Further, exclusionary historical institutions continue to affect present-day political and economic outcomes. Avidit Acharya, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen (2016) find that counties in the American South that had higher concentration of slaves in 1860 are more likely to be conservative, oppose affirmative action, and express racial resentment and colder feelings toward blacks today, even after accounting for contemporary racial threat. Municipalities that were under slavery in Colombia are associated with higher levels of current day poverty, land inequality, and poorer public goods provision (Acemoglu, García-Jimeno, and Robinson 2012). Similarly, in Brazil Giuliana Pardelli and Alexander Kustov (2022) find that areas with a larger share of Afro-descendants more than a century ago inherited weaker state capacity and continue to experience worse public goods provision as a result.

To summarize, status beliefs contribute to economic inequality between groups, what Charles Tilly (1998) refers to as "durable inequality." He argued that significant differences in "merit" between categories of people, such as black-white, male-female, citizen-foreigner, can be traced to social organization, belief, and enforcement rather than individual differences in attributes, propensities, and performance. Over the long term, the effects of discrimination due to identity, notions of self-worth, and the nature of social networks and

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11. Generalized prejudice refers to negative feelings against a group without an accompanying ideology that justifies it. For example, in the case of this study, generalized prejudice is the belief that lower castes have lower intellectual capacity or are less hard working than other groups (Cotterill et al. 2014).

institutions contributes to the unequal distribution and accumulation of power and resources.

WHY STATUS MATTERS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Development broadly refers to structural changes in the economy due to technological progress whereby agrarian societies become more industrialized. This shift is expected to increase economic productivity and the average material well-being of the population. Typically, a country's level of development is measured through the size of its economy or gross domestic product. The field of development was revolutionized with the "capabilities approach" in the late 1980s in which Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum conceptualize development as the process to enhance human freedoms through interconnected goals of economic development, social opportunity, and expansion of political and civil rights (Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2011). Although the theory was designed to influence policy, its appeal is rooted in its philosophical critique of both utilitarian and libertarian theories that had influenced development policy until then. In contrast to utilitarian theories, which rely on the total or average well-being in a society (reflected by GDP), and libertarians, who focus on appropriate procedures without worrying about whether some people suffer from systematic deprivation or substantive opportunities, the capabilities approach argues that the expansion of freedom should be viewed as both primary end (constitutive role) and principal means (instrumental role) of development. Sen argues that development involves both "the processes that allow freedom of action and decisions, and the actual opportunities that people have, given their personal and social circumstances" (1999, 17).

The capabilities approach mainstreamed the principles of the equality of opportunity in development theory. The normative principles of this model led to the conception of the Human Development Index (HDI) by the United Nations in 1990. HDI ranks the overall well-being of nations in terms of three indicators in equal measure—income, performance in health, and performance in education. The HDI was strategically designed to measure outcomes, rather than the source of service provision, to appeal to thinkers across the ideological spectrum. But the role of the state in the provision of mass education, health care, and effective financial markets is widely recognized as important for poverty reduction (Ravallion 2016). But what makes some states more welfare oriented or redistributive?

Our understanding of redistribution comes from two main strands of literature: the welfare state, and ethnicity and development. A large body of work has examined the determinants of variation in social entitlements across advanced industrialized countries (Huber, Ragin, and Stephens 1993; Esping-Andersen 1990; Luebbert 1991; Rueschemeyer, Huber, and Stephens 1992). Countries in northern Europe are able to provide generous social benefits to their citizens irrespective of class, whereas welfare in the United States is modest and primarily directed toward the poor. Gosta Esping-Andersen's *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* is perhaps the most influential theory on the welfare state. He follows the Polanyian tradition of conceptualizing welfare in terms of its capacity for "de-commodification," or the degree to which people can meet their living standards independently of pure market forces (Esping-Andersen 1990). The strength of the welfare state, he argues, depends on the role of cross-class coalitions and historical legacies of regime institutionalization. Although social democracies are relatively rare in developing countries, the role of cross-class coalitions stands out even under conditions of low income. The consensus among scholars of the welfare state is that the size, organizational coherence, cohesion of the working class, and the willingness of working-class parties to forge cross-class political alliances in gaining electoral power are the key determinants of universalistic welfare (Sandbrook et al. 2007).

A second body of work examines the relationship between ethnicity and public goods provision. These studies, across developed and developing countries, consistently find that ethnic diversity impedes public goods provision (Alesina and La Ferrara 2000; Miguel and Gugerty 2005; Habyarimana et al. 2007). More diverse cities and regions have been shown to have greater corruption, worse public health

and education outcomes, and lower levels of voting and civic participation. The negative relationship between social divisions and development has, in fact, been described as the "most powerful hypotheses in political economy" (Banerjee, Iyer, and Somanathan 2005, 639).

Recent research has challenged the influential "diversity-deficit thesis" from two perspectives. The first group of studies demonstrate that *inequality between groups* is a better predictor of public goods outcomes than diversity per se (Baldwin and Huber 2010; Alesina, Michalopoulos, and Papaioannou 2016). These studies emphasize that the concept of ethnic fractionalization used to measure diversity treats all groups as equivalent. Instead, we should examine how differences in endowments across groups shape redistributive politics.[12] Studies, for example, show that the share of low-status groups in the population is a better indicator of the quality of public goods—homogeneous Afro-descendant municipalities in Brazil and neighborhoods with a higher proportion of lower castes in India have worse public services than do ethnically diverse areas (Kustov and Pardelli 2018; Bharathi, Malghan, and Rahman 2015).[13] The second challenge comes from scholars who argue that *segregation*, rather than diversity, is at fault (Uslaner 2012; Tajima, Samphantharak, and Ostwald 2018; Ejdemyr, Kramon, and Robinson 2018). Simon Ejdemyr, Eric Kramon, and Amanda Robinson (2018) find that the political elite target public goods toward coethnics when ethnic groups are geographically segregated, which in turn increases disparity between groups. Eric Uslaner (2012) argues that segregation breeds mistrust because it isolates groups and exaggerates the degree of difference between them. He shows that diversity and segregation are

only moderately correlated. Segregation is the principal reason behind inequality and lack of social trust.

How is status inequality connected to redistribution? In hierarchical societies, the two factors associated with poor public goods provision—economic disparity and segregation between groups—can be traced to status differentials. As discussed in the previous section, status beliefs contribute to inequality between groups through discrimination and exclusionary networks and institutions. Status inequality also widens the social distance between groups. Historically Dalits were forced to live in the fringes of towns and villages and not permitted to use public spaces. Urbanization and economic development have reduced social hierarchy, but most large cities continue to exhibit high degrees of caste-based segregation (Bharathi, Malghan, and Rahman 2015). Similarly, racial segregation in the United States is a consequence of a long history of segregationist policies like Jim Crow. Fewer than 15 percent of blacks live in areas where blacks make up less than 10 percent of the population and 33 percent live in census tracks that are at least 65 percent black. As black incomes have risen, middle-class blacks have deserted the inner cities, often to segregated suburbs rather than mixed neighborhoods (Uslaner 2012).

From the perspective of redistributive politics, status differentials act as a barrier for effective class-based mobilization. Here scholars draw on theories in social psychology to emphasize the role of social affinity in predicting support for redistribution. The core idea is that individuals identify with another group based on the perceived social distance and relative status of the group in question (Shayo 2009). In the absence of cross-cutting ethnic cleavages, middle-income voters empathize with the

12. I acknowledge that shared culture and enforceable social norms affect cooperation at the community level (Habyarimana et al. 2007), which can in turn shape the production and maintenance of common pool resources (like drainage, irrigation systems, forests, and so on). In most countries, however, the main responsibility of public goods provision rests with the state. Overall, state-society relations should be expected to play a more salient role in redistribution.

13. A related body of work emphasizes the role of historical path-dependent processes of state development. Scholars argue that contemporary levels of ethnic diversity and public goods provision are both a function of slowly evolving state capacity, thus pointing toward potential endogeneity of ethnic diversity (Wimmer 2016; Singh and vom Hau 2016).

poor and support redistributive policies. In contrast, ethnic division within the working class weakens class cohesion and hinders cross-class alliances that are necessary for successful class-based mobilization for redistribution (Rueschemeyer, Huber, and Stephens 1992). Poor high-status individuals, like the white working class in the United States (Cramer 2016; Mutz 2018) and poor Brahmins in India (Suryanarayan 2019), for example, have been shown to vote against their material interests to preserve their ascriptive privilege. Jill Quadagno (1994) attributes the weakness of the American welfare state to status—racial discrimination against blacks in trade unions prevented labor organizing, and neighborhood segregation at the level of community impeded class solidarity. Further, if low-status groups are disproportionately poor, as is generally the case in hierarchical societies, the middle-class majority is less likely to transfer money to people whom they perceive as different from themselves (Alesina and Glaeser 2004; Lupu and Pontusson 2011; Houle 2017). Residents of wealthy white suburbs in the United States, for example, do not see themselves as part of the same moral community as black residents in inner cities. In such cases, the welfare state generates its own system of stratification by attaching stigma to welfare (Esping-Andersen 1990).

In short, the history of ascriptive discrimination in hierarchical societies exacerbates the social distance and inequality between groups, which in turn generates structural barriers for mobilization for redistributive politics. Status inequality is potentially a distinct mechanism affecting the politics of public goods provision that is yet to be systematically explored by scholars of the welfare state. Historical discrimination hence presents a unique paradox: redistribution is necessary to achieve greater equality and to reduce the social distance between groups, but meaningful redistribution is possible only under conditions of some basic levels of social solidarity.

REPRESENTATION AND EGALITARIAN POLITICS

Research on ethnic inequality and economic inequality has generally developed in separate silos. As Ridgeway and Hazel Markus (2022) note in their introduction to this issue, at the macro level, status is assumed to be an outcome of resources and power, and at the micro level, status is seen as a reflection of group identity. Concerns of identity and racism have led social psychologists to explore themes such as prejudice, hate, envy, and shame. Mary Jackman (1994) argues that the underlying assumption of much of the research on prejudice is that ethnic hostility is driven by *lack of information*—ignorance breeds misunderstanding, and misunderstanding breeds hatred. Contact theory, one of the most influential theories in social psychology, argues that increased intergroup contact will reduce prejudice by allowing individuals to update their prior negative stereotype through new information (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). Prejudice is hence divorced from the economic structure of the society and conceived as a phenomenon in the mind of an individual from the dominant group (Jackman 1994). Marxist scholars of redistribution, on the other hand, assume that identity is secondary and epiphenomenal—once economic inequality is eliminated, ethnic inequality will automatically fade away. The mainstream Left thought argues that the only way to eliminate inequality is through class conflict; hence the famous slogan in *The Communist Manifesto*, "Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!" Attention to identity is even seen as harmful because it divides the working class.[14] The distinction between sym-

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14. Frances Piven and Richard Cloward (1979) recall that the severest criticism of black movements in the United States came from the leftist scholars who argued that the movements worsened class divisions and failed to win meaningful economic gains. In South Africa, Saul Dubow (1995) argues that scientific racism was overlooked in part because the Left believed that racial prejudice operated as a disguise for capitalism and apartheid. This allowed South African intellectuals to place the sole responsibility for segregation on Afrikaner nationalism and race was almost wished away in the process. In India, the ideological conflict between Ambedkar and the Communist Party illustrates the inability of the Left to acknowledge humiliation as a distinct form of exploitation. Ambedkar was blamed for dividing the working class and "misleading" the Dalit masses (Teltumbde 2017).

Figure 2. Examples of Symbolic Representation

2a: Statue of B. R. Ambedkar, Parliament
House, New Delhi

2b: Statues of Dalit leaders in Lucknow,
Uttar Pradesh

2c: Portrait of Michelle Obama, National
Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.

Source: 2a and 2b: Wikimedia Commons 2020 and 2021; 2c: Curry 2018. Photo copyright Benjamin
A. C. Hines. Reprinted with permission.

bolic and material concerns has also domi-
nated the debates in the field of ethnic poli-
tics.[15]

The remedy for cultural injustice is believed
to lie in recognizing and positively valorizing
cultural diversity (Fraser 1995). It calls for sym-
bolic representation or revaluing disrespected
and marginalized identities in the public
sphere by acknowledging their achievements
and struggles. It may take the form of naming
or renaming of public spaces after leaders of
marginal groups as well as removal of symbols
of majority domination. Examples of symbolic
representation include the statue of Ambedkar
in the Indian Parliament (figure 2a). The re-
moval of Confederate monuments in the Amer-

ican South, because of the belief that they glo-
rify white supremacy, can also be conceived as
symbolic representation. Symbolic representa-
tion contributes to the destigmatization of low-
status groups whereby they gain cultural mem-
bership in the political community (Lamont
2018). This approach is consistent with theories
of social change in social psychology that have
emphasized the role of greater contact between
groups in humanizing "the Other," and in the
process, extending the "moral circle" of our sol-
idarity (Bloom 2010; Paluck, Green, and Green
2019). The marginal becomes mainstream
through its representation in the public sphere.
Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's
Cabin*, for example, is attributed to end slavery

15. Theories of ethnic preferences are broadly categorized into two camps—expressive and instrumental. Ex-
pressive theories, rooted in social-psychological models, attribute preference for coethnics to a fundamental
need for self-esteem (Shayo 2009; Horowitz 1985). Instrumental theories discount psychological attachment
to the in-group and instead see coethnics as a means of maximizing material benefits (Chandra 2004; Posner
2005).

in the United States and more recently, popular television shows such as *The Cosby Show* and *Will and Grace* have helped in reducing prejudice against blacks and gay people (Bloom 2010).

Cultural representation seems to offer a solution, but it faces two challenges. First, meta-studies on prejudice show that status beliefs or stereotypes are learned early in life are remarkably resistant to change in the short-to-medium term (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006; Paluck, Green, and Green 2019). Second and more important, the current discourse on cultural representation does not address the role of political agency in reducing social hierarchy. Symbolic representation can be powerful, but meaningful cultural representation of low-status groups is endogenous to their political power. In India for example, where public spaces have historically been named after upper-caste leaders, the Dalit-led Bahujan Samaj Party was able to prioritize the creation of Dalit iconography only after it assumed power in the state of Uttar Pradesh (figure 2b). More than symbolic politics, research across different contexts shows that governments led by marginal groups have supported descriptive representation in state institutions (Fernandez, Koma, and Lee 2018; Postero 2017; Chakrabarti 2019). Existing research has focused on understanding how majority social attitudes can be changed. I propose that directing our attention to the effects of representation of low-status groups in institutions of power can be more fruitful to uncover the sources of egalitarian politics. The transformation of the social bases of power can have important implications for reducing social hierarchy by changing social norms of inter-group behavior, reducing discrimination, weakening elite patronage networks, facilitating claims-making by marginalized citizens, and altering identity-based stereotypes.

First, representation of low-status groups in public institutions can reduce discrimination by changing the social and legal norms of interaction between groups. In India, for instance, untouchability continues to be practiced despite formal legislations in large part because laws against untouchability are rarely enforced. Simon Chauchard (2014), in his study

of village politics in the state of Rajasthan, finds that political quotas for Dalits in local government were instrumental in reducing caste-based discrimination. As studies on prejudice predict (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006; Paluck, Green, and Green 2019), majority beliefs about lower castes remained negative, but he found that villagers understood that Dalits leaders were in a position to enforce antidiscrimination laws and this led to changes in social norms. A growing body of work finds that perception of social norms regarding the appropriate treatment of an out-group is a more powerful predictor of intergroup behavior than individual attitudes toward the group (Paluck 2009, 2012; Dixon et al. 2012). Similarly, research in organizational studies shows that appointing members of minority groups as managers is more effective in advancing African Americans and women relative to individually directed attitude change efforts like diversity training (Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly 2006).

Relatedly, social change can be especially challenging if the keepers of public institutions are predominantly from socially dominant groups. Myron Weiner (1991), for example, attributes India's poor performance in mass education to caste bias. He uncovered a widespread belief among upper-caste policymakers that the education system should reinforce the occupational divisions of the caste system—between people who work their "minds" and people who work with their "hands." Although the effects of descriptive representation are mediated by institutional factors such as partisanship, design of representative systems, and party ideology (Dunning and Nilekani 2013; Jensenius 2017; Preuhs 2006), minority representation has been shown to reduce inequality, especially in law enforcement. In the United States, for example, Harris (2020) finds that increase in black judges improved equity in sentencing by reducing a black-white gap in incarceration. Black police officers are five times less likely to use gun force in predominantly black neighborhoods (Hoekstra and Sloan 2022).

Third, the inclusion of low-status groups in the state can weaken long-established elite patronage networks (Witsoe 2013). Greater representation of lower-caste groups in the bureau-

cracy can also support redistribution by breaking down upper-caste networks (Chakrabarti 2021). Revisionist history of political machines in American cities show that the recruitment of Irish, Italian, and Jewish groups in the party system in the early twentieth century was instrumental in reducing the political dominance of Anglo Protestant elites (Bearfield 2009). Although these jobs were no doubt patronage based, the primary purpose of patronage was recognition—"the symbolic and vicarious satisfaction of seeing "one of their own" given prestige, power and income" (Moynihan and Wilson 1964, 296). Such changes in traditional power structures can generate backlash in the short term (Alter and Zürn 2020), but descriptive representation has been shown to increase the overall support for minority leaders by reducing racial threat (Hajnal 2001), and can mitigate racial backlash against minority incorporation in social welfare (Preuhs 2007).

Fourth, from the perspective of low-status groups, descriptive representation can make the state more accessible and improve their responsiveness to public programs. In the United States, black and Latino representation is associated with higher voter turnouts (Rocha et al. 2010; Griffin and Keane 2006), increased institutional legitimacy (Scherer and Curry 2010), and lower levels of political alienation (Pantoja and Segura 2003). In South Africa, where white officials continued to incite fear and anger even after apartheid was dismantled, Sergio Fernandez, Samuel Koma, and Hongseok Lee (2018) find that black residents were more likely to trust black officials, which in turn improved policy enforcement. Descriptive representation in local institutions in India has been shown to transform social relations in significant ways by bringing members of traditionally marginalized groups into the formal space in the public sphere (Chauchard 2014; Kruks-Wisner 2018; Rao and Sanyal 2010). This can in turn allow marginalized citizens to make claims on the state and generate demand for public goods (Kruks-Wisner 2018).

Finally, descriptive representation can alter stereotypes and reduce self-reinforcing discrimination by demonstrating that all groups are equally capable of high achievement. Francesca Jensenius's (2017) work on India shows that descriptive representation allows members of low-status groups to gain political experience, which makes them better at mobilizing voters over time. She argues that the importance of representation is not necessarily in bringing material benefits, but in altering stereotypes about who can be a political leader and in making it less socially acceptable to discriminate against lower castes. Amy Alexander (2012) finds that increase in the representation of women in parliament is associated with women's beliefs in women's ability to govern. Leadership by women has further been shown to influence adolescent girls' career aspirations and educational attainment (Beaman et al. 2012). A photograph of a two-year-old black girl mesmerized by a painting of Michelle Obama at the National Portrait Gallery that went viral in 2018 illustrates the significance of representation (figure 2c). Reflecting on the reaction to the image, the girl's mother noted that her parents, who grew up in segregated America, could not have imagined a black president and first lady. She wrote, "Only by being exposed to brilliant, intelligent, kind black women can my girls and other girls of color really understand that their goals and dreams are within reach" (Curry 2018). Michelle Obama was aware of the effect that the portrait could have when she spoke at its unveiling: "They [Girls and girls of color] will see an image of someone who looks like them hanging on the walls of this great American institution . . . *And I know the kind of impact that will have on their lives because I was one of those girls*" (Curry 2018, emphasis added).

CONCLUSIONS

Theories of development are premised on the idea of equality of opportunity regardless of an individual's material endowment (Roemer 2009). Scholars and policymakers have hence focused on ensuring fuller access to public goods, especially education and health care (Sen 1999). This is reflected in the centrality of the Human Development Index in measuring well-being. But aggregate measures of development cannot tell us how social opportunity is distributed across ascriptive identities. States with well-functioning social services may still exclude certain groups from its public institu-

tions. Status inequality presents a unique set of challenges to equalization of social opportunity that mere investment in public goods cannot capture. An identity-based idea of justice faces the additional burden of dismantling status beliefs and biases, both institutional and psychological.

Although most identity-based movements grapple with questions of recognition and stigmatization, this article shows that status is fundamentally tied to the economic structure of the society. In the case of status groups, misrecognition and misrepresentation are not just the mechanism for social exclusion, but social hierarchy generates economic inequality between groups. Further, the social and economic distance between groups generated because of segregationist practices and historical discrimination presents unique structural challenges for political mobilization. The comparison of different types of identity-based movements is instructive to understand the role of structural inequality in social change. In the United States, for example, no measured public opinion attitude has changed more dramatically than same-sex marriage. Racial attitudes, in contrast, continue to remain sticky (Rosenfeld 2017). Meta-studies on contact theory also shows that contact with sexual minorities is more effective in reducing prejudice than racial minorities (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). Although homosexual people also face discrimination in employment, unlike racial minorities, they are geographically and socioeconomically integrated. Michael Rosenfeld (2017) attributes the shift in public attitudes to interaction with gay or lesbian friends or family members.

From a policy perspective, identity-based concerns have been addressed through policies supporting cultural diversity. The scholarship of multiculturalism, motivated by the politics of Anglophone and Francophone Canada (Taylor 1994; Kymlicka 1995), conceptualizes ethnic groups as culturally distinct, but hierarchically equal. The focus is hence on the politics of difference. Tracing the Canadian state's genocidal policies toward indigenous groups, Glen Coulthard (2014) argues that multicultural policies cannot address the structural inequality between the indigenous population, and An-

glophone and Francophone settlers at its generative roots. Similarly, in the case of racial inequality, Frantz Fanon (2008, 178) notes that "the black problem is not just about blacks living among whites, but about the black man exploited, enslaved, despised by a colonialist, capitalist society that happens to be white."

Racial capitalism in the Americas has received mainstream attention in recent years (Robinson 1983), but the distinction between symbolic and material politics continues to dominate the scholarship on ethnic inequality. Emphasizing the cultural turn in the scholarship on colonialism, political theorists on the empire argue that "bypassing the political economy of empire, and thus viewing indigenous dispossession, slavery, and imperial despotism primarily through the prism of racism, white supremacy, and cultural arrogance, risks falling into a sort of idealism or inverted reductionism. The lexical priority accorded to these ideological formations downplays the fact that slavery, settlerism, and despotism were above all modalities of expropriating land, labor, and social knowledge, and reorganizing them in the pursuit of wealth, profit and revenue." (Marwah et al. 2020, 291). It should therefore not be surprising that 43 percent of respondents in a recent survey in Britain believed that the empire was beneficial for the colonies (Satia 2020). Claims about the "benefits" of colonialism— transfer of modern institutions, investment in infrastructure, political stability—have little empirical basis (Satia 2021). The revenue records of the East India Company, for example, show that public works made up less than 2 percent of its expenditure. A substantial portion of the resources went into law enforcement to maintain the imperial state; the rest was remitted to Britain (Kohli 2020).

Cultural policies such as recognition of language rights or same-sex marriage can indeed lead to greater inclusion. But such measures do not carry a significant material cost for the dominant group. Redistribution or the recruitment of members of marginal groups, in contrast, is first and foremost economic. Elite resistance to affirmative action is generally based on questions of meritocracy and efficiency, despite evidence to the contrary (Bhavnani and Lee 2019; Deshpande and Weisskopf 2014).

Symbolic politics is not just inadequate to address status inequality, but can even be misleading. Reflecting on the disappointing policy response to the BLM movement, for example, Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò (2022, 5) uncovers two trends, "the elite's tactic of performing symbolic identity politics to pacify protestors without enacting material reforms; and their efforts to rebrand (not replace) existing institutions; also using elements of identity politics." Theories of multiculturalism are better equipped to address recognition gaps in unranked societies. Ethnic inequality has been found to be a stronger predictor of redistribution than cultural difference (Baldwin and Huber 2010), ethnic diversity (Alesina, Michalopoulos, and Papaioannou 2016), and income inequality (Chakrabarti 2021). The politics of status is hence distinct from the politics of difference.

Although legacies of slavery, colonialism, and the caste system present distinct challenges for redistribution, social hierarchies have been reduced in many contexts. New immigrant groups in the United States such as the Irish, Italians, Polish, and Jewish people faced blatant discrimination well into the twentieth century but gradually came to be seen as "white" (Roediger 2005; Brodkin 1998). Caste-based inequality in some parts of India has dramatically reduced over the last century. Across these contexts, political mobilization has been central in the destigmatization of these groups. The recruitment of immigrants in the party system in American cities contributed to their political and social inclusion and paved the way for progressive reforms before the New Deal (Golway 2014). Caste-based political mobilization in southern India were instrumental in reducing social hierarchy and making public policies more responsive to the masses (Ahuja 2019).

To conclude, Max Weber (1978) had conceptualized three types of inequality in industrial societies—status, power, and resources. The three sources are distinct, but status, power, and resources are mutually reinforcing (figure 3). Political representation or power has implications for status politics. Tali Mendelberg (2022, this issue) argues that political mobilization is not just an attempt to gain resources and power, but often a way to obtain status. Because official laws reflect the norms of the

Figure 3. Status, Resources, and Power
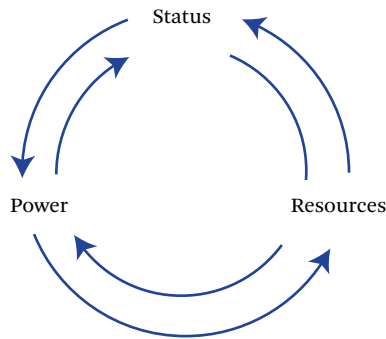
Source: Author's tabulation.

group that control the state, people infer status from public displays of authority and group representation. Further, the state is in a unique position to declare and enforce norms for the entire community (Gusfield 1986). Access to the state determines access to public services and security, including freedom from harassment by state officials, and access to jobs and markets (Chandra and García-Ponce 2019). This is especially relevant in societies where state institutions have historically represented the interests of dominant groups (Mansbridge 1999).

The representation of low-status groups in state institutions and public spaces can potentially reduce the real and imagined social distance between groups by destigmatizing status beliefs, which can in turn support redistributive politics by allowing cross-class alliances to emerge. The research agenda on status in the future should be cognizant of the pitfalls of previous generations of scholarship and needs to find creative ways of combining insights from social psychology into research on group-based political mobilization and redistributive politics.

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