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Inequality as a Multidimensional Process

Michèle Lamont & Paul Pierson, guest editors

with David B. Grusky · Peter A. Hall
Hazel Rose Markus · Patrick Le Galès
Irene Bloemraad · Will Kymlicka
Leanne S. Son Hing · Anne E. Wilson
Peter Gourevitch · Jaslyn English · Parco Sin
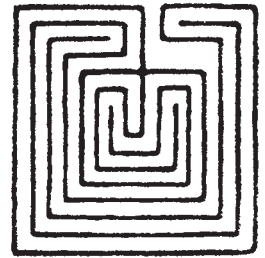Jane Jenson · Francesca Polletta
Paige Raibmon · Jennifer L. Hochschild
Katherine S. Newman · Vijayendra Rao

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Nineteenth-century depiction of a Roman mosaic labyrinth, now lost, found in Villa di Diomede, Pompeii

Dædalus was founded in 1955 and established as a quarterly in 1958. The journal's namesake was renowned in ancient Greece as an inventor, scientist, and unriddler of riddles. Its emblem, a maze seen from above, symbolizes the aspiration of its founders to "lift each of us above his cell in the labyrinth of learning in order that he may see the entire structure as if from above, where each separate part loses its comfortable separateness."

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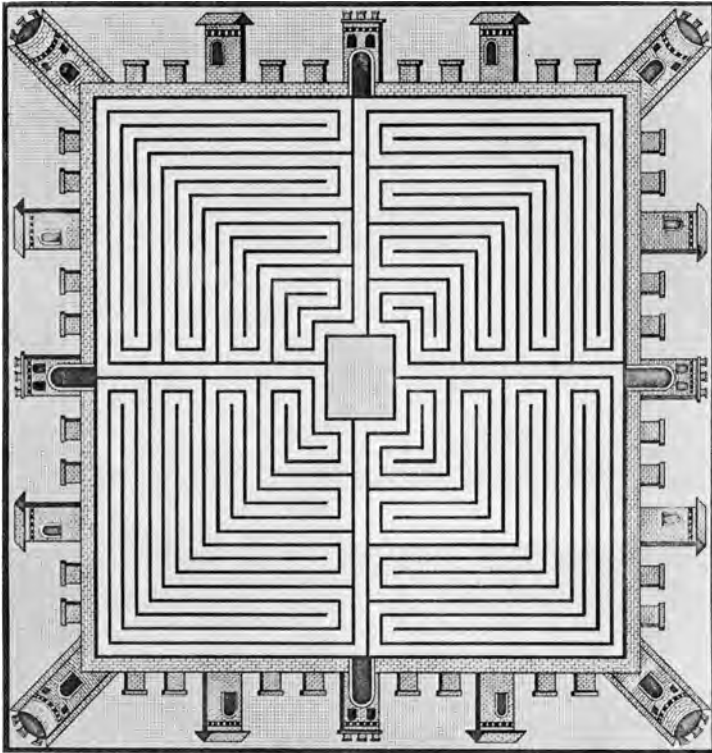
Inequality Generation & Persistence as Multidimensional Processes: An Interdisciplinary Agenda

Michèle Lamont & Paul Pierson

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(Complete author biographies appear at the end of the essay.)

Rising inequality is widely seen as one of our most pressing social problems and a focal point for social science research.[1] Much of the concern, amplified by the argument in economist Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, centers on the prospect that inequality may take extremely durable forms.[2] It is not just that some are advantaged or disadvantaged, but that structures of advantage and disadvantage may become more self-reinforcing and cumulative.[3] It is the persistence and deepening of inequality that raises many of the most troubling issues.

One reason to fear that inequalities may be increasingly durable is the declining effectiveness of key processes of equality generation. The "great compression" in social outcomes during the mid-twentieth century, witnessed across the affluent West, rested in part on core social arrangements that both facilitated more equal economic outcomes directly *and* expanded social opportunities. These arrangements included improved and greatly expanded mass education; continuing movement from rural to more densely populated areas that promised better economic opportunities and improved prospects for social integration; an expansion of access to citizenship and its

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associated benefits; and a social and political system that worked to mitigate excessive inequalities by redistributing wealth and by creating a strong welfare state. Even as some forces might generate inequality, these countervailing processes served as critical correctives.

In addition to often reducing inequality directly, these broad developments frequently limited the extent to which economic inequalities carried over to other aspects of social life. Indeed, these countervailing processes were in many respects mutually reinforcing: for instance, when expanding educational opportunities pulled people toward urban locations that offered other social advantages, or when welfare states provided a modicum of material security that gave people greater opportunity to develop their skills.

This collection of essays is motivated by a recognition that these equality-generating social arrangements have attenuated and, in many ways, been supplanted by processes that are instead inequality-inducing. We stress that it is not just the case that economic outcomes have become more unequal. There have also been important changes in some of the core processes described above. In many instances, we find evidence that these forces have diminished in scope, effectiveness, or both. While access to formal citizenship has been expanded, this has often been accompanied by a fraying sense of mutual obligation; levels of income inequality have increased without an associated strengthening of the welfare state or demand for redistributive policies; systems of advanced education are trending toward reproducing inequality rather than encouraging social mobility; and many of the most vibrant economic centers now promote social closure rather than widened opportunity, with skyrocketing housing prices limiting the access of the disadvantaged to critical social resources.

In thinking about the durability of inequality, we thus find value in exploring how transformed economic conditions are potentially linked to other social, psychological, political, and cultural processes that can either counteract or reinforce the likelihood that inequalities become durable. Only by drawing on a wide range of expertise in the social sciences can such changes and interconnections be understood. Our interdisciplinary inquiry has grown out of a sustained dialogue within an international team of scholars, from a range of social science disciplines, who share an interest in the changing dimensions of social inequality. More important, they share a core conviction: that interdisciplinary work is positioned to bring to light connections among social phenomena that may be less visible to research anchored in a single discipline.[4]

At a moment when societies struggle to deal successfully with inequalities, identifying and exploring connections between economic, social, psychological, political, and cultural dimensions of inequality holds great promise. It can clarify why many forms of social inequalities appear so intractable, often deepening or broadening over time. It also can provide insights into the kinds of interventions that might attenuate, ameliorate, or counteract deepening inequalities. Our group is unusually well-equipped to fully deploy such a multidisciplinary approach to inequality, thanks to fifteen years of regular exchange concerning our respective disciplinary assumptions and analytical tools. This issue of *Dædalus* capitalizes on this asset to broaden the study of inequality and advance new perspectives for future research.

Two distinct sets of claims have developed out of our conversations. The first concerns the need to explore linkages, both temporal and across levels of

analysis, that may illuminate the sources of durable inequality. The second, building on the first, focuses on relatively underexplored aspects of contemporary social inequality: more specifically, the relationship between distribution and recognition as intertwined dynamics producing and reproducing inequality. In this introduction, we outline each of these basic claims, before introducing the individual contributions to the volume. Most of these essays draw on empirical case studies, although some authors also provide new interpretations of secondary data to reveal patterns that have been overlooked up until now. While the essays examine different aspects and types of inequality, as well as different timescales and social settings, they converge on a set of complementary claims. Together, the essays demonstrate the benefits of an explicitly interdisciplinary analysis that explores linkages in over-time processes or across levels of analysis. Indeed, they are generally coauthored by social scientists who work primarily at different analytical levels (micro, meso, and macro) while focusing on different dimensions of social life (economic, political, cultural, or psychological). Each essay also provides an agenda for future research and identifies significant policy implications. To round off the issue, we invited commentaries by three leading social scientists from different disciplines to address the volume's substantive and applied implications.

At the heart of our contribution to the discussion of inequality is the identification and analysis of connections among social phenomena that may be most visible from distinctive disciplinary vantage points. We distinguish two important types of connections: one grounded in temporal relationships, the other in relationships that operate across different levels of analysis. Connections grounded in a temporal relationship draw one's attention to dynamic processes. Connections that link distinct levels of analysis draw one's attention to important combinations of micro-, meso-, and macro-phenomena.

Analyses of rising inequality have tended to focus on wealth and income disparities and their immediate determinants. They often concentrate on either structural changes in the labor market (such as the loss of blue-collar jobs), in economic organizations (such as the financialization of firms and the sharp decline of labor unions), or on elite-driven changes to laws and policies (such as lower taxes and deregulation). Such forces are, of course, extremely important. Yet in adopting these foci, analyses may miss cultural and other dimensions of inequality and the factors and relationships that feed into them, which are more likely to be understood if inequality is seen as a multifaceted and multilevel unfolding process. A key potential contribution of our approach is the ability to identify forms of social relationships and intergroup processes that may intensify unequal distributions of resources, or cause them to spread from one social domain to another. Either the deepening or broadening of inequality potentially makes it more intractable. As these processes unfold, the factors that reproduce inequality may also shift, requiring that analysts attend to distinct social phenomena and relationships. We argue that in the post-Piketty era, it is imperative that students of inequality refocus their attention on such fundamental processes, which have many direct and indirect implications for inequality-reducing policy-making.

A number of prominent scholars have stressed the dynamic qualities of inequality.[5] They build on sociologist Charles

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Tilly's influential writing on "durable inequality."[6] Tilly argued that a critical vehicle for the entrenchment of advantage and disadvantage is the development of dichotomous categorizations (white/black, immigrant/native, male/female). These rest on a series of distinct mechanisms operating in diverse settings (schools, firms, policies) that are built around such categorizations to produce social closure and opportunity-hoarding and allocate advantages and disadvantages differentially across categories. Sociologists such as Donald Tomaskovic-Devey and Dustin Avent-Holt are expanding our understanding of the role of organizations as loci for growing inequality, while others, like Rogers Brubaker, have taken issue with Tilly's claim that different types of categories (such as gender and citizenship) work in fundamentally similar ways in producing inequality.

An important aspect of our effort is to further develop this type of analysis. The essays in this issue show that the social relationships and cleavages, psychological conceptions of self and other, and political contestations that reproduce, intensify, or deepen inequality are often quite distinct from the ones that may have generated it in the first place. Recognizing these unfolding sequences may not only help identify distinctive sites that transform initial inequalities into durable ones, but also open the prospect of identifying possible policy interventions that might disrupt such vicious cycles.

We share the conviction that interdisciplinary analysis can help identify and explicate a variety of economic, political, social, cultural, and psychological mechanisms that tend to increase or intensify inequality in its various forms. In many cases, we can show how these mechanisms make important but underappreciated contributions to broader processes producing or reproducing inequality.[7]

In this volume, we pay special attention to a number of specific and common social mechanisms that illuminate how, over time, particular forms of inequality may be reinforced. Among these mechanisms are those of evaluation, legitimization, quantification, commodification, and policy drift. These mechanisms have been elaborated in particular disciplines, but they are quite useful for identifying specific linkages among social phenomena that may intensify inequality:

- *Evaluation* typically involves the categorization of individuals and goods as well as the legitimation of hierarchies.[8] It establishes hierarchies of value and/or status between units and builds a consensus around the criteria on which such hierarchies rest. Evaluation is central to the creation of the standards of deservingness and meritocracy that increasingly guide the distribution of resources as well as recognition of status: that is, the two faces of inequality.

- *Legitimization* involves a bias to accept the perceived status quo as appropriate. It leads to the justification of society and its institutions as fair, particularly when injustices are evident, as such processes help to reduce discomfort and uncertainty and restore a sense of the world as a just place.[9] It encourages the adoption of stratification beliefs, such as social mobility, meritocracy, and prejudice toward the poor.

- *Quantification* involves the introduction of metrics (quantitative measures of performance). While it is often advocated as an avenue to increasing accountability and fairness, quantification requires commensuration between entities of different natures.[10] Such metrics can reinforce inequalities. They may devalue criteria that might have favored the disadvantaged and shift outcomes toward groups that have the greatest

capacity to adapt to the new guidelines for competition. What looks like fairness and the rewarding of merit may in fact compound existing inequalities.

- *Commodification* involves the transformation of resources that were once provided as public goods into ones available only as purchasable commodities. In a context of rising economic inequality, commodification can play a significant role in spreading that inequality to other domains. By gradually magnifying the implications of these income disparities for life chances and well-being, commodification processes can greatly intensify the long-term implications of purely economic inequality.

- *Policy drift* refers to the effects that follow when rules or regulations remain static while social conditions shift.[11] It is especially likely when political reform is obstructed (as it is in many current institutional arrangements) during a time of rapid economic change and weakening political commitments to equity. Because drift involves the interplay between (static) policy arrangements and (dynamic) social settings, it is a mechanism whose exploration explicitly requires an interdisciplinary focus. This low-visibility but important mechanism can intensify inequalities, for instance, when minimum wages or social benefits are not adjusted for inflation, or when regulatory arrangements fail to adapt to changing markets or social relationships.

Process-focused analysis is central to the essays to follow. Initial shifts in, say, economic allocations emphasized in standard accounts may be only one part of more multifaceted long-term developments that transform structures of opportunity. The long-term implications of economic changes may depend heavily on other forces they may trigger, or that

may coincide with them but are distinctive and produce important interaction effects. For instance, in this volume, David B. Grusky, Peter A. Hall, and Hazel Rose Markus, in "The Rise of Opportunity Markets : How Did It Happen & What Can We Do?" show how several of the mechanisms just noted, especially commodification, are at work in the current transformation of higher education, deepening social inequalities.[12] As ability to pay becomes more tightly linked to educational opportunity, economic advantages become self-reinforcing. As the particular skills that schools value – built into their systems of quantification and evaluation – become increasingly stratified by class, seemingly neutral structures become status-reinforcing rather than sources of mobility.

"'Superstar Cities' & the Generation of Durable Inequality," the contribution of Patrick Le Galès and Paul Pierson, similarly focuses on how stunning new disparities in housing wealth in urban agglomerations can gradually intensify inequalities.[13] In the emerging knowledge economy, economic inequalities have become increasingly intertwined with the spatial distribution of groups and social opportunity. Understanding the long-term effects of these spatial distributions requires the investigation of a variety of important sociological processes. Transformations that follow initial economic inequalities potentially generate more varied and extensive structures of inequality. High-quality job opportunities, advantageous social networks (including marriage networks), and the benefits of short commutes become concentrated in particular areas. Prohibitive housing costs lock out those who cannot draw on preexisting economic advantages. Policy drift plays an important role. Long-established housing policies have often been overwhelmed by the new dynamic of

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rapidly escalating urban property values. The growing tilt of political power toward the already advantaged can worsen these inequality-intensifying dynamics. Political resistance to efforts to increase the availability of affordable housing can potentially bring the process of social closure full circle.

In their essay "Membership without Social Citizenship? Deservingness & Redistribution as Grounds for Equality," Irene Bloemraad, Will Kymlicka, Michèle Lamont, and Leanne Son Hing consider how evaluations of deservingness are shaping the transformation of social citizenship across advanced industrial societies.[14] They point to evidence that declining formal barriers to membership have coincided with a diminishing sense of shared obligations toward low-income groups, and identify various disciplinary explanations for this relationship. They also highlight potentially contradictory trends in the movement toward greater equality: just as membership boundaries based on ascribed characteristics (such as gender and sexuality and ethnoracial differences) have become less exclusionary than in earlier decades, deservingness judgments toward the poor have become fraught, with arguably less solidarity around redistribution.

Similarly, in "The Difficulties of Combating Inequality in Time," Jane Jenson, Francesca Polletta, and Paige Raibmon analyze three cases in which reformers made claims in favor of disadvantaged groups for greater equality (for gender equality in the EU, the rights of indigenous peoples in Canada, and women and people of color in medical trials in the United States).[15] In each case, activists proposed policies capable of overcoming the notorious equality/difference dilemma. That is, they sought to avoid the false dichotomy between assuming that disadvantaged groups have identical needs

to the advantaged, *or* that they are fundamentally different from them. The key to sidestepping this dichotomy lay in taking a *longue durée* view of the historical processes that caused and reproduced inequality. Yet, in the course of the reform process, various political actors either acquiesced to or were unable to prevent the rise of dehistoricized – often essentialist – views of the group in question, views that fundamentally undermined the reach, staying power, and effectiveness of the reform. Their essay illuminates how durable inequality can be unintentionally reproduced by collective efforts that aim toward equalization and destigmatization.

Finally, Leanne Son Hing, Anne Wilson, Peter Gourevitch, Jaslyn English, and Parco Sin, in "Failure to Respond to Rising Income Inequality: Processes That Legitimize Growing Disparities," examine another puzzling paradox.[16] Prominent public choice models contend that in a democratic political system, public demand for redistribution should prompt the strengthening of the welfare state, particularly under conditions of rising inequality. Instead, accumulating evidence more often uncovers the opposite pattern (increasing inequality *reduces* support for redistribution), suggesting that the democratic political process once expected to curb excessive inequality has become a system that instead may contribute to its durability. They further consider how psychological processes – often in interaction with emerging patterns of social, economic, and political inequality – lead people to legitimize rising inequality and redouble their belief in inequality-sustaining ideologies, with downstream consequences for intergroup judgments of deservingness. They also point to how inequality shapes political action, reducing participation among the economically disadvantaged, further

shrinking their influence on policy outcomes and reducing their trust in government to work on their behalf. All of these contributions have direct implications for addressing inequality.

A second focus of our interdisciplinary work explores how processes at the micro-, meso-, and macrolevels may interact to increase inequalities. As the essays in this volume demonstrate, collaboration between psychologists, sociologists, and political economists enables a more detailed and specific comprehension of the interface between individual action, cultural repertoires and institutions, and broader social forces, all of which are involved in the production and reproduction of inequality.

The *microlevel* refers to the intra- and interindividual degree of analysis occurring in personal interactions. The *macrolevel* refers to structural patterns of resources and society-spanning institutions (like governments) that characterize populations and societies considered in the aggregate. Much of what is studied in the fields of comparative politics and comparative sociology falls under this umbrella. By *mesolevel* we refer to institutions and cultural resources found in organizations, neighborhoods, and networks. While the mesolevel unfolds through ongoing micro-interactions among individuals, critical dynamics are often apparent only when different levels are incorporated within the same analysis.

Work on inequality often focuses on one of these levels, in part because disciplines often emphasize one level over others. Yet important dimensions of inequality may only be apparent when one examines linkages between two or more levels. For instance, Hazel Markus has shown how institutional (meso) processes with a seemingly egalitarian character governing access to higher education (elite colleges admitting and educating meritorious low-income students free of cost) can be subverted at the microlevels (for example, by processes that stigmatize these students on college campuses). Sociologists Wendy Espeland and Michael Sauder have demonstrated how similar isomorphic organizational responses to the quantification of performance by individual law school deans accentuate inequality throughout the field of legal education.[17] The result is an accelerated "winner takes all" trend, as each law school aims to improve its performance in terms of the very criteria they are being assessed on. The same happens in the American K–12 education system. The quantified performance of public schools, driven by isomorphic processes as well as macrostructures of public policy, is exercising a growing influence on microlevel home-buying decisions. This in turn feeds into the concentration of advantages in the top 20 percent of the population.[18] In their contribution, Son Hing, Wilson, Gourevitch, English, and Sin outline how mesolevel phenomena – that is, the increasing wealth segregation of neighborhoods and socioeconomically homogenous social networks – affect microlevel phenomena – such as social comparison processes and perceptions of income inequality. Within-class social comparisons lead the poor (comparing with other poor people in their community) to overestimate their position in the income distribution and the rich (comparing with their wealthy neighbors) to underestimate theirs. In both cases, changes in these meso-environments lead individuals to underestimate inequality.

Identifying connections across levels often requires simultaneous consideration of distinct social realms. It might, for instance, demand attention to the interplay between microlevel psychological processes and mesolevel phenomena that

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manifest themselves in the social, political, or economic realm. Even when social scientists grounded in a specific discipline do seek linkages across multiple levels, they may be unable to theorize adequately or write cogently about them for lack of training or disciplinary overspecialization. Even if they are aware of such connections, disciplinary incentives may strongly discourage them from pursuing or emphasizing them if they lie outside their field.

This is why multidisciplinary inquiry is a particularly promising path for broadening and enriching the study of inequality. Our group has been specifically designed to build the intellectual capacity to consider such linkages, including connections that cut across disciplinary divides. For instance, the contribution of Bloemraad, Kymlicka, Lamont, and Son Hing analyzes tensions between more inclusive membership and less support for redistribution across advanced industrial societies. They show how these tensions can be accounted for by mobilizing contrasting theoretical frameworks from political theory, psychology, and sociology. Moreover, by combining the analytical tools of spatial and political analysis, Le Galès and Pierson show that national institutional arrangements heavily condition both the capacity and willingness of local communities to respond to spatially reinforced inequalities. They argue that effective responses to these seemingly local challenges require the provision of resources and the imposition of constraints that are only likely to occur in some national political settings.

While we are interested in demonstrating the broad and diverse advantages of the interdisciplinary exploration of linkages, we place priority on exploring connections between social processes of resource distribution and cultural processes

of recognition. Echoing early arguments about poverty, some social scientists debate whether inequality should be conceptualized as an economic or a cultural phenomenon. More recent studies are resolutely moving away from such dichotomous framing to analyze how social structures (such as class formations) and cultural repertoires (such as frames, narratives, and institutions) enable and constrain access to various types of economic, social, and cultural resources.[19] While social scientists increasingly reject the critique that cultural approaches to poverty are inherently conservative, a growing number have come to understand inequality and poverty as multidimensional: that is, they combine economic, cultural, spatial, and political dimensions.[20] This suggests that an interdisciplinary agenda for improving our understanding of inequality is particularly timely.

One of our premises is that meaning-making is central to the social processes through which unequal relationships are set into motion and reproduced. In approaching "inequality as a multidimensional process," we underscore that inequality involves both the distribution of resources and narratives concerning the relative status and identity of groups (such as recognition and its counterpart, stigmatization). Differences in recognition are produced by narratives and manifested in the existence of pecking orders that are revealed through the display of status, expectations of deference, and a myriad of other signals. They are also legitimized and contested through equalization and stigmatization narratives and strategies. Thus, Jenson, Polletta, and Raibmon examine the ways in which efforts to combat inequality were undermined by the competing understandings of historical process and progression from which political actors operated. Particular understandings yielded quite different assumptions

about the sources of group disadvantage *and* about the ways in which past inequality would yield to future equality. For their part, Son Hing, Wilson, Gourevitch, English, and Sin consider how various narratives and ideologies, such as meritocracy, the American dream, and the belief in a just world, result in the heightened conviction that the economically disadvantaged in an unequal system must deserve their lot. As a result, spiraling economic disparities ironically dampen rather than energize calls for redistribution and a strengthened welfare state. Such psychological mechanisms ultimately limit efforts toward greater equality when it is most needed, and are among the mutually reinforcing factors that are at the center of our collective inquiry.

Issues of distribution have been the focus of the bulk of the vast social science research on inequality, with a focus on income and wealth cross-nationally or gender and ethnoracial groups.[21] While there is increasing appreciation that access to resources may be contingent on recognition of individuals as full members of the community, the independent impact of stigmatization on inequality and poverty remains largely underexamined. For instance, stigmatization is a cause of inequality in the case of LGBTQ youth, who may be forced into homelessness as a result of intense family conflict around their sexual or gender identity. Our issue is part of a broader effort to more fully include the impact of stigmatization and recognition into our understanding of dynamics of inequality.[22]

One step toward developing a more comprehensive and multidimensional approach to inequality is to investigate distribution and recognition in relation to one another. Research suggests that the relationship between recognition and access to resources may be much more complex and contingent than suggested in debates pitting identity politics against class claims (as put in the original writing of social scientist Nancy Fraser on recognition).[23] We now know that recognition is about class as much as gender and ethnicity, that all groups aim to raise their position within a status order, and that the latter is often correlated with access to both symbolic and material resources. Such findings call for a step away from economic determinism, toward a broader reconceptualization of the relationship between the various aspects of inequality.

One of our objectives is to explore specifically how the construction of groups – particularly in terms of their perceived deservingness – may influence who gets what over the long term. This is examined in particular in the essay by Bloemraad and colleagues, which focuses on changed feelings of solidarity toward the poor in advanced industrial societies, feelings that have been declining in some societies precisely at a time when low-income populations are being asked to demonstrate self-reliance under the pressure of increasingly influential neoliberal standards of personhood.[24] The authors document a general pattern of growing recognition and inclusion of women, ethnoracial and religious minorities, and legal immigrants in advanced industrial societies over the last decades, if we focus on formal legal equality, social relations, and cultural inclusion. But at the same time, in various places, the poor are more frequently judged as undeserving of social support in the form of welfare redistribution. Mobilizing the analytical tools of their respective fields of specialization – political philosophy, social psychology, cultural sociology, and political sociology – these authors articulate a broad agenda for exploring these changes and the relationships between membership, identity, social inclusion, and redistribution. Linkages among micro-,

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meso-, and macrolevels are central to their argument: individual judgments of others draw on mesolevel cultural repertoires and institutions and on macrolevel public policies, which in turn influence macrolevel political contestation and resource distribution.

These essays also seek to deepen understandings of *how* cultural and institutional frameworks interact in the production of inequalities and equality. This is a topic that the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research's Successful Societies program tackled in two previous collective volumes.[25] Here we are especially interested in how certain kinds of cultural frameworks (such as those associated with ethnoracial inclusion) acquire legitimacy and become institutionalized, and how the operation of certain kinds of institutions (such as those associated with the welfare state) influence cultural frameworks of inclusion. This is particularly central in the essay by Son Hing and colleagues, which is concerned with how beliefs about merit are formed and in turn influence beliefs about the distribution of income.

We conclude with a methodological note. Readers will recognize that we are in conversation with a broader literature that treats multilevel process-tracing and configurational analysis as valuable tools for exploring the social world.[26] We are interested in understanding not only *how* things happen, but also *why* they happen.[27] Again, this conception of causality focuses on interactions among the micro-, meso-, and macrolevels as they evolve in space and time. It is intended to help define a broader agenda for the interdisciplinary study of inequality as social scientists realize the pitfall of considering social phenomena in isolation.

The essays included in this issue are the result of sustained collaborations within the Successful Societies program, which has met three times a year since 2003.[28] Each team of authors developed their contribution through extensive discussions at meetings with the entire group over two years. Program members (Bloemraad, Grusky, Hall, Jenson, Kymlicka, Lamont, Pierson, Polletta, Raibmon, Son Hing, and Wilson) and advisory committee members (Gourevitch, Le Galès, and Markus) have created teams to attack a question of mutual interest. In all cases, authors focus on the core set of questions and theoretical concerns outlined in this introductory essay, and their contributions draw on a continuing conversation among members of the group. This results in a productive yet all-too-rare conversation drawing on insights from sociology, political science, social psychology, and history.

Our intensive collaboration, however, is not just intended to draw on insights from these specific disciplines. Rather, it seeks to specify some of the important advantages of sustained dialogue across disciplinary divides. Ultimately, the goal is to point to possible sites and strategies for meaningful interventions to disrupt the generation and reproduction of growing inequalities. To enhance this effort, we are including commentaries by three leading scholars/practitioners, each based in a different discipline, who have researched or participated in a wide range of efforts geared to inequality reduction.

In an insightful essay, political scientist Jennifer Hochschild praises our multidisciplinary approach to inequality but points out that we could well have paid more attention to properly political dynamics that feed inequality – and, historically, have at times diminished it as well. She rightly insists on the need to continue to explore equality-producing processes. Finally, she urges us to extend our agenda to the conditions under which

the relationships we identify would hold, and to pay even more attention to how time matters.

For her part, sociologist Katherine Newman focuses on our contributions to the role of deservingness, the legitimation of inequality, and spatial segregations as dynamics feeding inequality. She urges that more weight be placed on growing xenophobia in the analysis of the broadening of social inclusion over the last decades. She also points to the ways in which societies like the United States have attempted to counter the effect of spatial immobility and opportunity-hoarding by the rich by opening elite universities to the poor, even if it often appears to be too little, too late.

Finally, World Bank economist Vijayendra Rao locates our contributions in the context of the competing paradigms that have structured the discipline of economics in the past few decades. He spells out how much an approach to inequality focused on processes, instead of outcomes, has to contribute to the broad enterprise that is the study of inequality. He urges us also to consider the global South and the ability to "give voice" in our attempts to broaden policy interventions addressing inequality beyond the well-traveled paths of scholars studying more affluent societies.

Bringing our analyses of "inequality as a multidimensional process" into dialogue with social scientists working in policy and applied settings is particularly appropriate at a time when Robert Shiller, president of the American Economic Association, has turned his attention to "narrative economics" and when leading foundations such as the Gates, Casey, and Ford Foundations are focusing on narratives as crucial to the study of inequality and mobility.[29] This signals the growing importance of moving away from narrow approaches to causal analysis of inequality that seek to isolate single causes and effects, in order to focus on intersecting and complex causal pathways as they manifest themselves over time in the real world.

Each essay in this issue explicitly addresses the policy implications of their analysis. We maintain that in the long run, it is not simply the distribution of resources that matters, but the highly varied social processes that influence what people can and cannot do with those resources, as well as how individuals and groups make sense of (and therefore respond to) these distributions. In many cases, disrupting or attenuating some of these related social and cultural processes may be an essential part of any effort to tackle intensifying inequalities of material resources. Compared with direct efforts to generate redistribution of resources, they may also represent more plausible targets.

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ENDNOTES

[1] By inequality, we refer not only to the unequal access and distribution of material and social resources (the most common focus of studies of inequality), but also to corollary status orders that signal unequal recognition (stigmatization and discrimination) for various segments of the population.

[2] Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014).

[3] Thomas A. DiPrete and Gregory M. Eirich, "Cumulative Advantage as a Mechanism for Inequality: A Review of Theoretical and Empirical Developments," *Annual Review of Sociology* 32 (2006): 271–297.

[4] See also Leslie McCall, Derek Burk, Marie Laperrière, and Jennifer A. Richeson, "Exposure to Rising Inequality Shapes Americans' Opportunity Beliefs and Policy Support," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 114 (36) (2017): 9593–9598.

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The Rise of Opportunity Markets: How Did It Happen & What Can We Do?

David B. Grusky, Peter A. Hall & Hazel Rose Markus

Abstract: We describe the rise of "opportunity markets" that allow well-off parents to buy opportunity for their children. Although parents cannot directly buy a middle-class outcome for their children, they can buy opportunity indirectly through advantaged access to the schools, neighborhoods, and information that create merit and raise the probability of a middle-class outcome. The rise of opportunity markets happened so gradually that the country has seemingly forgotten that opportunity was not always sold on the market. If the United States were to recommit to equalizing opportunities, this could be pursued by dismantling opportunity markets, by providing low-income parents with the means to participate in them, or by allocating educational opportunities via separate competitions among parents of similar means. The latter approach, which we focus upon here, would not require mobilizing support for a massive redistributive project.

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Is there any pressing need for another paper on the effects of educational expansion and reform on social mobility? Because the ongoing stream of commentary on education reform is so vast, it might seem unlikely that a new contribution to this literature could add much value.[1]

But however saturated the education reform literature may be, existing commentary tends to gloss over the rise of "opportunity markets," a fundamental development that should be treated as a main threat to realizing our country's long-standing commitment to equalizing opportunity and increasing mobility. We will show that the rise of opportunity markets makes it possible for parents to convert money seamlessly into high-quality resumes for their children and thus create the perception that merit just happens to coincide with money. We will also show that the task of building a merit-projecting resume requires vast infusions of parental money from the very moment of

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conception. Although we are hardly the first to make this point,[2] the extent to which the merit-construction business has come to depend on financial resources has not been fully appreciated, nor have our reform efforts adequately taken the force of this development into account.

The first step that any reformer should take is to diagnose well. We thus begin our essay by describing the rise of opportunity markets and how they allow well-off parents to buy elite education and other desirable outcomes for their children. As important as this diagnosis is, our essay does not end with it. We also use this diagnosis for the purpose of prescribing. In doing so, we do not insist on treating the "root cause," given that there is no iron law to the effect that a successful treatment must target the cause. When it comes to reforming our mobility regime, our instinct is that present-day Americans likewise lack the stomach to deal directly with the causes of unequal opportunity, as doing so would entail massive redistribution.

But that is not reason to despair. It only means that we must find another way. We show that, although the mobility process has been deeply recast by the rise of opportunity markets, it is possible to counter this development by intervening at a late point in the process rather than attempting to undo the development of opportunity markets themselves.

We do not mean to suggest that anyone operating under a Rawlsian veil of ignorance would want to live in a society based on opportunity markets. The problem we now face, however, is one of dealing with opportunity markets after they have emerged. In this context, most high-income Americans will aver that they should be allowed to spend their hard-won dollars however they wish, a type of "liberty" that includes the right to participate in opportunity markets for

the purpose of helping their children succeed.[3] Moreover, because most high-income Americans are also skeptical of aggressive redistribution, it would be difficult to garner support for a transfer program that would allow low-income families to participate fully in opportunity markets. The good news is that neither of these types of revolutions is necessary. We argue instead that, were a small handful of education-sector elites to decide to restructure the college admissions process, they could trigger a norm cascade that would counter the rise of opportunity markets and lead to a substantial increase in social mobility.

It is rare indeed that an opportunity for transformative change lies within the control of so few. We are, you could say, writing this essay for those few.

The balance of our essay elaborates on this argument by providing prolonged answers to the following two questions :

1) Why has the expansion of higher education in the United States failed to bring about an increase in social mobility?

2) How might selective institutions of higher education be reformed to increase social mobility and ultimately spawn norm cascades that would lead to more far-reaching change?

We focus more on the diagnostic question than the policy question because, as noted above, it is all-important to get the diagnosis right. After describing the rise of opportunity markets, we introduce several policy options available to us, only one of which might realistically be implemented in the near term. This prescription entails convincing education-sector elites to define merit in a way that adjusts for the different environments in which it is constructed. We feature this solution as an important corrective to the view that any far-reaching commitment to equal opportunity would require a massive redistributive effort.

It is easy to be disillusioned by the unceasing flow of small reforms that are intended to equalize opportunities but that clearly have not made much headway against far more powerful opposing forces. Although these incremental reforms are an important stopgap, they fall short of meeting a democratic society's obligation to act decisively to equalize opportunity. As sociologist Michelle Jackson argues, social scientists should be on perpetual lookout for more radical ways to get the job done.[4] Even if our preferred radical option is not taken up, there is still value in synthesizing social science insights – from sociology, economics, political science, and psychology – to imagine how a policy intervention could trigger an array of macro-, meso-, and microlevel processes to equalize educational opportunity.

But is the current state of affairs all that worrisome? Is such a radical defense of equal opportunity an overreaction? The available evidence suggests that we are *not* overreacting. We know that the test-score gap between children from low- and high-income families has widened by roughly 40 percent in the last three decades.[5] We know that, at the thirty-eight highest ranked colleges, more students come from the top 1 percent of the family income distribution than from the entire bottom 60 percent.[6] We know that less than half of the students in the bottom quintile of family income attend any college at all.[7] We know that, because the returns to education continue to increase, children without access to a high-quality education are ever more disadvantaged.[8] We know that approximately two-thirds of the income inequality between poor and well-off families is passed on to the next generation.[9]

As important as these facts are, there are also profound gaps in our knowledge. There is, for example, a troubling evidence deficit on long-run trends in U.S. social and economic mobility, especially with respect to relative mobility rates.[10] The deficit exists mainly because the available surveys are based on small samples and do not extend far enough back in time. Although we cannot weigh in definitively on long-run trends, there can be no doubt but that present-day departures from equal opportunity in the United States are profound. The current state of affairs simply cannot be reconciled with an "American dream" in which all children, even those with low-income parents, are supposed to have the same opportunity.

When measured against the depth of the problem, the policy response to this state of affairs is disappointing. For the most part, the response has taken the form of either 1) admitting more "first-generation" students to postsecondary institutions; or 2) providing postsecondary loans or grants to low-income children. The former approach falls short because first-generation status is a poor proxy for income, and the latter approach falls short because it wrongly presumes that the main barriers to access are credit constraints at the very end of the training period (the postsecondary years). Insofar as credit constraints are indeed in play, we will show that they are likely to be more problematic in the earlier years of childhood, when low-income families cannot borrow the money needed to rent or buy housing in neighborhoods that offer high-quality education. It follows that low-income children are not receiving the early training that then positions them for a high-quality college track.

It would be conventional at this point to champion some new approach to "fixing" the primary or secondary schools that low-income students attend. The school-fixing literature, which is of course vast, has so far been a disappointment.

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Because all prior efforts at equalizing training have been tepid and weak, it is best to look to solutions that do not require us to wait for an authentic effort at rebuilding a training system that truly provides equal opportunity. This will likely be a long wait. After decades of interventions, we still find ourselves in a situation in which, for example, the test-score gap between children from low- and high-income families is widening, not narrowing.[11] This leaves us with the decision of either 1) continuing to pretend that the next tepid intervention will somehow succeed where none other has or 2) owning up to the inevitability of running a deeply unequal training regimen for the foreseeable future. The great virtue of moving beyond the usual wishful thinking is that we can then turn directly to the task of building a college admission system that integrates well with the unequal training system we actually have and will likely continue to have for some time. The prescriptive purpose of our essay is to show how doing so could set in motion a norm cascade that would lead to far-reaching change.

The foregoing raises the question of whether current levels of inequality are too deeply entrenched to be addressed by everyday reform efforts. In suggesting that we should own up to the "inevitability of running a deeply unequal training regimen for the foreseeable future," we only mean to suggest that, *given our existing institutional and cultural commitments*, it will be difficult to dismantle the current system of highly unequal training. The United States has settled, in other words, into a particular type of training regime that is backed by a wide range of institutional commitments that then make it difficult to effect reform using conventional approaches. In principle, the United States could have opted for a different

set of institutions, with some of these very likely to have yielded far lower levels of inequality. The theme of this *Dædalus* issue, which resonates in our essay, is that a society's inequality regime is the historically specific outcome of the cultural and institutional arrangements characterizing that society. These cultural and institutional arrangements come together and interact in ways that produce an inequality regime that is then naturalized and understood as inevitable.

Although this abstract formulation of the genesis of existing inequalities will strike many social scientists as unobjectionable, it is not the formulation that underlies the typical lay understanding of this process. It is instead conventional to treat inequality as the product of either inevitable variation in the talents or proclivities of individuals or inexorable forces at the heart of late industrialism or market economies. For many commentators, the extreme inequality in the United States and other well-off countries is represented as a "necessary evil," whereas inequality is in fact an implicit or explicit policy decision arising out of historically specific cultural and institutional arrangements.

These arrangements tend not to be a haphazard congeries of commitments. We use the term *inequality regime* to express the relatively high level of integration that runs across macrolevel institutions (like the economy), mesolevel organizations (like the family), and microlevel processes (like constructing the self) that are implicated in the production of inequality. The rise of opportunity markets, for example, is an expression of a deeper cultural and institutional commitment to allocate scarce goods and services through markets. This macrolevel commitment to opportunity markets travels downward to the mesolevel in the sense that families become the main unit for mobilizing the

resources needed to make investments in these markets. It also travels downward to the microlevel as parents, teachers, and peers pass on class-specific conceptions of the self, conceptions that affect how children will fare in opportunity markets.

The result of these integrative tendencies is an inequality regime that functions so smoothly that its many interlocking components can be invisible. It is nonetheless crucial for our argument that, beneath this appearance of high integration, there remain some quite fundamental inconsistencies and contradictions. By drawing out the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of opportunity markets, our goal is to identify a point of intervention that can unravel the regime. The unraveling will rest on exploiting a contradiction between a commitment to markets as the preferred mode of allocating opportunities (the "neoliberal commitment") and a commitment to providing opportunities to all children (the "equal opportunity commitment") even when their families cannot afford to buy them.

This contradiction may seem too fundamental to have been overlooked in any existing inequality regime. How did a society built around a commitment to equal opportunity end up putting opportunity on the market? Although that may seem an unlikely outcome, the neoliberal commitment to defunding and privatizing the public sector swept up everything in its path, in effect blinding us to some of the inconsistencies that this commitment engendered. The marketization of opportunity was in this sense a side effect of a host of smaller decisions, each undergirded by a neoliberal logic, that cumulated into an outcome never explicitly chosen.

This sudden turn to neoliberalism was undergirded by a dual claim about the efficiency and justice of markets so seductive that it was applied even to services that were a prerequisite for accessing opportunities.[12] The efficiency side of the neoliberal claim assumes that market competition maximizes total economic production. The logic here is that, were we instead to "give training away" to everyone (via free college, for example), some students would opt for it even if the training would be wasted on them. The market ensures instead that resources are only spent where justified by the payoff. The justice side of the neoliberal narrative asserts that market competition yields not only efficiency, but also a fair distribution of rewards. This justice premise holds that the winners of the competition deserve the substantial rewards bestowed on them because they are the most diligent and talented. It assumes, in other words, that universities are making their admission decisions on the basis of merit and that universities are processing their admitted students in ways that produce a merit-based ranking that may then be profitably used by employers. The neoliberal vision is thus a tight and self-reinforcing model that legitimates the market as both efficient (output maximizing) and just (meritocratic). It compactly inspires and defends some of the core inequalities now characteristic of contemporary societies.

But are opportunity markets like all other markets? Can they be defended convincingly in these terms? If a training system is to have good neoliberal credentials, it must at minimum ensure that investments in children are made on the basis of expected returns, not on the basis of the family's capacity to afford them. With the rise of opportunity markets, a family's capacity to invest in the human capital of its children depends on its income and wealth, with the implication that many low-income and low-wealth families are locked out of making investments even when the expected returns to those invest-

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ments are very high. Although, in principle, this problem could be solved by allowing for borrowing, in practice, there are not well-developed markets that allow for borrowing in early childhood, when investments are likely to have the highest payoff. Moreover, even if these markets did exist, many low-income families would not avail themselves of such loans because they deem them too risky in the absence of fallback resources should the investment go awry.[13] The upshot is that children born into well-off families are protected from a fair and open competition with their counterparts in poor families.

We now turn to the task of laying out in very stylized terms how opportunity markets came into being. As discussed above, we do not suggest that elite policy-makers, operating under the spell of neoliberal stories about efficiency and justice, purposefully brought opportunity markets into being. It was rather the case that they drifted into opportunity markets via a series of small policy decisions that, each taken separately, could be narrowly justified in neoliberal terms.

We begin this story during that period after World War II when the provision of mass education came to be seen as one of the architectonic tasks of modern states. Although mass education had long been represented as a vehicle for increasing social mobility, this function was stressed as a key component of the emerging modern welfare state. In one of the earliest defenses of the welfare state, sociologist T. H. Marshall accorded education a preeminent role in what he termed "class abatement," the process by which class-based differences in life chances would erode and allow social equality to be secured.[14]

The U.S. educational system began to take on a form that approximated this ideal in the aftermath of World War II. The secondary schooling that was need-

ed to enter the middle class was so widely available that even poor families could reasonably expect their children to secure it and thus qualify for a good job in an automobile factory, a steel mill, or a grocery store. To be eligible for these types of middle-class jobs, all that was needed, at most, was the standard secondary schooling available in local neighborhoods. The road to the middle class did not entail parents buying high-quality childcare, moving to an expensive neighborhood, making ongoing investments in off-season or after-school training, or taking on debt to afford years of college tuition.[15] Although there were still vast inequalities of opportunity in the postwar period, it was not the case that the opportunity to enter the middle class was quite so baldly sold to the highest bidder. The profound restrictions faced by African Americans, for example, stemmed from segregation and legal restrictions rather than from purely financial obstacles.[16]

We now live in a very different world in which financial obstacles have become an increasingly fundamental challenge to realizing our commitment to equal opportunity. The marketization of opportunity has taken hold gradually and through many seemingly distinct processes. Once in place, it has been protected by a generalized neoliberal commitment to the sanctity of markets, a commitment that has made it difficult to challenge the prerogative of families to buy opportunity for their children on the new opportunity markets. Because these markets are now well developed at every stage of the life course, it is important to review how a child, from the moment of birth up to labor market entry, is processed through them. Although everyone knows that tertiary education is directly purchased, this is but the culmination of a shockingly deep penetration of opportunity markets into our everyday lives.[17]

Zone-1 opportunity markets. We begin this review with the early childhood period. The main macrolevel dynamic affecting early childhood training is that it is increasingly delivered on the market rather than via the family. In the postwar period, parents were the main providers of early childhood training, with mothers responsible for the bulk of it. Because mothers are now more likely to work in the formal labor market, childcare and early childhood education have become services to be purchased. Although many countries have reacted to this "differentiation of childcare out of the family" by converting it into a state-provided or state-subsidized service, the United States has instead put it on the market and provided only modest means-tested childcare subsidies to some poor families.[18] It follows that poor parents who want to provide high-quality childcare to their children are now often obliged to rely on their own resources to buy it.

When a function is wrested out of the family, it opens up an opportunity to reduce the effects of the family on how that function is met. The essence of modernization theory, as developed by sociologist Talcott Parsons and others, is that the differentiation of functions out of the family would have, for example, a class-abating effect.[19] Because the family was seen as a conduit for class-specific cultures and sensibilities to be transmitted across generations, any function that differentiated out of the family could in principle be delivered in a standardized way, thus "abating" the effects of class.

Why didn't modernization theory get it right in the U.S. case? The simple answer: the theory wrongly presupposed that a newly differentiated function, such as childcare, would be delivered in a standardized way. When a service is put on the market, this is rarely true. We don't have one type of car for sale, one type of

house for sale, or one type of vacation for sale. If childcare differentiates out of the family and into the market, we would likewise expect it to be offered at different price points, with only well-off parents able to afford the highest-quality offering. This differentiation in price would not matter for our purposes if the highest-quality childcare entailed luxury add-ons that did not much affect a child's life chances. The marketization of childcare investments does, however, matter precisely because the best available evidence shows that children exposed to high-quality early education are profoundly advantaged in their lifetime earnings and employment.[20] This is a textbook case, then, of putting a service onto the market, converting it into a commodity, and thereby making money the arbiter of subsequent life chances.

We are not suggesting that the neoliberal narrative was responsible for the differentiation of early childhood training out of the family. To the contrary, a broad constellation of historical, social, and cultural processes led young mothers to enter the labor market en masse, processes that then made it necessary for childcare to be delivered outside the family. Although the neoliberal narrative was not the cause of this transition, it did make it more difficult for the state to ensure that childcare was delivered in a standardized high-quality form, to define childcare as a universal and guaranteed public good, or to deliver comprehensive means-tested subsidies that would allow poor families to buy high-quality childcare. The United States thus ended up with a childcare system that is ensconced in the market, is subject to market logic, and accordingly makes the quality of childcare increasingly dependent on the capacity to pay for it. This is the first critical step in the creation of opportunity markets in the United States.

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Zone-2 opportunity markets. The next step in creating robust opportunity markets was to allow parents to buy different gradations of training for adolescent children. This might seem difficult in the context of the largely public system of primary and secondary education in the United States. In the case of early childhood training, the state's involvement in the delivery of care was quite modest and indirect, mainly taking the form of rudimentary regulation, supporting Head Start and other public training programs, and providing limited childcare subsidies to poor families. By contrast, primary and secondary schooling in the United States remains a largely state-provided affair, thereby complicating the task of commodifying it. How, in other words, are well-off parents allowed to *buy* higher-quality education for their children when primary and secondary schooling have been set up to be universal and public?

The well-known answer rests on 1) segregating neighborhoods by household income and 2) allocating the funding for neighborhood schools on the basis of local property values. This two-part process ensures that neighborhoods are income-homogeneous and that the income level associated with each neighborhood dictates the amount of school funding and quality. From the point of view of parents, the result is no different than simply allowing them to buy the desired level of school quality, although the sale comes in the form of a package deal in which access to the school is sold in tandem with access to the neighborhood.

This solution sets up a zone-2 opportunity market that allows well-off parents to buy access to those neighborhoods that increase the human capital and earnings of their children.[21] These higher earnings are partly attributable to the higher-quality schools disproportionately found in more expensive neighborhoods. Although school effects are notoriously difficult to establish, the best available evidence suggests that children attending schools with high per-pupil funding have higher earnings as adults.[22] The social organization of schools in high-income neighborhoods is also distinctive by virtue of providing an academic experience very close to the college experience.[23] The curriculum and social organization of these schools entail open access to class materials, complex and varied tasks, freedom of movement, and ample choice among tasks and activities.[24] To promote analytical thinking when solving problems, teachers focus not on following rules but on the importance of understanding the logic behind the process of answering a question.[25] This means emphasizing the value of independent work and creativity, encouraging students to ask questions and challenge assumptions, promoting individual expression in essays and class presentations, and developing big-picture thinking. In all of these ways, teachers in high-income neighborhoods are carefully scaffolding the college-bound self, a type of scaffolding that is likely to have a higher payoff in the labor market.

What type of scaffolding is there in low-income neighborhoods and schools? Because educators in low-income neighborhoods often assume that most of their students will not enter the middle class, many provide a scaffolding that prepares the self for a low-wage world. In these schools, the curriculum and classroom practices emphasize more limits on individual freedom, less complex and more structured activities, and more attention to following rules and instruction. Although this type of regimented classroom fits well with a home experience emphasizing the importance of "keeping your head down" and following authority, it can be fraught when students en-

ter secondary school and begin to assert their own voice and autonomy. Because the very same actions that are construed as "finding one's voice" in a high-income school can be read as defiance in a low-income school, these differences in school organization produce corresponding differences in the likelihood of being disciplined with trips to the principal's office or suspension.[26] This in turn has implications for college attendance and earnings.

We have so far argued that low-income children tend not to attend opportunity-expanding schools because their parents cannot afford the housing in the neighborhoods that deliver these schools. The effects of neighborhoods on opportunity are not, however, entirely due to such differentials in school quality.[27] Although it is well-established that neighborhoods have a profound effect on opportunity, we know less about the forces accounting for this effect. The best available research suggests that the payoff to a high-income neighborhood is *not* reducible to "school quality" effects alone and may also be attributable to networks and cultures that cultivate high-status preferences, develop skills for high-earnings jobs, and protect against exposure to trauma, crime, discrimination, and other stressors that suppress later achievement.[28] For our purposes, we do not need to know exactly *why* children growing up in high-income neighborhoods are advantaged, since parents who buy into these neighborhoods will regardless have access to the full package of effects.

Have opportunity markets of this sort always been in play? As best we can tell, high-payoff neighborhoods have always cost more, but there is reason to believe that money figures ever more in securing entry into them. The key change here is rising economic segregation. As neighborhoods become increasingly segregated by income, access to neighborhoods

with high-quality schools and other advantages has come to depend ever more on the capacity to buy one's way in.[29] Although there is much debate about how this came to pass, one plausible account is that the rise of the professional-managerial sector and related technological changes increased the returns to college, ramped up the competition for the training and credentialing needed to attend top colleges, and thus induced parents to buy this training and credentialing via the highest-income neighborhood they could afford.[30] There are of course many other accounts. Whatever the causes of rising economic segregation, what matters here is that it allows well-off parents to buy opportunity for their children. By contrast, low-income parents can no longer afford the high-amenity neighborhoods that, before the recent intensification of economic segregation, were more open to them.

We are thus left with a pretend public-school system at the primary and secondary levels. In reality, parents who send their children to "public" schools do so only after entering a market that metes out different levels of public school quality, a market that is again legitimated by neoliberal sentiments about the sanctity of markets for all allocative purposes, even evidently the allocation of opportunity. As with the early childhood market, this late childhood market was not created *because* of a commitment to neoliberalism, but once it emerged it came to be viewed as a legitimate – even sacred – exercise of the right of a well-off parent to assist and protect one's children. The neoliberal narrative was in this sense available at just the right moment to play a valuable legitimating role. Although the American commitment to "equality of opportunity" should have undermined the development of such brazen opportunity markets, the ready availability of a generalized

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commitment to market-based allocation successfully smoothed over any possible legitimation problems.

Zone-3 opportunity markets. The rise of opportunity markets within the third zone – the young-adult zone – is just as critical. This is the zone where young adults settle on their initial investments in tertiary training, undertake that training, and then attempt to convert it into a full-time job. The simple problem that emerges in this zone, as with the two childhood zones, is that family money is again deeply associated with outcomes. That is, the children from well-off families not only end up in the best preschools, primary schools, and secondary schools, but also in the best colleges and universities. By contrast, children from less advantaged families often forgo tertiary training altogether, tend to drop out quickly when they do opt for tertiary training, or are frequently relegated to for-profit schools and other institutions with relatively low returns.[31]

These developments are troubling because the pathway to the middle class now depends critically on this transition. In the past, it did not much matter that high-quality colleges were dominated by the children of well-off families, as the main pathway to middle-class jobs (such as union jobs) did not require college or any other type of tertiary training. The typical working-class or middle-class family in the prewar and immediate postwar decades properly viewed college as the irrelevant plaything of the elite. However, now that college is a virtual prerequisite for entry into the middle class, it surely matters that well-off families are deeply advantaged in getting into the best ones.[32]

The key question that emerges is *why* children from well-off families are so much more likely to attend selective tertiary institutions. We have already shown that when one asks why well-off children attend the best primary or secondary schools, the simple answer is that their families are able to buy this schooling for them, either directly (via private schooling) or indirectly (via the purchase of high-amenity neighborhoods). It is not the case, by contrast, that most well-off families can simply buy slots for their children at selective institutions. Although extremely rich parents can sometimes buy their children acceptance into top universities (either licitly or illicitly), the typical well-off parents must instead proceed indirectly by making the requisite investments that ensure that their progeny are seen as meritorious.[33] The winning resume will display high grades and test scores, a high-status secondary school, exposure to high-level classes in math, science, and the arts, the right number of successful advanced placement exams, a strong profile of volunteering activities, and a self that is appropriately independent, confident, self-expressive, enthusiastic, optimistic, and high-energy.[34]

It just so happens that it costs money to build such a resume. The well-off parent cannot, then, directly buy access to elite universities but must instead do so by spending the money necessary to build a resume laden with signals of merit. These investing and cultivating activities are a direct form of money laundering: one of the main reasons why well-off parents spend so much money on high-quality preschool, the best primary and secondary schools, after-school and summer training, and college coaching is to develop a personal portfolio for their children that signals merit and thus appeals to employers and admissions officers at selective institutions.[35]

It is surprising that more attention has been paid to the role of money in buying information than to its role in buying merit. The information problem,

as conveyed most famously by economist Carolyn Hoxby, takes the form of low-income children with attractive secondary-school profiles failing to apply to selective institutions because they have not heard of them or because they think that they would never be admitted to them.[36] This classic information problem arises because poor children are raised in low-income neighborhoods that do not come with the peers, teachers, and counselors who know the college admission process. When well-off parents buy into high-income neighborhoods, they are not just buying a certain caliber of training, but also a mentoring network that provides high-quality information on colleges and, more generally, assists in conveying middle-class mores and practices. This is yet another way in which opportunities purchased in the second opportunity zone affect behavior and outcomes in the third zone.

We might also assume that children from poor families do not attend college because it costs too much.[37] If poor children worry about going into debt or are especially risk averse, they may be deterred from attending college or investing in other forms of tertiary training.[38] Over the last twenty years, the average net price of tertiary training, which is the difference between total costs (tuition, fees, room and board) and total grant aid and federal tax credits and deductions, has increased by $350 per year for public two-year institutions, $6,110 per year for public four-year institutions, and $6,020 per year for private nonprofit four-year institutions.[39] Although the per-year increase is only slight for public two-year institutions, many of these institutions are oversubscribed, meaning that students cannot obtain the necessary classes to fulfill requirements. This in turn extends the time of enrollment and increases the total cost of completing a degree.[40]

These rising costs express a very direct and simple way in which money increasingly matters. We are reluctant, however, to make too much of these trends in the net price of college, since there is much debate about the extent to which credit constraints are indeed a deterrent to attending college.[41] Even if the rising price of college is an important deterrent, it is still likely less important than the monetary deterrents in zones 1 and 2, in which low-income families face overwhelming price barriers to moving into neighborhoods that can reliably deliver a merit-signaling resume for their children. These costs cannot be mitigated, as they can in zone 3, by taking out loans. That is, because home mortgages are based on a family's income and wealth, they cannot be used to finance a zone-2 investment in a child. The same applies to low-income parents who would like to finance a zone-1 investment in early childhood training. The clear implication: the truly consequential borrowing constraints are likely in opportunity zones 1 and 2.

To this point, we have emphasized the resume-building *skills* that money can buy, including test-taking skills that generate high-achievement test scores (like SAT scores), classroom skills that generate high grade point averages, and writing skills that generate appealing college application essays. We have also emphasized that money can buy valuable *information* about the types of colleges to which one might apply. We have focused on the sale of skills and information within new opportunity markets only because they are the most easily identified mobility-generating commodities for sale. But money also "gets under the skin" and affects how individuals come to view themselves, how they come to understand their role within the world, and how they come to understand their relationships with

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others. The purpose of this section is to describe how the middle-class world promulgates in children "neoliberal selves" who understand themselves as independent self-interested actors, how this sensibility pays off, and why it takes money to garner access to the habits of mind and ways of being that constitute the neoliberal self.

What is the neoliberal self ? Through engagement with neoliberal systems of ideas and practices, middle-class individuals have increasingly come to understand themselves as separate from others, from the public, and from the civic or the social. They have come to construe their own behavior and that of others as an expression of internal attributes and the consequence of preference-based free choice. By virtue of this heightened individualism and independence, neoliberal selves often devote less time and fewer attentional resources on others and enjoy less connection to and empathy with others.[42] This sensibility provides answers to basic questions of identity such as "Who am I ?" and "How should someone like me act ?" The answers on offer perpetuate as obvious and good the priority of the unconstrained individual and the expression of preferences and rights above other possible foundational values, including equality, obligation to family and community, or the public good.

The middle class and especially the upper-middle class is the home ground of the neoliberal self understood in this way. It follows that, when a child lives in a middle-class home or neighborhood, that child will be exposed to practices and behaviors that support the development of a neoliberal self. Likewise, when a family moves from a poor to middle-class neighborhood, the child's exposure to neoliberal ideas and practices will increase. The children in middle-class neighborhoods learn, for example, to prioritize their individual needs, to promote and express themselves, to stand out from others, and to attempt to influence the world according to their goals and aspirations.

By contrast, when children grow up in low-income families or neighborhoods, they are less likely to have experiences that foster neoliberal selves and are more likely to have experiences that foster "interdependent selves" that are useful and appropriate for a less-advantaged world.[43] In a world with fewer resources, it becomes important to relate to and fit in with others, since doing so builds networks that can be relied upon for both material and emotional support. When one's fate is more dependent on the actions of others, it makes sense to pay attention to others, to be responsive to them, to be aware of hierarchy, and to maintain loyalty with in-groups.[44] The resulting self is likely to prioritize interdependence, relationships, and family and community over individualism, individual accomplishment, and independence from family and community.

The neoliberal self is fine-tuned to succeed in the upper-middle-class world of elite universities. This is partly because adolescents under its sway are likely to approach college as something they need and as a natural next step that is, in effect, little more than "grade thirteen." Because of their family and neighborhood experiences, they are primed to receive precisely the message that selective colleges communicate, a message that celebrates the freedom "to be incredible," "to be unique," "to make extraordinary contributions," "to take risks," "to chart one's own course," and "to choose from more than sixty majors, double majors, and individualized majors." The university pitch is appealing to neoliberal selves because it allows them to express their uniqueness, focus on individual accomplishment, make choices, and realize

their independence by separating from family and community. Once admitted, they will also be more likely to finish because they experience a comfortable fit between their own preferences, motives, goals, and aspirations and those fostered by the university context.[45]

For many adolescents who instead grow up in low-income neighborhoods, there is often less interest in college, and not just because they have not had access to the types of primary and secondary schools that provide them with college-oriented skills and information. They are also less likely to see college as "the answer": the neoliberal self sees college as the solution to the problem of securing independence, whereas adolescents raised in low-income environments are often more interested in maintaining family and community ties than escaping them.[46] Moreover, low-income adolescents may not have previously traveled far from their homes or spent time in unfamiliar environments, nor are they likely to believe that doing so is attractive or important. The university's invitation to leave one's home and become an independent, extraordinary, choice-making self may be more bewildering than it is exciting. Some students may wonder, "What kind of a person do I have to become to succeed in a place like this?" As one first-generation student put it, "I want to go to college so that I can give back....It is just not about me and my success." When children from low-income neighborhoods do nonetheless opt for college, they often report a lack of fit and a feeling of being like a guest in someone else's house. Even when they are highly motivated and achieve good grades and test scores, they experience higher dropout rates, lower feelings of belongingness, and fewer close relationships with peers and professors.[47]

This is all to suggest that money is not just used to buy the skills and information

needed to gain access to and thrive in top universities. It also cultivates an orientation and sensibility (the neoliberal self) that tends to view the college experience as the logical next step, that fits with the college and is accordingly attractive to college admission officers, and that aligns well with the elite university's social world. It makes the university feel like one's natural new home. Although there are doubtless many reasons why middle-class neighborhoods tend to increase the earnings of children who lived in them, we suspect that it is partly because they are exposed to sensibilities and orientations that are fine-tuned for the college experience.[48] If low-income parents want to secure this type of "cultural fit" for their children, they may well conclude that they need to raise them in middle-class neighborhoods that are chock-full of neoliberal selves.[49] This is likely, however, to be prohibitively expensive.

The obvious point is that it was not always this way. In the past, parents did not have to try to finesse their way into a "neoliberal neighborhood," as middle-class union or office jobs could be secured by simply attending the local high school in a working-class neighborhood. Because middle-class outcomes now require a college degree, we have obliged low-income parents to think about "cultural fit," which has been put up for sale at out-of-reach prices. The rise of for-pay college application "advising services" can be understood in this context as an effort to provide a shortcut to cultural fit at a price point that's at least lower than the cost of eighteen years of a middle-class mortgage.[50]

We have sought to deliver a big-picture overview of where the United States stands on its commitment to delivering equal opportunity to all children. Because the education field is so large and

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specialized, it is easy to fixate on just one part of the larger research literature or on one class of narrow-gauge interventions, often with the unfortunate result of obscuring the larger forces at work that are transforming the distribution of opportunity in this country.

The concept of opportunity markets allows us to better understand how the landscape of opportunity is changing in the United States. We have shown that three such markets have become increasingly prominent and that only the third one, the early-adult market, allows low-income families to take out loans that make for fairer competition. In the two childhood zones, many low-income parents would of course like to assemble "high-merit resumes" for their children, but this is a difficult undertaking when they cannot afford private childcare, high-quality preschools, the best primary and secondary schools, amenity-rich neighborhoods, and the usual complement of after-school and summer training activities. Because there is no capacity for borrowing in these childhood zones, they have become simple money-laundering operations in which well-off parents are the only ones who can buy the schools, neighborhoods, and peers that generate what is deemed to be merit (such as accomplishments in music, theater, debate, test scores, grades, or volunteering). In the tertiary zone, the requisite financial aid is then delivered and a commitment to need-blind admissions is trumpeted, making it appear as if there were now an equal and fair competition in which all children have a fair shot. The obvious problem with this arrangement is that the potentially equalizing financial aid is delivered far too late. Were it instead delivered earlier, when the children's "merit resumes" and selves were being constructed, well-off parents would no longer have an effective monopoly in accessing the schools, neighborhoods,

and information required to construct the appearance of merit.

It would be difficult to imagine a setup that more directly controverts our commitment to equal opportunity. To be sure, middle-class parents cannot directly buy a middle-class outcome for their children, but they can and do buy a higher probability of a middle-class outcome through their disproportionate access to the requisite schools, neighborhoods, and information. This laundering operation is insidious because it creates the appearance that universities are selecting on merit when in fact they are selecting on the capacity to build a merit-projecting resume.

The emergence of opportunity markets becomes even more problematic when it is combined with rising income inequality.[51] Although some economists have argued that rising income inequality is in and of itself incompatible with our commitment to equal opportunity,[52] in fact it is the emergence of opportunity markets that gives rising income inequality its teeth. If the United States had resisted putting opportunity on the market, it would not have mattered so much that the well-off were securing ever-greater shares of total national income. The extra money at the top of the distribution could have been used to buy more yachts, more Teslas, and more private planes, but not to buy more opportunity for those lucky children born into the top. It is only when opportunity markets are also available that the well-off can use their extra income to reduce the chances of downward mobility for their own children and the chances of upward mobility for other children.[53]

What can we do? It is easy to be disillusioned by the unceasing flow of incremental reforms that are well intended but ultimately overpowered by the combined effect of rising inequality and growing

opportunity markets. The purpose of this section is to lay out a radical intervention that could cut through all the incrementalism and directly deliver equal opportunity.

At any point in time, the likelihood of radical change is very small, but it would be a gross misreading of U.S. history to rule it out altogether. There is nothing more distinctively American than the idea that our principles should be taken seriously and that our institutions should be continually recast and perfected to ensure that we live up to them. At several points in its history, the United States has acted decisively to effect a correspondence between its principles and institutions, with the civil rights movement perhaps the most recent – and ongoing – example of this type of reconciliation. The commitment to equal economic opportunity, although arguably one of our most sacred principles, has not yet had an equivalent "line in the sand" moment.

If ever that moment arrived, there are several ways in which it could play out. It might, for example, be judged that opportunity markets are here to stay and that we must therefore equip low-income families to compete within them more fairly. This type of equalization could be achieved, at least partly, through aggressive income redistribution that makes it possible for all families to participate more fully in zone-1 and zone-2 opportunity markets. Alternatively, new financial products might be developed to allow loans to be taken out within these two markets, thus making it possible for low-income families to invest in their most talented children. Although either of these efforts would allow low-income or middle-income children to compete on a fairer footing, some residual inequalities in opportunity would inevitably remain. This is because, insofar as the original rank-order inequalities are preserved

even after redistribution, the higher-ranked families could continue to outbid lower-ranked families in key opportunity markets.[54] Moreover, insofar as low-income families face various environmental conditions (such as high incarceration rates in their neighborhoods) that prevent them from reaping fair returns to their human capital investments, it is possible that they would not make deeper investments in their children even with an increased capacity to do so.[55] It is nonetheless plausible that an aggressively redistributive program could substantially reduce inequalities of opportunity.

The second approach that might be taken entails reversing the rise of opportunity markets rather than acquiescing to them. This "decommodifying approach" would proceed by installing a full range of public goods – including free high-quality education, free high-quality childcare, and integrated neighborhoods – that would allow lower-income families to access opportunities for their children without having to buy them. With this approach, an aggressive program for redistributing income would presumably no longer be required, since access to opportunities would be directly delivered in the form of public goods rather than purchased in markets.[56] The obvious difficulty with this approach would be identifying those key services that, once delivered as public goods, would best level the playing field.

It is hard to imagine a more radical agenda. These approaches would require either the most radical redistributive effort in the history of the United States or the most radical commitment to the universal provision of services in the history of the United States. Although the New Deal might, for example, be seen as a precedent, it seems unlikely that sufficient support could be mustered for a new equal-opportunity project that would make even the New Deal seem small.

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Is there a third way? Is there anything the United States could do – right now – *without* spending a large fraction of the federal and state budgets? There indeed is. The simple way forward is to give up on the ideal of lavishing the same advantages on low-income children as are currently lavished on middle-income children. We have been caught in the trap of thinking that, insofar as we are unwilling to forcibly prevent middle-income parents from making large investments in their children, our only alternative is to raise low-income parental investments to a middle-income level. The resulting "race to the top" is an immensely costly approach when the top has so much to spend.[57]

We thus need a third way that does *not* rest on equalizing access to all investments. The obvious starting point for such a third way is to recognize that, whenever investments in children are affected by the parents' capacity to invest, the resulting investment tracks must be viewed as incommensurate competitions. It then follows that universities should take a proportionate share of winners from each track. By this logic, universities should admit students who win their within-tranche competition, with each "tranche" comprising children from families of roughly the same economic circumstances.

This approach is inexpensive precisely because we are not compensating for privately financed differentials in early childhood investments. We are instead using the existing competition among low-income children to provide evidence on performance differentials (such as grades, test scores, musical performance, volunteering profiles) when investments are low. We are likewise using the existing competition among middle-income children to provide evidence on performance differentials under a middling infusion of resources. And we are using the existing supercharged competition among high-income children to provide evidence on what happens when extraordinary resources are applied.[58] The premise behind this approach is that cross-tranche competitions are intrinsically incommensurate, that any attempt at forced commensuration is folly, and that there is accordingly no alternative but to take a population-proportionate share of winners from each tranche.

We are not suggesting that a three-tranche approach of this sort should actually be used. If the admissions process were indeed based on just three tranches, the winners in each of them would likely be drawn from near the top of their tranche's income distribution, an outcome that would reflect residual within-tranche differences in the capacity to make investments. This type of "creaming" could be mechanically reduced by using a larger number of tranches. Under a decile approach, the within-tranche heterogeneity in economic resources would be much reduced, and the competition within each decile would be fairer. For selective institutions using a holistic admissions process, each admissions officer could concentrate on a single tranche, allowing that officer to become a specialist in the types of accomplishment that can emerge for any given amount of family income. The "equal opportunity" constraint then takes the form of simply requiring that the same number of students are selected from each of the ten deciles. This approach could be straightforwardly combined with existing racial, ethnic, and first-generation policy.

In practice, there would be no need to divide applicants literally into deciles, given that the admissions process could instead be treated as an optimization problem subject to the constraint that the selected class must have the country's family income distribution. If admissions

data were merged with tax or earnings data, it would in principle be possible to choose weights on the various input measures, like grade point average, that then serve to maximize long-run earnings and other labor market outcomes.[59] This approach raises the possibility that, at least for some elite universities, the constrained solution would yield expected earnings and other outcomes that are in fact *higher* than those of graduates admitted under conventional admissions protocols. Because recent research reveals that elite-university graduates from low-income families earn nearly as much as their counterparts from high-income families, we know that imposing a family-income constraint is not very costly, at least not with respect to the anticipated earnings of graduates.[60]

The conventional name for our proposal is of course *economic affirmative action*. Although it has been implemented in many countries, economic affirmative action has never gained much traction in the United States, despite various proposals to introduce it.[61] What accounts for this lack of traction? The strong resistance to economic affirmative action is mainly the result of efforts to treat it as a substitute for existing admissions procedures that deliver racial and ethnic diversity. In the aftermath of the first Supreme Court challenge to affirmative action (*Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*), economic affirmative action was pitched as an attractive substitute for "minority quotas," an approach that ultimately faltered because the association between race and income is not strong enough to treat the two variables as the same.[62] The clear implication is that we should never view economic affirmative action as a substitute for equally important measures that correct for inequalities of opportunity arising from racial barriers. The only defensible purpose of economic

affirmative action, therefore, is to address the *economic* barriers that arise because low-income families do not have the money to make investments in zone-1 or zone-2 markets. Because some selective institutions have already developed admissions practices that yield a racially and ethnically diverse student body, there is no need to develop new plans or approaches for realizing that objective (unless existing approaches are deemed unlawful). At the same time, existing approaches for delivering racial and ethnic diversity, as important as they are, do not fully address inequalities that arise from differential capacities to invest in opportunity markets, a deficiency that economic affirmative action does address. It follows that any viable economic affirmative action plan will have to be carried out in conjunction with existing admissions practices ensuring racial and ethnic diversity.[63]

The same applies to existing policies for admitting students whose parents have not attended college ("first-generation students"). Because the correlation between family income and education is far from perfect, we cannot rely on economic affirmative action to substitute for existing first-generation admission policy, nor can we rely on existing first-generation policy to substitute for economic affirmative action. In many selective institutions, there are very successful practices in place that ensure that first-generation students are admitted in ample numbers, and such practices need to continue (and to diffuse more widely). These policies should be understood, however, as addressing some of the "complementarities" that can reduce returns to investments rather than directly addressing differing capacities to invest in opportunity markets.

The final practical problem of interest, arguably the most daunting one, is of

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course that of cost. Although an economic affirmative action plan would be *far less costly* than the alternative of ramping up zone-1 and zone-2 investments in low-income children, it would nonetheless be necessary to substantially increase financial aid allocations within zone 3 (presumably through some combination of federal and university grants). This increase, although hardly trivial from the university's point of view, would be trivial relative to the vastly larger amount that would be needed to equalize zone-1 and zone-2 investments. The main reason why economic affirmative action could be implemented right now is precisely that it allows the country to continue to save money by underinvesting in high-quality training for low-income children. Although our own view is that the country ought to dramatically ramp up its investments in low-income children, doing so would require a stronger commitment to tax-and-transfer policies than seems viable at present. If we reconcile ourselves to this reality, we are left with our third-best option, a reform that we can afford and implement instantly.

In ordinary times, the board of trustees at any top university would brand this type of initiative as too risky, with even a small trial likely seen as irresponsible. But these are not ordinary times. In this moment in history, selective institutions have been called to task on a host of ethical matters, including tuition costs, investment decisions, admissions policy, pay policy, athletics subsidies, outsourcing and deunionization, sexual harassment, and institutional racism and sexism. There are growing concerns that if universities do not act soon and decisively, they may face tax and regulatory interventions with profound financial implications. This is precisely the circumstance in which a bold university might preemptively seize the high ground by making an unprecedented commitment to equal opportunity. Because the associated costs are substantial (from the point of view of the university), this commitment might be phased in gradually, with mandated signposts that ensure that proportionate steps toward full implementation are taken each year.

It is worth considering how such an initiative might unfold in a university bold enough to implement it. How, in other words, could an economic affirmative action program be implemented so well that other elite universities would understand its logic, see that it is working, and ultimately join the movement? If the first experiment were poorly implemented, it could prematurely cut off what could have otherwise been a transformative initiative. There is likely but one chance to get it right.

It is easy to see how a sudden infusion of low-income students into an elite setting could, if implemented poorly, lead to problems. This is partly because students from different backgrounds bring systematically different understandings of the self to college. It would therefore be critical to devise ways to effectively teach students who, although highly motivated and talented, may not fit well or experience a sense of connection or belongingness with institutions whose practices were devised for well-off students. When low-income students arrive at college, they can find themselves in institutions whose practices are somewhat alien to them and incongruent, in particular, with their own priorities and understandings of self. This may result in short-term deficits in performance, satisfaction, and well-being.[64] There may also be internal resistance from those who misinterpret economic affirmative action as relaxing standards rather than revising them to reflect the tranche-specific obstacles that students faced. The solution to this

challenge is to openly and transparently discuss the evidence that merit has been wrongly conflated with the money needed to buy it.

These discussions would have to be coupled with wide-reaching initiatives to recast the culture and social organization of the university. It is now well-established that low-cost interventions addressing the challenges of cultural mismatch can be highly effective.[65] The available evidence suggests that students benefit from discussing strategies for adapting to the demands of college, learning about the effects of family background on college experiences, and learning how to feel more "at home" in the university. These initiatives may include affirming values or identities, shoring up a sense of belongingness, reducing stereotype threat, teaching a growth mindset, encouraging the development of possible selves, developing activities that build relationships across economic divides, providing counseling on majors and careers, providing loans or grants to relieve ongoing financial stress, developing programs and curricula that address the concerns of less advantaged students, and offering mentoring programs that feature faculty and older students who have shared similar circumstances.[66]

We began this essay with a big-picture description of the emergence and consolidation of opportunity markets. Although opportunity is now thoroughly on the market and directly available for purchase, this development has not been widely discussed, with the result that well-off children are usually seen as earning their impressive resumes rather than having them bought for them.

This development, insofar as it is recognized at all, tends to be viewed as natural, inevitable, or too entrenched to be taken on. It is presumed that opportunity markets are here to stay because we cannot possibly come up with the money needed to allow low-income parents to participate in them equally. Because this would be such a costly undertaking, the possibility of radical reform is immediately taken off the table, and we are left with narrow-gauge reforms that at best tinker on the margins of opportunity markets.

We have suggested that we need not give up so quickly. Although it may be necessary, at least for now, to give up on the admirable objective of equalizing access to human capital investments, this does not mean that we must also give up on our commitment to equal opportunity. We have failed to appreciate that equal opportunity can be secured even *without* equalizing access to human capital investments. This alternative approach allows parents to continue to make variously sized investments in their children, treats the resulting investment tracks as incommensurate competitions, and then takes a properly proportionate share of winners from each track. It is a relatively inexpensive reform because it does not attempt to compensate for privately financed differentials in childhood investments.

Although an initiative of this magnitude inevitably raises a host of practical concerns, we have discussed many of the main ones and shown that they can be satisfactorily resolved. The more fundamental worry, and one with which we would like to close, is that an economic affirmative action initiative of this sort *might* amount in the end to little more than a symbolic commitment. The critical question, in other words, is whether a decision by a single selective institution – such as Stanford University, Harvard University, or Princeton University – to implement such an approach would trigger a wider norm cascade.

In addressing this question, it is relevant that the twenty-first century is

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shaping up as a century of norm cascades in which seemingly small events have unleashed a host of cascading social movements, like #MeToo and Black Lives Matter. The commitment to equal opportunity, although a bedrock principle in the United States, has not yet had a moment of this sort. The growing popularity of "rigged game" commentary within the United States nonetheless suggests that this moment could be approaching and that the right triggering event is all that is needed.

If a high-profile university were to announce a new commitment to economic affirmative action, it is not impossible that this would become just that triggering event. How would other universities react to such an announcement? It is possible that they would attempt to change the conversation by pointing to their very generous financial aid packages for those low-income students who *are* admitted. This is of course disingenuous because so few students are the beneficiaries of such largesse. It is easy to be generous when the recipients of the generosity are so few. This long-standing "distraction strategy" deployed by selective institutions entails focusing attention on the enormous size of the financial aid packages awarded to the few low-income students who win the lottery and are admitted. Among selective institutions, it seems that there is a quiet agreement to "live and let live," each university allowing the others the convenience of continuing with such disingenuous claim-making.

But could the ruse survive once a renegade university broke ranks? This renegade would presumably embrace its newly adopted rebelliousness by directly confronting other selective institutions on the matter of just how many low-income students they were admitting. We suspect that this would in turn reveal that many people understand current practices as just one more case of a deeply rigged game. Because this sensibility is, we believe, widely shared, the resulting pressure might be overwhelming enough to put all selective institutions, save the triggering institution, immediately on the defensive. This might in turn lead to demands for transparent annual reporting on 1-percent admits, legacy admits, bottom-half admits, and much more.

What would happen next? It is possible that some selective institutions would "dig in" on the defense that it just so happens that students from the 1 percent are intrinsically more meritorious and that their children benefit not one whit from access to elite prep schools, elite neighborhoods, or after-school tutors. This amounts to arguing that existing admission practices *are* consistent with equal opportunity and that the vast resources and legacy privileges lavished on 1-percent children are not distorting. The obvious problem with this "aristocracy of merit" defense is that, while it would prove popular in hard-right circles, those are not the circles in which elite universities typically like to run. Although unremitting pressure would likely be required, we suspect that in the end the decision would be to "give in" rather than "dig in."

The skeptic might still point out that only a minority of college students are educated in selective institutions and that even a very successful movement within them will leave much unequal opportunity untouched. It is indeed possible that the movement would end at the gates of the selective institutions. If so, it is still no mean achievement to have at least democratized them.

It is also possible that a norm cascade, after coursing through the country's most selective institutions, would gain force rather than stall out. It could spread by raising the aspirations of low-income children, mobilizing well-off students to

demand more high-quality college slots, and delegitimating impediments to equal opportunity in government hiring and other institutional settings. This more fundamental transformation, although perhaps unlikely, cannot be ruled out in a country that has long been defined by its commitment to equal opportunity.

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individuals engage in the many intersecting sociocultural contexts that configure their ex-
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60 Chetty et al., "Mobility Report Cards."

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"Superstar Cities" & the Generation of Durable Inequality

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Abstract: The striking economic agglomerations emerging in affluent democracies are generating, reproducing, and expanding inequalities. A major mechanism for this is housing, which is both a repository for wealth and, under these conditions, a magnifier of wealth. Access to urban areas – the site of educational, labor, and marriage market advantages – is contingent upon access to housing. We use comparative analysis of cases in Europe (London and Paris) and the United States (New York and San Francisco) to consider the capacities of different societies to limit or ameliorate these new sources of diverging opportunity. These seemingly local issues remain shaped by distinct national political contexts, which vary dramatically in their capacity to support local affordable housing and reduce the collective action problems confronting major metropolitan areas.

"Unless we deal with the housing deficit, we will see house prices keep on rising. Young people will find it even harder to afford their own home. The divide between those who inherit wealth and those who don't will become more pronounced."

– Theresa May, July 11, 2016[1]

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The economic processes of creative destruction, long ago defined (and celebrated) by political economist Joseph Schumpeter, have a pronounced spatial dimension. The Marxist geographer David Harvey described "the spatial fix" of capitalism and the increasing use of land and property as financial assets to be traded like any commodity.[2] Some cities and regions – their institutions, culture, economy, and political organizations – are made obsolete and marginalized. Mobile capital is reinvested in new places, cities, or states offering the highest rates of return. These spatial transformations are

central to the creation of new inequalities, as evidenced by the decline of older, once prosperous industrial centers, major cities and small towns alike, from Detroit and Milwaukee in the American Rust Belt, to Northern England, Coventry, Liege, Lille Roubaix Tourcoing, Leipzig, large chunks of Southern Italy, and the nonmetropolitan parts of Eastern Europe. Working-class manufacturing cities are dying, along with their hinterlands. Those living there – especially young, white, working-class men – are facing social decline and a sense of loss.[3]

Simultaneously, modern political economies are producing extraordinary agglomerations of wealth in key urban centers well placed to benefit from the rise of new technologies, services, and finance. While a number of forces drive this trend, including the search for safe havens among global economic elites, the primary factor is the increasing value of density in a knowledge economy.[4] Ideas emerge, spread, and can be exploited more easily in dense urban settings. As a result, favorably situated cities become vital centers for both attracting and generating human capital, radically reshaping the spatial structure of advanced capitalism.[5]

The shifting spatial distribution of economic activity has generated growing social and political tensions in both North America and Europe. Some of these are *within* these agglomerations, as their rapid development disrupts established social patterns and communities. Others are *between* these agglomerations and less-favored areas outside these economic cores. With the increasing centrality of place in distributing economic and cultural rewards and opportunities, these urban concentrations constitute important emerging structures of inequality production and reproduction. We begin this essay by briefly describing these

socioeconomic shifts. We then outline the ways in which they both generate and, increasingly, perpetuate inequalities. It is that perpetuation – the process of deepening inequality in which advantage builds upon advantage – that we wish to emphasize and explore.

Our empirical focus is housing. Central to this structural shift in opportunity is a sharp rise in property values as a result of these agglomeration processes, reinforced by the rapid growth of mobile capital at a time of cheap credit. The combination of low growth and low interest rates tends to create asset bubbles, and the largest and most consequential of these assets is housing in the most desirable and booming cities.[6]

On their own, rapidly rising housing prices are a generator, repository, and transmitter of inequality.[7] This is most apparent in the distribution of wealth, which is probably the most important indicator of durable distributions of advantage and disadvantage. Rising housing wealth is a straightforward mechanism for the intergenerational transmission of assets, and is the most important one for the overwhelming share of households who hold little or no financial wealth. Indeed, some economists argue that Thomas Piketty's story of rising inequality in twenty-first-century capitalism (at least in the United States, which he sees as at the vanguard of a broader transformation) is mainly a story of the growth of highly unequal housing wealth.[8] In many countries, as we shall see, the erosion of inheritance taxes has further enhanced these intergenerational wealth transfers.

Yet rising housing prices have profound indirect effects on the transmission of inequality as well. Increasingly linked to the sites of greatest economic opportunity, changes in housing prices have a powerful impact on the distribution of life chances. For those without access to this

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increasingly valuable property, the new urban economy is becoming a landscape of exclusion. Economic advantage is increasingly concentrated and reproduced through property, which carries with it the cumulative advantages of social proximity. If you don't have it (or stand to inherit it) you are pushed down, into increasingly precarious conditions, or out, forced to relocate or remain at a distance. Exclusion from these economic centers has consequences for life chances. Structures of social advantage – access to elite education, social networks, employment, and the acquisition of cultural capital – are geographically concentrated. Distance from these structures, fueled by housing costs, comes with an increasing penalty.

Akin to the changes in educational structures analyzed in the contribution of David Grusky, Peter Hall, and Hazel Rose Markus to this issue of *Dædalus,* the rise of these superstar cities contributes to the commodification of opportunity – highly unequal opportunity – through property ownership. To see how this works, and why it plays out differently in distinct settings, requires an approach that pays attention to processes unfolding over time and involving the interplay of actions at the micro-, meso-, and macrolevels. At the microlevel, individuals choose locations for status and access to services and labor markets, with effects that shift the opportunity structures for both the privileged and disadvantaged. At the mesolevel, interest groups representing competing claimants and organizations like political parties struggle over how to respond. At the macrolevel, the available options and pressures these actors face are shaped by changes in the global economy, including the transformation of financial flows and the growing metropolitanization of capitalism.

We examine these interlinked processes in four "superstar cities," the highest-income, globally connected metropolitan areas diverging from the rest of their respective countries: New York, the San Francisco Bay Area, Paris, and London. The comparisons reveal important commonalities in both the processes generating these agglomerations and the profound social challenges associated with them. At the same time, we emphasize important differences. Public authorities in these cities often are the ones directly responsible for facing these problems. Their responses, however, have varied in both content and effectiveness. A principal reason, we argue, is that these authorities operate within quite different national contexts. National institutional arrangements remain essential determinants of potential reactions to emerging place-based inequalities, creating different opportunity structures for local actors, as well as very different options and capabilities associated with existing policy structures.

Cities have always been cauldrons of social change. In the late nineteenth century, the rise of globalized large cities (Vienna, Berlin, London, Paris, New York, Buenos Aires) led sociologist Georg Simmel to highlight their distinctiveness: the emergence of different mentalities, the constant excitation of these spaces, their increased social diversity, and the accompanying fears of the unknown and unfamiliar. In the last third of the twentieth century, analyses typically (especially in the United States and the United Kingdom) dealt with urban decline: New York's bankruptcy, massive deindustrialization, or low quality of life (boring and gray London or museified Paris).[9] In many Western countries, the population of the national capital was stable or in decline. Los Angeles, seen by many as the "new" urban model, yielded a new school of urban studies, preoccupied with the

dystopian challenges of brutal policing, social unrest, and gangs.

Today, the allure of cities has returned. Urban prosperity, while accompanied by astonishing inequality and exclusion, is a defining feature of advanced capitalism. A generation of political economists, economic geographers, economists, and urbanists has documented the urban revival. From the mid-1980s onwards, European cities began enjoying economic and demographic growth along with greater political capacities.[10] In the United States, gloom about cities persisted longer, but the trend was the same. Leading U.S. cities have enjoyed considerable economic and demographic growth.[11] New York and Los Angeles contain 10 percent of the U.S. population, and account for 13 percent of its GDP. The gap is even more pronounced in Europe. London and Paris account for about 20 percent of their national populations and close to 30 percent of their respective GDPs. Relative rates of growth in income, employment, and the formation of new enterprises have all shifted in favor of these dynamic urban areas.[12]

High-income globalizing cities are becoming more productive, attracting an increasing share of the skilled labor force, and pulling in tourists along with new inhabitants, firms, and capital. For those with economic means, "urban hubs" have become desirable places to visit and to live, with unparalleled concentrations of amenities: job opportunities, social networks, transport, elite educational institutions, sophisticated hospitals, and media and communications networks. They are also places of conspicuous consumption, with a prestigious cultural infrastructure from opera to jazz clubs, museums to theaters, and elite and specialized shops, star restaurants, and trendy cocktail bars.

Those on the outside are affected too. More and more indicators point toward greater differences between those living in cities and those living far away, particularly in rural areas or declining industrial towns. From life expectancy to access to health services, from income to social mobility, from education to voting behavior, social life is becoming more spatially polarized.[13] The divide between core and periphery is intensifying. Clearly the vote for Hillary Clinton, for Remain in the United Kingdom, and for Emmanuel Macron and Jean-Luc Melenchon in France has been a distinct "urban vote." By contrast, Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen, and Brexit have done particularly poorly there. As an example, Marine Le Pen's share of the presidential vote in the core of Paris was only 5 percent.

The remarkable transformation of these urban areas has had a powerful impact not only on immediate wealth and income distribution, but also on the generational distribution of social and economic opportunity. Economic dynamism in these geographically compact spaces operates as a kind of escalator. Those who can get on have improved opportunities for upward mobility in comparison with the rest of the country.[14] Those who stay (or arrive) have a good chance to find high-paying jobs, to build human capital, and to access social and cultural resources that enhance the likelihood of passing their improved social prospects, and the opportunity for more, on to their children. As a result, these urban hubs attract large numbers of newcomers from their own countries and abroad.

These "escalator" qualities are part and parcel of the concept of agglomeration. Large cities absorb the high end of the labor market, attracting skilled people (the young in particular) and investment. New York, San Francisco, London, and Paris all have per capita GDPs substantially higher than national average

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incomes. New York's per capita GDP is a full one-third higher than national averages, while San Francisco's is almost 40 percent higher. High-income, larger European cities (such as Paris, London, Munich, Milan, and Stockholm) are becoming increasingly different from the rest of Europe's cities.[15]

In the emerging knowledge-based economy, spatial proximity confers multiple advantages.[16] First, residents in these locations have access to high-wage labor markets, providing future economic opportunities. Wage dispersal among U.S. cities has grown.[17] Some of this economic edge reflects the substantial benefits to being near clusters of high-skilled workers and firms. Your work is more valuable (and your wages higher) when it can be easily combined with that of others with high skills. The people and organizations around you allow you to make more of the human capital you have.

Second, with density comes a "thickness" of labor markets that offers substantial protection against individual risks associated with the knowledge economy. An increasing share of high-end economic activity is in highly volatile sectors. Constant innovation means that new firms or even industries emerge quickly. Most firms do not survive, while a few succeed spectacularly. Since any single position carries considerable risk, skilled workers gravitate to locations where there are many firms seeking their talents. In short, they want to be in an agglomeration.

Third, there is growing evidence that part of what makes these agglomerations function is that they accelerate the accumulation of human capital. Initial opportunities in these economic clusters generate potential for learning more, which in turn creates additional opportunities. Proximity also allows you to gain access to better and more extensive job networks.

Fourth, access to high-wage urban areas can mean access to economically favorable marriage markets, particularly for upper-middle-class women.[18] Indeed, the rising participation of women in high-skilled labor markets increases the appeal of agglomeration cities. Whether already part of a couple or anticipating the future, the highly educated wish to be in "thick" high-skilled labor markets where both partners will have good employment prospects. Thus, restricted access to the economic opportunity structures in these high-wage cities may encourage homophily in marriage, increasing durable inequality. The concentration of young, high-wage individuals increases the prospects for widening inequalities between two-earner households able to access these dynamic economies and those who cannot. There is good recent evidence of the inverse pattern in deindustrializing areas of the United States.[19] Loss of manufacturing jobs leads to declining marriage prospects for men. With this decline comes an increase in single-parent households and child poverty.

Finally, the clustering of high-income households in particular areas makes it easier to provide a range of high-quality public goods as well as cultural amenities. This too can produce a self-reinforcing cycle of advantage. Differentiation across space in the quality of public goods (schools, parks, public safety) intensifies incentives for the affluent to cluster, and to prevent these advantages from leaking out to other groups. The poor, of course, face the reverse situation: a limited capacity to finance public goods discourages all but those with no economic alternative from living in those areas. In the United States, the increasing spatial segregation of income has accompanied growing income segregation in schools.[20]

The escalator qualities in these economically dynamic cities may have made

them sites of considerable upward social mobility. A remarkable paper by economist Raj Chetty and colleagues reveals large differences in social mobility across the United States depending on where you are born and raised.[21] Strikingly, the "neighborhood effects" identified seem to operate before an individual enters the labor market. The prospects of moving from the lowest to the highest quintile of the income distribution were strongest where racial and class segregation and rates of single parenthood were relatively low. San Jose (San Francisco's southern neighbor), San Francisco, and New York are all among the top ten metro areas (among the fifty largest) for social mobility.

Similar escalator qualities have been identified in France. In the Paris Île-de-France region, for instance, the per capita GDP is 60 percent above the French average (with household income 26 percent above the national average after taxes and transfers). Paris Île-de-France has a greater concentration of middle-class residents and managers (41 percent compared with 27 percent nationally) and a smaller share of working-class residents (9 percent compared with 15 percent nationally).[22] Recent research following the work of Chetty and colleagues has shed some light on the *geography of social mobility*, defined as the percentage of children from working-class families that become middle class.[23] In deindustrialized regions with low levels of education (such as Northern France), the rate is less than 30 percent; it is the highest in the Paris Île-de-France region (47 percent). Quite strikingly, working-class children born in the Paris Île-de-France region who leave at an early age for another region have a rate of social mobility that is significantly lower than those born in a different region who move to Île-de-France as children.

There are reasons, however, to worry that in agglomeration cities, the social context that these researchers describe is fading. Because Chetty's research focuses on cohorts born in 1980, it represents, inevitably, a view of the recent past rather than the present. And conditions in these agglomeration economies are changing rapidly. Those at the bottom are pushed toward increasingly precarious conditions, or out of these locations entirely. Perhaps even more important, it is becoming increasingly difficult for those not already economically advantaged to move to these escalator regions. A crucial factor in both of these developments is the transformation of housing and exploding housing prices in superstar cities, in particular.

The comparison of house prices faces many obstacles. First and foremost, there is a lack of systematic, comparable, longitudinal data. A second classic obstacle in comparative urban studies concerns scale. Is the proper unit the core city (in London, "inner London" with fourteen boroughs and 3.5 million inhabitants), the extended city (the Greater London Authority, with thirty-two boroughs and 8.6 million inhabitants), or the economic region (London South East, population eleven million)? For our purposes, all of these units are relevant. Despite the challenges, we provide evidence of the patterns of house price increases in London, Paris, New York, and San Francisco.

London (here understood as the Greater London Authority) is emblematic. Its remarkable property boom is linked to an equally remarkable demographic turnaround. Between 1939 and 1991, London lost 2.2 million inhabitants, about 25 percent of its population. In the past quarter-century, it has grown by two million inhabitants. In just the first decade of the twenty-first century, it grew by one

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million, including large inflows from Europe. At the same time, the story of London has also been a story of stagnant construction of new dwellings, except for top-end construction encouraged under Mayor Boris Johnson.

In the United Kingdom, house prices have increased by almost 300 percent in real terms between 1960 and 2010. Even as housing prices have risen faster than income across the United Kingdom, London has, especially since the late 1990s, pulled away from the rest of the country.[24] The bulk of the increase started in the late 1990s, with an acceleration after 2000. By 2015, the average home price in London (£536,000) was almost twice the average for England as a whole (£301,000). The average rent is about £15,000 a year. Wages and incomes have failed to keep up. Unsurprisingly, there has been a decline in home ownership in the United Kingdom since its peak in the early 2000s (from 70 percent to 64 percent). Many predict a sharp fall of new homebuyers for the next decade, as Londoners are increasingly priced out of the housing market.[25]

Paris consists of three concentric circles: the Paris City Council with twenty *arrondissements* and 2.2 million inhabitants; the *Métropole du Grand Paris*, which comprises 131 *communes* (basic local authorities) and twelve *territoires* (groups of communes) and 7.5 million inhabitants; and the Île-de-France region, with twelve million inhabitants. The population of the Paris City Council has been relatively stable, while that of the Métropole du Grand Paris has begun to grow, with an increase of one million people in the past decade.

The Paris urban region has, like London, faced massive deindustrialization. Unlike London, however, its main economic engines are still rooted within the French economy in close connection to large firms and French investors. It is a classic escalator region, with an ever-increasing proportion of professionals and the upper-middle class and fewer manual laborers. Foreign investors have only become significant since the mid-1990s.

Because of long-standing investments in social housing and the rental sector, the rate of home ownership is relatively low in France. In the Île-de-France urban region, the rate of home ownership is lower still, only 48 percent (against 58 percent nationally). The rate is 35 percent within Paris, the inner core, but 61 percent in the periphery. The rental sector is extensive in France. Forty percent of the population rents, with both a large private rental sector (23 percent of the population) and a substantial public sector (17 percent) of mostly affordable housing supported by government subsidies.[26]

Housing prices show a trend similar to London but with less intensity. The price increase was greatest between 1998 and 2008, when prices rose 185 percent in Paris and about 150 percent in the Métropole du Grand Paris, while disposable income increased by only 43 percent. If one measures the cost of housing in the Paris urban region as a percentage of household disposable income (that is, for those who rent or pay a mortgage), the figure was 14.4 percent in 1988 and 20.7 percent in 2013.[27] The average masks an important variation: the growing burden is more evident for the worse off. For those with low incomes, the cost was 21.6 percent in 1988 and 36.2 percent in 2013. However, they have benefited more from public subsidies.

San Francisco and New York, despite important differences explored below, have followed broadly similar trajectories. New York City consists of its five boroughs, with a population of 8.5 million, within a metropolitan area of about

twenty million. San Francisco proper has 850,000 inhabitants, an increase of about 8 percent in the past decade. The San Francisco Metropolitan Area comprises five counties with just under five million people, while the larger Bay Area region contains nine counties and eight million inhabitants.

Like London, these cities have witnessed a sharp rise in the cost of housing, dramatically escalating already significant issues of affordability. The same changes that make agglomeration cities increasingly attractive to those with high skills have also driven up housing prices. In turn, the sharp rise in housing prices has fed into inequality by triggering processes of increasing spatial segregation.

It is striking that San Jose, identified by Chetty and colleagues as the place offering the greatest prospects for upward mobility for those born thirty years ago, has become the least affordable place in the country to buy a home.[28] In nearby San Francisco, only 14 percent of new homes are affordable to a family with a median income. Home ownership in the city is increasingly limited to those who already own, have a very high income or substantial wealth, or who can draw on the wealth of their parents. Thus, professional/managerial groups are increasingly concentrated in these dynamic urban areas, which have also seen a sharp growth of income in the past few decades. In San Francisco, for instance, 44 percent of those over twenty-five had at least a bachelor's degree, compared with an average of 28 percent in American cities as a whole.[29]

In 1999, during the last tech boom, about one-third of San Franciscans spent more than half of their gross income on housing (policy analysts generally regard anything over 30 percent of spending on housing as burdensome). By 2015, that proportion was 47 percent of the population.[30] In New York, the share of households spending 30 percent or more on rent rose from 41 percent in 2000 to 52 percent in 2014. Unsurprisingly, those in the lowest income brackets are most likely to face these intense burdens. By 2014, three-quarters of low-income residents in New York were rent-burdened.[31] In turn, these pressures create the kind of precarious position that can easily spill over into eviction and homelessness.[32]

While our main focus is on the impact of rising housing prices on access to mobility opportunities, we wish to return briefly to a direct and powerful effect of these rising asset values on durable inequality, one that highlights the need to consider changes in housing markets and public policy simultaneously. A small number of cities – including New York, Moscow, Hong Kong, San Francisco, and Los Angeles – are home to a large share of the world's booming class of billionaires.[33] London in particular stands out, having refashioned itself as a locale where the superwealthy can invest heavily in property as a useful tool for money laundering, wealth diversification, and hoarding beyond the reach of their home-state's public authorities.[34] This is a distinctive dynamic, with particular causes and effects, which calls out for separate analysis. It does, however, have important ripple effects on broader property markets, which are especially evident in London.

Yet the wealth impact of the housing boom is not just, or even primarily, a question of oligarchs parking (or laundering) their assets. Rising property values in high-income cities are driving large shifts in wealth inheritance. In a precursor of the argument we develop more extensively in the next section, policy choices of national governments figure prominently in this development. In

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all three of the countries where our superstar cities are located, governments have relaxed inheritance tax laws to make it easier for the wealthy to pass these increasingly valuable assets on to their heirs. In the United Kingdom, the Cameron government's 2015 budget included a new exemption for the main family home from inheritance tax, potentially allowing a couple to leave their children up to £1 million tax-free. In France, the Sarkozy government increased the ceiling for tax-free transfers of inheritance to children. In the United States, conservatives have repeatedly and successfully pushed to cut inheritance taxes, which now apply only to the superrich. The tax bill passed in late 2017 will allow a couple to transfer up to $22.4 million to their heirs free of tax.

Thus, on one side of the housing divide, one finds existing homeowners and their children. Not only can they sustain access to these sites of economic opportunity and benefit from the forces pushing up the value of their property, now they can also pass more of this wealth across generations without tax. On the other side are those within younger generations who face the specter of massive house price increases without the advantage of wealthy parents. Often, they must cope simultaneously with stagnating incomes and declining prospects for pensions. These young people cannot buy. Locked into renting in increasingly expensive markets, their housing conditions may deteriorate, or their tenancy may become precarious. They may have to leave the high-cost region altogether. All these effects restrict social mobility.

In the United Kingdom, those on the short end of this transformation have been dubbed "Generation Rent." Indeed, a wealth of evidence shows a stark generational contrast. Those born in the 1960s and 1970s had good access to property ownership. The Institute for Fiscal Studies' report on inheritance shows the scope of wealth accumulated by the most favored within the older cohort of property owners. According to the report, due to rising housing prices, "the average wealth of elderly households (where all members are 80 or older) increased by 45%" between 2002 – 2003 and 2012 – 2013.[35] The richest 10 percent of the elderly own 40 percent of the wealth to be inherited. By contrast, within the following generation, prices are too high, wages too low, and rents too burdensome to allow an easy path to home purchase. For many, the rise of rents has generated precarious housing situations if not outright homelessness (there are now eight thousand "rough sleepers" in London). At a minimum, it prevents most young people from saving money for the future, with potentially massive consequences for long-term inequality.

In Paris, again, those impacts exist but are more muted. Economist Clément Dherbécourt has mapped the strong increase of inheritance, which has grown from the equivalent of 8 percent of household income in 1980 (€3.5 trillion) to about 19 percent of household income today (€10.6 trillion), and is projected to reach about 30 percent by 2050.[36] Rising house prices explain most of the change. Indeed, since the early 1990s, the net assets of households increased much more rapidly than incomes, as house prices doubled between 1998 and 2008. From 1980 to 2015, the level of inheritance went from €60 to €250 billion (constant prices). As in the United Kingdom, this goes together with an increase of inequality both between and within generations. Assets are far more concentrated than incomes and therefore the increasing importance of inheritance is a powerful mechanism to create long-term inequalities within generations. Without

reaching the levels of inequality seen in London, Dherbécourt nonetheless shows that the average incomes of households who inherit more than €100,000 are more than 30 percent higher than other households.

So far we have examined general social processes associated with high-income metropoles. These processes generate higher housing prices and, in turn, cycles of concentrated advantage and disadvantage. We now contrast the policy experiences of our four cities. All have been part of the broad spatial revolution concentrating increased economic advantage in urban areas. In key respects, however, divergence among these cities is as evident as commonality. Housing prices have not increased equally in all these places. More important, the translation of high housing prices into durable mobility advantages is not fully automatic. Paris stands out as a site where both the run-up in housing prices and its impact on the distribution of economic and social opportunity have been more limited.

The situation of housing today is partly the result of long-term policies and collective choices about what is public and private, and about the priority of housing for the poor and those with modest incomes. Public policy scholar Allen Scott and urban geographer Michael Storper have stressed the urban-land nexus related to density.[37] How do authorities resolve the competition among individuals and groups who want to live in these high-income, dynamic metropoles? What mechanisms should be used to decide land-use patterns that usually reflect a mix of power relations and efficiency concerns? In all of our cases, the increased competition for housing has benefited the upper-middle classes and tended to limit access for lower-income groups, or expel them. Policy responses to address

the crisis and to limit inequalities have been diverse, and generally insufficient. Yet the degree to which this inequality has grown and become entrenched has varied. Below we identify some of the proximate sources of these differences and then proceed to explore some of the deeper structures that help account for the distinctive pathways that cities find themselves on.

At least on the surface, housing policy is led by the public and private actors – especially mayors – within these large cities who have struggled to create coalitions and mobilize resources to develop affordable housing. But looking at cities themselves is not enough. The fragmented governance of these metropolitan areas requires a combined analysis of what is done at the level of the municipality (or the borough in London) and at the level of the metropolitan government, where there is such a thing. Intermediate authorities such as the regional council in Paris or the states of California and New York also possess financial and regulatory resources that may be mobilized.

In the end, we argue, national commitments are crucial. Cities are embedded within national societies. Nation-states have not disappeared, nor have welfare states. A major source of city robustness in the past has been the redistribution and services that national welfare states have provided for urban populations. Despite strong pressures for austerity in some settings, these features continue to shape the pathways of urban transformation. Cities – even "global" ones – remain situated within particular national contexts that continue to exert considerable influence on the development of structures of social and economic opportunity. National policies influence the capacities, options, and incentives of more geographically proximate actors. If, as we argue, Paris is different, it is primarily because France is different.

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A useful place to begin this exploration is to distinguish supply and demand pressures on housing prices. On the demand side, critical factors include the prosperity of a region, flows of foreign investment into property markets, and population trends. Increasing population, especially among those who can afford to pay more, will bid up housing prices. On the supply side, one can distinguish between public and private construction. To the extent that there is increasing supply from either source, upward pressure on prices will be diminished. By contrast, in the presence of heightened demand, supply constraints will generate what economist Fred Hirsch long ago labeled *positional competition*, in which housing markets begin to resemble an ever-faster game of musical chairs.[38]

The main point is that even within this group of dynamic, global cities, all of which see rising housing prices as a huge challenge, there are important differences in outcomes. We briefly sketch those differences before exploring some of the differing policy structures that generate them – differences that help to illuminate some of the patterns of political and social responses to housing affordability challenges as well.

London has experienced a long-term decline of the role of the public sector, and the national government in particular, in providing affordable housing. The city was once characterized by social housing – its famous housing estates – built before and after World War II. In 1980, the Thatcher government famously introduced the "right to buy" social housing, leading to the sale of 1.8 million council homes nationwide at considerable discount to their occupants. Sales were especially brisk in London, where rising home prices made the deal particularly attractive to tenants. On average, the

number of new affordable housing units being built, typically by nonprofit housing associations, offset roughly 10 percent of the number of properties sold. And more recently, under Conservative Treasury Secretary George Osborne, the right to buy was extended to housing association properties as well. There is a general sense of a housing crisis in the United Kingdom and in London in particular. Never-ending fiscal pressure on local authorities (UK public expenditure is one of the three most centralized in Europe) has marginalized social housing. Report after report emphasizes the lack of new construction. The Conservative Cameron-Osborne government made only modest efforts to address this challenge. In 2010, the government developed its "First Buy" scheme, aimed at helping ten thousand households to buy new property by guaranteeing interest-free loans. The program has delivered but the scale is limited. The Cameron-Osborne government's "Help to Buy" scheme offered interest-free loans to first-time buyers and a guarantee to allow them to offer 95 percent of the mortgage with little risk. It was designed to help seventy-four thousand buyers over three years for a cost of £3.5 billion.

It is not just that these efforts were very modest; others cut in the direction of worsening housing affordability. In England, the number of new dwellings built as social housing for rent has declined from about twenty-five thousand in 2006 to six thousand in 2015. A major shift in policy was the decision to cap the housing benefit, in particular in London in 2013, a move that was strengthened in 2016. The importance of the housing benefit in England (and in London in particular) had grown because of increasing house prices. Capping the housing benefit provoked rent increases up to several hundreds of pounds a month in the worst cases. The likely result will be an

additional push on those at the low end of the market, leading either to worsening housing conditions or induced departure from London.

The housing charity Shelter issued a critical report on housing policy under Cameron.[39] It noted that the government's policies have done little to address the supply problem. In 2013, construction was at a postwar low. Conservative Mayor Boris Johnson worked closely with leading private developers and international partners to attract money, but the result was a limited amount of housing, mostly at the very top end of the market. At the end of Johnson's mandate, affordable housing in London represented just 25 percent of new construction, compared with 40 percent when he was first elected. According to government statistics, there are about seventy-five thousand households in temporary accommodation or homeless in the city. Shelter reports that between 2011 and 2016, the number of households in temporary accommodation increased by 60 percent. A National Audit Office study emphasized the curtailment of private-sector tenancies, together with a general decline of affordability of private rentals, as the major reasons for the rise of homelessness.[40]

With the withdrawal of national government, efforts to combat the affordability crisis and homelessness have fallen to fiscally stressed local councils. Yet the Cameron-Osborne government also cut local budgets dramatically, up to 50 percent in some cases. As a result, councils in London faced intense pressure to raise capital by selling pieces of land or council estates to private developers. Given tight budgets, most of the new dwellings were built to sell or rent at market prices. And this comes on the heels of decades of decline for social housing. There is now a reduced social housing stock to house homeless people. Private landlords

with more lucrative alternatives are less and less willing to house them.[41] Rather than address these long-term supply shortages, scarce resources have been redirected to face the overwhelming immediate crisis. As the National Audit Office report concludes, "local authorities have increased their spending on homelessness while reducing spending on preventing it." Since 2011, spending on overall housing services (mostly for the low-income groups) has decreased by 21 percent in real terms despite a spending increase on temporary accommodations.

Unsurprisingly, housing was the major issue of the 2016 mayoral election in London, figuring prominently in the manifesto of the winning Labour candidate Sadiq Khan. His long-term goal is both to increase the production of housing in London and ensure that 50 percent of new dwellings are affordable. Over £1 billion have been diverted to subsidize affordable housing construction. Yet, forced to rely on local fiscal resources, Khan faces the same challenge as New York and San Francisco. The major resource of local governments is their control over zoning, which gives them regulatory authority over increasingly valuable land. *Inclusionary zoning* has become the watchword for using this remaining form of government authority to address both the challenges of rising prices and rising exclusivity.

Khan has implemented a number of restrictions on luxury development. He is working closely with Transport for London (TFL), which has become a major developer, releasing land to build new housing around stations. Yet the resources generated in these projects are largely destined to finance transport, another urgent need in an increasingly congested London. Like other booming cities, London faces massive infrastructure needs that compete with subsidized housing for limited local funds. Still, the mayor

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is requiring that 50 percent of homes on TFL sites be "genuinely affordable."

The mayor is thus employing a carrot-and-stick strategy, working with private developers to enroll them in his agenda while exercising coercion when they are recalcitrant. He has launched a number of new initiatives, including subsidies for a new generation of "naked homes" – that is, affordable housing stripped down to the bare essentials – that would sell for 40 percent under the existing market price.[42] In addition to working with private developers and finance companies, Khan is developing partnership deals with nonprofit housing associations to build thousands of new units. His team works on developing incentives and planning regulations at the borough level to deliver 35 percent "genuinely affordable" housing in any new development. The mayor also plans to introduce a "new private sector tenure" with rents set at one-third of average household incomes: that is, "genuinely affordable" for a couple earning around £4,000 per month.[43] Some new homes would be accessible for £1,000 a month to rent instead of the market rent of £1,450.

Mayor Khan has built a coalition to fuel affordable housing construction and fully use the regulatory power at his disposal. Whether these efforts are commensurate with the scale of need, given the backdrop of a pronounced long-term decline in support for housing from the national government, remains very questionable. At the end of the day, neither the Greater London Authority nor the boroughs possess the resources necessary to build the houses needed by lower-income groups. These same challenges and constraints are evident in major agglomeration cities in the United States.

The forces that have led to skyrocketing prices in San Francisco and New York City are similar to those in London. The influx of foreign investment has been more modest, although in New York it is still notable. In both New York and San Francisco, the critical driver is their enhanced status as economic magnets. This has created intensified demand, as high-end wages skyrocket and draw affluent workers to these cities. Compared with London, however, population growth has been low, especially in San Francisco. Indeed, American economists have been struck by what previously would have been seen as an economic paradox: booming economies coexisting with limited population growth.[44] The population of both cities has grown, but not nearly as much as rising economic productivity might lead one to expect. Many high-skilled workers have entered, but many with fewer skills have headed in the other direction. Many more have been deterred from entering by prohibitive housing costs. They have instead chosen to locate where housing prices are lower, even though economic opportunities are more limited as well.[45]

That housing prices have skyrocketed despite modest population growth points to problems on the supply side, where both American cities have faced severe challenges. There is now widespread consensus that supply limitations are central to escalating prices in both New York and San Francisco. With an influx of high-income households and very limited new construction, housing markets quickly exhibit Hirschian-style positional competition. In this brutal game of musical chairs, seats go not to those who are fastest, but to those already in secure possession of a chair and those equipped to win a bidding war for the few available spots. Supply constraints in a context of increasing demand form the backdrop to both the escalating prices and massive resource transfers to property owners described at the beginning of this essay.

There is some dispute about the reasons for the restricted supply. Public resources to support affordable housing have always been relatively limited in the United States. Today, national resources for such efforts are scant by comparative standards (and even by historical standards in the United States). Moreover, zoning restrictions and local opposition have placed marked restrictions on new construction. Indeed, American housing economists and government officials at both the state and national levels now point to these supply restrictions as a chief culprit in the affordability crisis.[46] They document that other American cities lacking such restrictions have seen a more limited run-up in house prices. Despite its booming economy, San Francisco, in recent decades, has built new housing at a rate far below the norm for American metros, as well as the pace it set in prior decades. New York has done only a little better.

The two American cities we examine have had somewhat different responses to the challenges associated with rising housing prices. We begin with the more modest actions of city officials in San Francisco before turning to New York's more aggressive policy response. There are clear differences between the two cities, as well as over time (with each stepping up its efforts in recent years). But the commonalities largely swamp the differences, revealing some of the key features constraining effective policy responses in the United States.

In both New York and San Francisco, housing affordability (along with its most alarming manifestation, widespread homelessness on the same streets that display unprecedented affluence) has come to dominate local politics. San Francisco and the surrounding areas were among the first places to recover from the financial crisis, and even within the booming Bay Area, San Francisco gained ground economically. Between 2010 and 2015, San Francisco and San Jose added over one hundred thousand digital service jobs; their share of the nation's tech employment continued to grow to a remarkable 17 percent.[47]

The tenure of San Francisco's Ed Lee, who became mayor in 2011 (and was reelected in 2015), coincided with striking changes in the city. Lee's initial focus was on consolidating San Francisco's economic appeal to the already extensive tech industry. His efforts reflected and reinforced a shift in the political economy of the Bay Area, with a growing share of start-up and venture-capital activity (along with an influx of high-skilled, high-wage workers) moving from Silicon Valley to the city itself. By 2010, new venture capital within the city's limits exceeded that in Silicon Valley. By 2015, there were almost twice as many "unicorns" (private companies with valuations of over $1 billion) in San Francisco as in the Valley; indeed, San Francisco is the headquarters for over 40 percent of all such companies in the world.[48]

This economic boom, combined with the influx of high-skilled workers, coincided with a sharp spike in housing demand. Lee's tenure in office was accompanied by escalations in both housing prices and the intensity of conflicts over housing and development. Rents more than doubled between 2009 and 2015. Soaring housing costs in turn rapidly translated into growing signs of social and political strain: activist challenges to the tech industry's prominence, increasingly visible encampments despite growing city expenditures to combat homelessness, and dueling ballot measures seeking to finance affordable housing and either curtail or facilitate private development. Housing has not only become

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the biggest issue on the city council's agenda, it now also figures prominently in the state legislature in Sacramento and has spurred a number of state-wide ballot initiatives.

The city has responded to these challenges on a number of fronts. It has substantially expanded resources dedicated to combatting homelessness, both through an extension of social services and efforts to increase the supply of permanent housing for homeless families and individuals. In 2015, the city spent $240 million on homelessness, about 3 percent of its budget and a 25 percent increase in real terms since Lee first took office.[49] It has attempted to increase the supply of affordable housing by financing construction and rehabilitation. Notably, in 2015, the city passed a $310 million bond measure dedicated to affordable housing, with 73 percent voter support. It has encouraged the rehabilitation of public housing through partnerships with nonprofits.[50] And, most extensively, it has – like London and New York – expanded the use of inclusionary zoning both to increase new construction and leverage that construction to generate new affordable units.

Despite the importance of some of these initiatives, their overall impact has been modest. The scale is simply insufficient given the extent of the challenge. San Francisco's flagship bond initiative must be viewed against this background. It will, at current prices, yield, at most, 775 new units of housing – and probably less given escalating construction costs.[51] It is telling that a large share of the city's efforts (supported by modest state and federal funding) is required just to keep the *current* stock of affordable housing from disappearing. Budgets are far from sufficient for the maintenance of existing public housing. Nationwide, the federal budget for public housing repairs has fallen by over 50 percent in real terms

since 2000. It now totals under $2 billion, while the system faces $26 billion in needed maintenance.[52] San Francisco's embrace of a pilot program to transfer management of its public housing stock to nonprofits reflects these painful realities. It may not only preserve, but also improve the quality of 3,500 units of affordable housing; it will not, however, increase the supply.

Meanwhile, extraordinary prices inexorably pull existing affordable housing into the open marketplace. Property owners face powerful incentives to cash in on the housing gold rush. The city's own *Housing Balance* report, which analyzes efforts over a decade, is telling.[53] It estimates that between 2004 and 2015, the city developed 6,559 new units of affordable housing. Over the same period, 5,470 units were "removed from protective status" with, for instance, the movement of owners into previously occupied apartments. In other words, despite its efforts, the city was barely holding even in absolute terms. Given the trends of sharply rising rents and growing population, it was almost certainly losing ground relative to need.

The California Housing Partnership estimates that state and federal funding for low-income housing in California dropped by 67 percent between 2009 and 2015.[54] All told, federal, state, and local financial assistance for affordable housing in California has subsidized the construction of about seven thousand rental units a year. This amounts to only about 5 percent of total construction in a state of almost forty million people, at a time when the total construction effort falls consistently and woefully short of estimated need.[55]

With the national government in absentia and local authorities lacking resources and facing conflicting incentives, the most interesting policy activity

in California is in the state capitol. State policy-makers are increasingly focused on housing policy and, in 2017, finally brokered significant new legislation. The state has introduced new funding for affordable housing construction, but in the face of competing priorities, the impact of the modest new allocations is likely to be marginal. The bigger change is the introduction of zoning reforms that might foster private construction. That the state is now weighing in on these regulatory issues to encourage more housing construction represents an important change, but the new rules are likely to make only a modest difference against a backdrop of entrenched local resistance, in which both cities and suburbs are fiercely protective of their traditional authority.

New York has faced a broadly similar housing crisis, fueled by roughly similar forces. It has, by most accounts, been more aggressive than San Francisco in its response, and its aggressiveness has grown over time. The severity of the housing challenge was recognized under Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who presided over New York's booming economy from 2002 to 2014. The increasing burdens of housing affordability, combined with a spreading sense that the city was becoming the exclusive preserve of the affluent and superrich, was a growing blemish on the mayor's record. Bloomberg set a goal of creating or preserving 165,000 units of affordable housing, mostly through expanded use of inclusionary zoning. Yet despite the city's stepped-up efforts, it lost more affordable units than it gained during Bloomberg's tenure.[56]

This disappointing record was one of the catalysts for the surprise election of the progressive Bill de Blasio, who won the mayor's office over Bloomberg's preferred candidate in late 2013. In his most prominent campaign speech, de Blasio promised a robust response to what he decried as a "tale of two cities" dividing rich and poor:

> Without a dramatic change of direction – an economic policy that combats inequality and rebuilds our middle class – generations to come will see New York as little more than a playground for the rich . . . a gilded city where the privileged few prosper, and millions upon millions of New Yorkers struggle each and every day to keep their heads above water. . . . History has taught us that no economy – and no city – can thrive in the long-term under such circumstances.[57]

After winning office, de Blasio immediately launched an unprecedented effort to expand city support to preserve and extend social housing. He set what was by historical standards an ambitious goal: two hundred thousand units of affordable housing over a decade. The primary tools for meeting de Blasio's aspirations were two sets of incentives for developers. First, extending Bloomberg's efforts, the city offered to relax zoning in some areas. "Inclusionary zoning" would allow for more and denser construction. In return, the city would get a commitment that a significant share of the resulting housing would be reserved for those with moderate incomes. Second, the city (and state of New York) proposed to offer more generous relief from property taxes for developments providing a designated share of affordable housing. In short, city policy-makers sought to exploit the main tool they controlled: regulatory authority over private construction in a context of exploding demand. The goal was to generate both an expanded housing supply and, within that expansion, a significant affordable component.

Like public officials in San Francisco, those in New York City are swimming

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against a very strong current. Their efforts play out in an environment in which rapidly rising property values create powerful incentives for private actors to remove units from the affordable housing stock whenever possible. Each year, rent-stabilized units are allowed to increase rent modestly, but once they reach a specified threshold, these rents are deregulated entirely and can shift to market rates. Since 2007, a staggering 172,000 units have been deregulated.[58] This is one of several examples of policy drift that are rife in the urban housing crisis in the United States.[59] The interaction between changing circumstances and frozen policies produces fundamental change. Federal housing programs were designed at a time when rent burdens and prices were far lower. With each passing year of rising prices, they become less adequate. They cannot be adapted to meet current social demands without new laws that are impossible to pass in the current political climate.

On the contrary, the federal government is retreating ever further from its limited prior support for low-income housing. As federal agreements on previously subsidized units expire, some are not renewed, and formerly covered housing is converted to market rates. Local governments must devote their limited resources to offsetting the steep decline in affordable housing that would occur in the absence of concerted efforts. Like San Francisco, New York struggles against long odds to preserve its stock of public housing, constructed long ago with massive (but now long gone) federal support. The New York City Housing Authority faces an $18 billion backlog for repairs. Meanwhile, the already grossly inadequate federal spending that is supposed to finance those repairs continues to dwindle. Given the current political and budgetary climate, there is every reason

to think federal housing programs may face steeper cuts in the near future.

Thus, despite the energy and resources devoted to meeting the growing housing crisis, many of the city's limited resources must be allocated to not slipping backwards. Bloomberg's administration failed to meet even this test. De Blasio's aggressive plan calls for two hundred thousand units of affordable housing in a decade, but fully 60 percent of the total refers to preserving existing units rather than producing genuinely new supply. As in San Francisco, the city simultaneously faces the additional challenge of dealing with the expensive fallout of the housing crisis, most palpably homelessness. The population in city homeless shelters has doubled, to over sixty thousand, since Bloomberg entered office in 2000.[60] Although declining affordability is not the only cause of homelessness, it is a fundamental one. Just as has happened in London and San Francisco, already scarce city funds must be shifted to deal with the immediate and severe humanitarian challenges.

New York City's housing efforts are on a scale unmatched in the recent American past or in any other present-day American city. In the words of Alicia Glen, de Blasio's deputy mayor for housing and economic development: "I can't even compare it to what other cities are doing. At the risk of sounding like we're the bee's knees…we are the bee's knees. New York has always . . . been the place where the most interesting housing policy and programs have happened."[61] And yet the effort is clearly incommensurate with the scale of the challenge. The city receives very limited support from the state of New York or the federal government. State officials are happy to see the city sacrifice its future property tax revenues (and indeed developed a more generous proposal that would involve mandated

high wages for union construction workers), but it offers little financial assistance. The federal government, always a marginal participant in housing, has reduced its efforts sharply over time. In the absence of such support, the needed public resources are certain to be lacking.

Paris, as we have already suggested, represents a distinctive case. It faces all the same pressures as the other three cities, but in more limited form. It remains more socioeconomically diverse, and the strains of housing affordability and precarious living are more muted. How has public policy contributed to this outcome?

France has had a long tradition of direct state and municipal intervention to build affordable and social housing. That impulse receded in the last part of the twentieth century. Since then, however, it has not only returned, but has been adapted and enhanced to meet contemporary challenges. New efforts at the local, regional, and national levels have limited the scale of the housing crisis, as well as the extent to which rising prices generate more durable forms of exclusion. The pressures remain severe. Yet concerted public efforts, both local and national, have made Paris a notably different type of global city.

A great deal of the massive development of the Paris urban region took place after 1945. The Ministry of Housing and the *Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations* (a publicly owned, large financial institution) started an ambitious program of social housing estates (*les grands ensembles*) in the suburbs of Paris. The centralist technocratic Gaullist regime accentuated the effort and introduced together an ambitious regional strategy for Paris in 1965, designed to transform urban planning and land use. It combined innovative policy instruments, granting resources to public authorities to impose

zoning, to expropriate private owners, to build complementary infrastructure, and to develop social and affordable housing on a large scale. The effort included the construction of the regional transport system, five new towns around Paris, and *La Défense* (the new business district). The working-class industrial belt on the northern and eastern sides of Paris enthusiastically built up red bastions of municipal communism, concentrating social housing and workers alike.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the French state made a partial retreat. The liberal government of Prime Minister Raymond Barre curtailed the effort to build social housing, substituting large-scale subsidies toward the building of new houses for first-time buyers. This encouraged a form of "white flight," as the departure of low-income white families led to a growing concentration of immigrants in social housing, in particular in the biggest estates far away from Paris. The priority given to affordable housing declined as many municipalities in the Paris region became afraid of attracting low-income populations or migrants. After 1982, housing policy further decentralized. Jacques Chirac, the conservative mayor of Paris, expanded reliance on market mechanisms and encouraged a shift to upper-class housing. Social housing was marginalized, falling to roughly 7 percent of housing in Paris. Municipalities gained control of land-use planning. Although left-wing municipalities were often keen to build more houses for low-income groups, elsewhere in the region NIMBYism (not in my backyard) spread. Municipalities with middle-class constituencies and conservative officials worked to prevent the building of new housing.

In 2000, however, the political winds began to shift again, with renewed policy efforts to mitigate the impact of housing-price increases on the social

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composition of Paris and the surrounding region. A major turning point was the SRU (*Solidarité et renouvellement urbain*) law passed by the left-wing Jospin government. The law profoundly transformed urban planning and housing policy in France. It stated that every municipality should have 20 percent, and eventually 25 percent, social housing. Municipalities had several years to comply, but if they failed to do so they would face fines. Encountering resistance, new laws in 2013 and 2017 strengthened the SRU, substantially increasing fines on recalcitrant conservative municipalities in the Paris region.

A second policy change, led by centrist Minister Jean-Louis Borloo (after 2003), was the creation of the national agency for urban renovation (ANRU, *Agence pour la Rénovation Urbaine*). It sought to demolish and then restructure the massive housing estates, replacing them with affordable housing that would be more integrated into neighborhoods. ANRU undertook a massive public investment – about €1 billion annually for twelve years – for four hundred neighborhoods in France (including 119 in the Paris Île-de-France region). Those projects supported the building of new social and affordable housing, to be integrated with economic development projects, new infrastructure, and expanded services.

Political and policy changes in Paris complemented these dramatic shifts in national policy. In 2001, the victory of a left-wing coalition led by Bertrand Delanoe ended twenty-four years of conservative municipal government. Delanoe was reelected in 2008 and succeeded by his former deputy Anne Hidalgo in 2014. Housing has been a top priority for the coalition. It introduced an ambitious program to build social and affordable housing, extending into more upper-middle-class neighborhoods. Paris is a very well-funded municipality, with a budget of nearly €10 billion for 2.2 million inhabitants and a powerful and capable administration. The Paris City Council also deploys powerful regulations to control land use and expropriate reluctant property owners where necessary.

The impact of these efforts has been notable, and the pace has accelerated. The Delanoe administration managed to build roughly five thousand new social or affordable dwellings per year; Mayor Hidalgo has increased the number to seven thousand a year (to which we can add three thousand in the private sector). As a reminder, this is equal to the number of social housing units being constructed annually in the entire state of California, a jurisdiction with almost twenty times as many inhabitants. All in all, the Paris City Council, backed by national policy, dramatically changed the housing situation. The percentage of social housing (with subsidized rents and strong rent-increase limitation) rose from 7 percent to 20 percent, and is scheduled to reach 25 percent by 2021. To meet this goal, all new housing projects are supposed to include a remarkable 60 percent share of social or affordable housing.

Finally, the encouraging developments within the core of traditional Paris were flanked by the creation of new institutional structures and initiatives for a "Grand Paris" encompassing the broader metro area of seven million people. While on the 2007 presidential campaign trail, the Conservative Party candidate Nicolas Sarkozy pointed to booming London and accused the city and region's transport, housing, and spatial planning policies of lacking a "grand vision" for the capital-city region. The ensuing political battle eventually led to three important developments: 1) a €40 billion investment in a large-scale regional metro system, *Le Grand Paris Express*; 2) the creation

of a new local authority, *Métropole du Grand Paris,* in 2017, designed to boost the supply of new housing and overcome the collective-action problems regarding housing and infrastructure that pervade metropolitan regions; and 3) the recruitment of financial institutions and private developers to design and cofinance large-scale investment in housing within this urban core. The changing scale of Paris and the making of a Grand Paris are a major opportunity for new development. The massive expansion of transport infrastructure allows various actors to increase their investment beyond the city of Paris.[62] New policy instruments have been put forward to allow public-sector organizations to preemptively purchase land for future housing. The state and the municipalities have identified thirty-three strategic sites, many around new metro stations, on which to build two hundred thousand new dwellings in the coming decade.

Paris thus stands out as a distinctive case. French officials have marshaled national regulatory and financial resources, sought to coordinate local efforts, and, where necessary, reformed the division of labor among public authorities. All of these actions have been on a scale at least plausibly commensurate with the scope of the challenges facing agglomeration economies. To say this is not to ignore the obstacles or the weaknesses within the French response. Planning documents during the past two decades typically sought construction of seventy thousand units of new housing every year in the Paris Île-de-France region, but for many years, the realized totals remained under forty-five thousand. However, the set of policies described above has led production to rise to about sixty thousand in 2015, and the tempo is increasing toward seventy thousand. All of the new schemes

include substantial commitments to social and affordable housing.

But questions remain. The commitment to social and affordable housing is extensive, but still must be fully implemented. Risks for the most vulnerable remain evident. Fifteen percent of the population lives in poverty (less than €1,000 a month for one person). Almost 10 percent of all those living in the Paris region – about one million people – live in bad housing conditions. Rising prices have excluded increasing numbers from the private rental sector. New buyers are increasingly concentrated among the already privileged. They are less likely to have a mortgage (that is, often because they are drawing on inheritances). As in London, the rate of first-time homeowners has decreased by 20 percent between 1986 and 2016 (from 25 to 20 percent).[63] According to the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies, there are about thirty thousand homeless people in the Métropole du Grand Paris, and eight to ten thousand in Paris.

The new governance design for the Métropole du Grand Paris, intended to restrict NIMBYism, remains an untested arrangement. The making of Le Grand Paris combines two objectives: to develop social, affordable, and inclusive housing, and to increase the attractiveness of Le Grand Paris. At a minimum, these goals stand in tension with each other. Public actors now have major resources and have developed important policies to combat housing-price increases, or attenuate some of the negative effects. Some groups, however, will be tempted to use those resources to increase the competitiveness of Paris, to get rid of poor populations, and to build for the very affluent, as in London.

Finally, the deeply ingrained policy commitments to house low-income groups and to maintain forms of social

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diversity in Paris also may come under threat because of the financialization of the housing sector.[64] France is not immune to the broad changes sweeping advanced capitalism. Power relations between private developers, private finance organizations, and local authorities are changing, with more expertise and financial capacity concentrated in the hands of major market actors.

There are indeed uncertainties and reasons for concern that a shift in political coalitions and weakening of currently extensive policy commitments could lead to the dynamics on display elsewhere, promoting durable inequalities. Yet even noting these anxieties suggests the distinctiveness of the French experience. The fear, after all, is that possible events could eventually push Paris down a path that London, New York, and San Francisco have already traveled.

Housing is a crucial mechanism through which the dramatic changes associated with the rise of the knowledge economy, and its accompanying reconstruction of cities, generate new forms of durable inequality. Combined with changes in inheritance tax, exploding urban property values constitute a powerful form of inequality production and reproduction.

In the long run, the indirect impact of rising prices on inequality may be just as significant. The high and rising housing prices that characterize these settings are not just a generator and store of wealth. Increasingly, access to these assets becomes a prerequisite for opportunity. The concern is that only those who already have significant economic advantages can make effective use of what these urban agglomerations provide. It is getting harder and harder to get on the escalators present in high-income globalizing cities.

Thus, housing within these agglomerations provides a stark illustration of the broader theme of this volume: inequality is a *process*. Initial inequalities can trigger additional effects that intensify those original divisions. Housing costs become a divider between those who either already own or can bear the costs of ownership and everyone else. Sociologists have pointed to "the spatialization of class."[65] Today, there is growing evidence that these economic agglomerations can generate, absorb (through in-migration and gentrification), and then reproduce and expand enormous inequalities. Most dramatically, this operates in the astonishing concentration of income at the very top.

Housing unaffordability can come to dominate how people make critical choices about location. In the United States, dramatic differences in the cost of living are producing "movement to stagnation."[66] Geographic mobility in the United States is declining and mobility to the areas with the highest wages is increasingly difficult. Instead, populations flow to places with lower productivity and wages but much lower housing costs as well (the median home price in Houston, for example, is just one-fifth of the price in San Jose). Put differently, prohibitive housing costs cut off access to the escalator of high-productivity metro areas.[67]

Two dynamics of exclusion are at work here: exclusion *within* and exclusion *from*. The radically new conditions in superstar cities operate not just as an escalator, but as a filter. Filtering doesn't just work by blocking in-migration by those with fewer resources; it operates within cities as well, as rising prices push individuals away from the escalator and into situations of insecure housing or homelessness. In many European cities, there are strong logics of differentiation and segregation at the extremes: geographer Sako Musterd and his colleagues have

provided evidence of increased segregation in European cities. Sociologists Douglas Massey and Jacob Rugh have found similar trends in the United States, with the affluent in American cities increasingly segregated, both racially and economically, from everyone else.[68]

Those who find that the combination of very expensive housing and a weak market for their (low) skills renders life in these urban areas increasingly untenable are also pushed out. Indeed, absent immigration, San Francisco and New York would be losing population despite their booming job markets. Disadvantaged inhabitants exit to the declining industrial towns of New Jersey from New York, or to the Midlands and Northern England from London, or to the periphery of the Paris urban region, or far away from the coastal areas of California to less expensive but much poorer towns to the east or out of the state altogether.

The striking changes in superstar cities thus reveal shared patterns, highlighting the importance of global forces and technological shifts. Yet the contrast between Paris, on the one hand, and New York, San Francisco, and London, on the other, demonstrates the continuing significance of national institutions, political coalitions, and policies in shaping the new contours of inequality.

Both by comparative and historical standards, contemporary national programs to support affordable housing are extraordinarily weak in the United States. This structure of national weakness in urban policy reflects a national institutional framework of decentralized federalism that leaves an unusual amount of political authority in the hands of local officials. Much more than in most democracies, cities are forced to rely on their own resources.

In the current context, such self-reliance creates two massive problems. The first has long been well-understood. Localities are poorly placed to pursue aggressively redistributive policies.[69] Mobile companies and wealthy individuals find it both attractive and possible to evade such efforts if they become too burdensome. The dynamics of agglomeration, in which companies and skilled workers want to be in close proximity to other firms and workers, may mitigate this constraint to some extent.[70] In November 2018, San Francisco voters passed a controversial initiative, imposing significant taxes on large and profitable local firms in order to address the housing crisis. The initiative, if it survives legal challenges, will be an important test of this proposition. Redistributive initiatives that would promote affordable housing and combat homelessness must be primarily a regional or national responsibility.

Second, unconstrained by more overarching authorities, local politics creates powerful incentives for NIMBYism. The politics are complex, and of course opponents of new construction rarely argue that they want to raise the value of their homes. In local politics, these incentives coexist with mobilization against developers stemming from concerns about neighborhood preservation and fear of gentrification, as well as environmental issues. Nonetheless, the massive contribution of zoning restrictions to rising property values, higher prices, and rising wealth inequality is very clear.[71]

Existing property holders benefit from restrictive zoning rules that raise the value of their assets. Local political officials face incentives to curry favor with politically powerful blocs of existing homeowners, an incentive structure that has also been linked to the extraordinary levels of incarceration in the United States.[72] Regional or national actors are much better placed to limit such restrictive

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practices and encourage new construction. In the United States, however, such forces (especially national ones) have limited authority. Moreover, the strong rural bias built into American electoral institutions makes the urban housing crisis a very low priority for national officials. In short, one would be hard pressed to develop a structure of political authority less conducive to confronting the housing crisis than the one in place in the United States.

New York and San Francisco show that some institutional arrangements and policy inheritances present formidable obstacles for confronting these new inequalities. By contrast, London's experience reminds us that choices remain to be made, and thus politics retains its vital importance. Acting on their own, London's public officials face many of the same constraints as their American counterparts. As the currents associated with the

property boom push the disadvantaged down, or out, it is all city officials can do to slow the tide. But unlike the United States, British institutional arrangements concentrate relevant regulatory and fiscal resources with national authorities. The decision not to direct those resources toward coping with the housing affordability crisis has been a political one. In this respect, the contrast between Britain and France could hardly be starker. For decades, policy in the two countries has moved in opposite directions. The United Kingdom has largely abandoned its efforts to subsidize affordable housing and sustain broad access to its most thriving economy; France, by contrast, has redoubled its energy. In light of the highly distinctive social outcomes in London and Paris, the continuing centrality of these public decisions to the distribution of life chances is clear.

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Membership without Social Citizenship? Deservingness & Redistribution as Grounds for Equality

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Abstract: Western societies have experienced a broadening of inclusive membership, whether we consider legal, interpersonal, or cultural membership. Concurrently, we have witnessed increased tensions around social citizenship, notably harsher judgments or boundaries over who "deserves" public assistance. Some have argued these phenomena are linked, with expanded, more diverse membership corroding solidarity and redistribution. We maintain that such a conclusion is premature and, especially, unsatisfactory: it fails to detail the processes – at multiple levels of analysis – behind tensions over membership and social citizenship. This essay draws on normative political theory, social psychology, cultural sociology, and political studies to build a layered explanatory framework that highlights the importance of individual feelings of group identity and threat for people's beliefs and actions; the significance of broader cultural repertoires and notions of national solidarity as a source and product of framing contests; and the diverse ways elites, power, and institutions affect notions of membership and deservingness.

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This essay explores processes by which a broadening of legal, social, and cultural membership in Western societies appears to be accompanied by a reduction in the social rights of citizenship, in part due to harsher judgments concerning the deservingness of low-income populations. As more diverse groups are extended formal national membership, fewer individuals appear deserving of social rights, such as welfare redistribution. Why is this the case? Some explain this decline in solidarity as a simple, even mechanical response to growing diversity. We offer alternative approaches to understanding these tensions and consider pathways for promoting inclusive membership and broad social rights. We do so by drawing on the analytical

tools of four distinct fields that are rarely in dialogue, proposing that positive social change may emerge from 1) solidarity, explored by normative political theorists; 2) group identity and distributive justice, a focus for social psychologists; 3) boundary-drawing and destigmatization, as analyzed by cultural sociologists; and 4) contestation and social movements, studied by political sociologists and political scientists. Sociologist T. H. Marshall famously distinguished three dimensions of citizenship – civic, political, and social – with corresponding types of formal rights pertaining to legal inclusion, political participation, and economic redistribution (social rights), respectively.[1] He argued that modern societies are characterized by a progressive extension of these rights to a larger number of individuals. Marshall predicted that this extension would go hand in hand with greater economic integration of all citizens, and that the decades bookending World War II would see "the subordination of market price to social justice" by "recognizing in principle the right of the citizen to a minimum standard of civilized living."[2]

Contrary to Marshall's expectations, we provide some evidence that the broadening of legal, interpersonal, or even cultural membership has not gone uniformly hand in hand with a broadening of the distribution of welfare resources, in part due to a rigidification of moral boundaries based on perceptions of deservingness.

On the side of broadened inclusion, we consider membership in three analytically distinct ways: legal membership (as defined by citizenship law or formal rules about who has access to rights); social or interpersonal membership (referring to social distance via networks of friendship and romantic relationships); and cultural membership (who is viewed as a valuable member of society, as expressed in intergroup attitudes, school textbooks, popular media, and public representations of the nation). By all three measures, people previously thought to be "others" – racial, sexual, and religious minorities and immigrants – are more likely today to have access to legal citizenship, to marry someone from the majority group, and to be perceived as valuable and as belonging to the nation than in the 1950s.

In contrast, we see increased tensions around social citizenship over this period. Contestation plays out in different ways. In some societies, increasingly harsh judgments about who deserves public help distinguish the "deserving" poor from others. According to this logic, one must demonstrate cultural membership or moral blamelessness to access resources, rather than receive public assistance as a formal right extended to anyone in the national community. Other societies appear to embrace welfare chauvinism: the historical beneficiaries of redistribution continue to enjoy generous assistance, but newer groups, such as immigrants, are excluded. In still other societies, the provision of social benefits has become decentralized, which accompanies a decline in a sense of mutual obligation toward low-income groups.

What processes of social change lie behind these tensions, and what factors may mitigate them? One prominent analysis links expanded membership but restricted social citizenship to demographic diversity: it is posited as corrosive for social capital, redistribution, and/or solidarity.[3] We find such a conclusion premature, given very mixed evidence.[4] Moreover, such an answer is analytically unsatisfactory. It does not get at the possible processes behind the tensions over membership and social citizenship, tensions that we believe must be captured by a multilevel analysis. We begin to do this by combining insights about solidarity,

group identity, destigmatization, and social movements that draw on normative political theory, social psychology, cultural sociology, and political sociology/political science.

In aiming to bridge levels of analysis, we view these insights as complementary, each highlighting a dimension of inequality. The macrolevel concerns formal law and public policy that determine membership, whether through legal rights or bureaucratic rules governing access to education, social assistance, medical care, and so forth. The microlevel captures on-the-ground experiences of membership based on interpersonal interactions and intersubjective meaning-making. The mesolevel is conceptualized as scripts of worth, available cultural repertoires, and practices institutionalized by organizations.[5] Mesolevel institutions from schools to workplaces establish rules, procedures, and norms that generate and communicate membership, and mediate the relationship between individuals and the state.[6] Each level interacts and exercises reciprocal influence.

The literatures on which we draw share an emphasis on boundary-drawing, a process by which we categorize others as worthy, valuable, or legitimate along dimensions of morality and deservingness. Such symbolic boundaries, ones that distinguish insiders and outsiders, can be accompanied by reinforcing consequential social boundaries, as manifested by laws and institutional rules.[7] At the same time, stigmatized individuals and groups can resist and struggle for recognition in opposition to dominant groups that justify opportunity-hoarding via moral criteria.[8] These literatures vary, however, in how they understand boundary-drawing, including in where they locate the process. This then leads to different views on how to ensure inclusive membership and social solidarity. Some accounts focus on national-level dynamics, tracking deservingness judgments as manifest in membership in national welfare states. In this view, prospects for a more equal society depend on national-level inclusion. In other accounts, boundary-drawing emerges from dynamic psychological processes responsive to localized situational cues or to the contingencies of particular activities, workplaces, social networks, and political coalitions; and appeals to local cultural scripts or, alternatively, to cultural repertoires that transcend the "nation" (such as human rights). Another view focuses instead on power and political contestation, with the prospects for a more equal society depending in part on the outcome of such struggles. In what follows, we lay out membership and social citizenship tensions, grapple with a set of multilevel, multidisciplinary explanatory approaches, and consider future prospects.

One of the striking successes of the last half-century is the struggle against exclusionary definitions of national membership. This is reflected in the trajectories of both legal and sociocultural inclusion across Western democracies, which show a rejection of the idea that national membership is based on or limited to an ascribed ethnic background.

With respect to legal membership, the formal rules for acquiring citizenship or nationality have become more open.[9] A common way of describing this shift is as a move from ethnic to civic conceptions of nationhood. The former defines membership in terms of blood or ancestry, with attendant affiliation to a cultural or ethnic community. The latter defines membership by residence on a state's territory with attendant loyalty to a political community. Under an ethnic model, ethnic Germans living for generations in Poland still had the right to German citizenship, even as ethnic Turks born and raised

in Germany were effectively denied it.[10] Under the civic model, immigrants can acquire citizenship through a straightforward naturalization process and their children can acquire automatic citizenship through birth in the country's territory.

Over the past fifty years, the ethnic definition of nationhood has been significantly delegitimized in the Western world. Today, virtually all Western countries accept that citizenship should be available via naturalization to those who have settled permanently in the country. This logic extends to children of immigrants. They are assumed to be part of the national community by their birth and presence in the country. Thus, in their survey of citizenship laws in eighteen West European countries from the 1980s to 2008, political scientist Maarten Vink and law scholar Gerard-René de Groot find a trend toward broader territorial birth-based citizenship, and somewhat facilitated naturalization, among countries previously holding strong descent-based citizenship rules.[11] Political scientists Marc Howard and Sara Goodman's Citizenship Policy Index yields similar results: tracking the fifteen long-standing EU countries from 1980 to 2016, they have found a general opening of formal citizenship, although the trend has stalled since 2008 (see Figure 1).[12]

The diffusion of the civic model has made national membership more diverse. For instance, once German national membership became available to long-settled ethnic minorities, a multiplicity of ways of "being German" took root, one of which is to be a German of Turkish ethnicity and Muslim faith. Shifts to a more pluralistic conception of national identity are also reflected in diversity policy. Political scientist Keith Banting and philosopher Will Kymlicka have measured eight types of multicultural policies across twenty-one Western nations at three time points (1980, 2000, and 2010) as indicators of "some level of public recognition and support for minorities to express their distinct identities and practices." Contrary to perceptions of a retreat from multiculturalism, they find that cultural diversity policies have largely expanded across countries and over time.[13]

Beyond formal policies, there are also changes in public perceptions of cultural membership: that is, who is viewed as belonging. Examining twentieth-century American opinion polls, sociologists Claude Fischer and Michael Hout have documented declining "social distance" articulated by white Americans vis-à-vis ethnoracial or religious minorities. Americans across time are more willing to have someone from a minority group be a citizen of the country, a coworker, a friend, or even a family member, with the most significant change happening in the 1970s and 1980s.[14] Changes in stated opinion are also somewhat reflected in behavior, such as by increased intermarriage.[15]

Another indicator of cultural membership is the global spread of multicultural education in school textbooks (see Table 1). Such texts expose students "to a depiction of their own societies as ones filled with validated diversity along many dimensions."[16] In the United States, scholars document how legislation and organizations in higher education and the corporate world have institutionalized criteria of selection and promotion that favor various diversities.[17] These changes result in representations of societal life that emphasize a broadened definition of cultural membership in terms of gender and sexuality and ethnoreligious and racial identity.

Whether viewed as formal citizenship and government policy, social attitudes and interaction, or cultural representation, membership has become more

Figure 1
Changes in the Citizenship Policy Index between 1980, 2008, and 2016
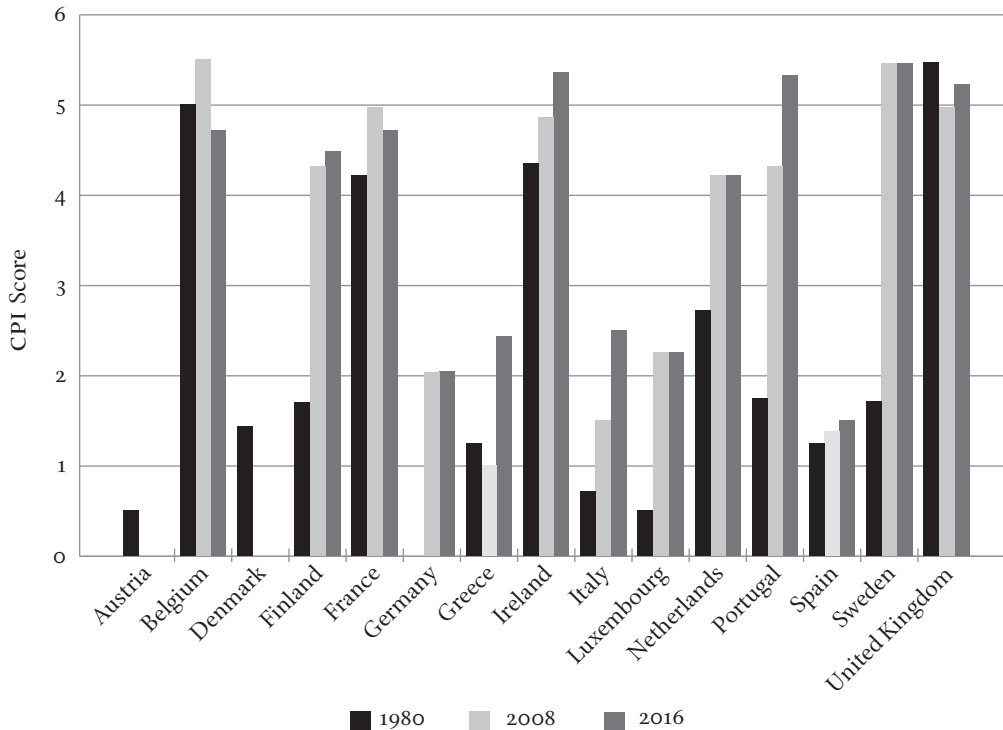
Note: Where there is no bar, a CPI score of zero is recorded for that year. Source: Marc Morjé Howard and Sara Wallace Goodman, "The Politics of Citizenship and Belonging in Europe," in *Debating Immigration*, 2nd ed., ed. Carol M. Swain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

inclusive across Western democracies, although with varied speed and extent and including moments of backlash. Ideas of civic and pluralistic nationhood are now part of "world culture." The postwar period has witnessed the "rise of global models of nationally organized progress and justice" that articulate the appropriate goals of state action, such as economic development and individual rights, while delegitimizing older goals, such as the pursuit of divine missions or racial and religious purity.[18] These global models provide the cultural frameworks within which state elites establish the "modern" and progressive credentials of their country. The transition to civic and pluralistic

conceptions of national membership is now arguably part of world culture.

These ideas do not penetrate equally across social strata.[19] Over one-third of citizens in most OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development) countries – including the United States – believe that someone must share the dominant religion to be truly a member of the nation, and over two-thirds believe that one must be born in the country to be "truly" American (or French, or Austrian, and so on; see Table 2). While recent data suggest that the importance of birthplace may be declining for countries that have experienced high immigration in the last three decades, support

Table 1

Textbook Depictions of Discrimination and Group Rights over Time

Groups Experiencing Discrimination	1950–1974	1975–1994	1995–2010
Women	0.12	0.15	0.34[****]
Other Minorities	0.13	0.25[***]	0.33[*]
Immigrants and Refugees	0.06	0.19[****]	0.28[**]
Workers	0.21	0.27	0.24
Indigenous	0.10	0.22[***]	0.21
Children	0.06	0.06	0.20[****]
Gays/Lesbians	0.01	0.02	0.04[*]
Groups Bearing Rights	**1950–1974**	**1975–1994**	**1995–2010**
Women	0.14	0.16	0.32[****]
Other Minorities	0.08	0.15[*]	0.23[**]
Immigrants and Refugees	0.05	0.06	0.13[*]
Workers	0.19	0.24	0.22
Indigenous	0.03	0.07	0.09
Children	0.09	0.09	0.19[***]
Gays/Lesbians	0.01	0.01	0.03[*]
Humans (Human Rights)	0.26	0.32	0.45[***]

Note: **** $p < .001$, *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$; two-tailed tests. "Human rights" refers to rights that are depicted as being owed to people because of their membership in the human race. Source: Luke Terra and Patricia Bromley, "The Globalization of Multicultural Education in Social Science Textbooks," *Multicultural Perspectives* 14 (3) (2012): 136–143; analyzing 548 secondary social science textbooks – history, civics, social studies, and geography – from ninety-three countries published from 1950 to 2010.

for exclusionary conceptions of nationhood has been relatively stable over the past twenty years (see Table 3). This helps to explain why there is a significant pool of support for populist parties seeking to "take back" the nation. In particular, the American National Election Survey reveals an increase in xenophobia since 2016.[20] It remains to be seen whether this trend will persist moving forward.

We turn now to social citizenship, which refers to the responsibilities that the state has to its citizens, including "the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security."[21] Whereas national membership has expanded, the segment of the population seen as deserving of redistributive support has arguably shrunk, at least in some Western countries, although the empirical evidence is less clear-cut here than for expanding national membership.

Public attitudes toward the welfare state are complex. Examining the British Social Attitudes Survey from 1986 to 2009, the data show, at first glance, resilient support for redistribution. British respondents express strong support for the idea that the state has an obligation to redistribute income from the better-off to the less-well-off, and this commitment has not changed significantly over the last twenty-five years.[22] This finding is consistent with other studies showing stability in support

Table 2
"To Be Truly [National Identity], How Important Is It to Be a [Religion]?"

Country	Percent Saying "Very Important" or "Fairly Important"			
	1995	2003	2013	2016
Australia	31.5	36.9		29.0
Austria	54.2	53.1		
Bulgaria	71.1	76.2		
Canada	24.5	54.0		34.0
Czech Republic	22.2	29.3	28.6	
Denmark		33.2	23.9	
Finland		23.0	21.0	
France		17.5	18.5	23.0
East Germany	21.7	13.3	13.3	
West Germany	33.8	37.1	29.4	
Hungary	35.9	43.2	46.5	66.0
Ireland	54.4	57.8	31.4	
Israel (Arabs)		23.7	5.8	
Israel (Jews)		84.1	69.0	
Japan	26.5	25.4	20.9	
Latvia	35.4	22.5	25.1	
The Netherlands	7.3	13.1		24.0
New Zealand	30.2	37.4		
Norway	21.4	20.3	20.2	
Philippines	82.9	84.4	85.9	
Poland	52.7	74.8		71.0
Portugal		65.6	36.3	
Russia	39.7	58.3	73.6	
Slovakia	27.0	49.7	54.1	
Slovenia	33.8	32.5	22.8	
South Korea		41.0	46.3	
Spain	46.7	44.0	33.9	19.0
Sweden	17.4	17.2	10.4	17.0
Switzerland		39.3	30.7	
Taiwan		26.1	19.8	
United Kingdom	35.5	34.8	31.1	37.0
United States	53.7	65.8	45.8	51.0
Average across Countries	36.8	39.7	35.8	37.1

Note: The 2016 Pew Research data are for respondents reporting "very important" or "somewhat important." For 1995, 2003, and 2013, the average includes data for the sixteen countries with data for each wave. Source: International Social Survey Programme, *ISSP 1995–National Identity I*, ZA2880 (Köln: GESIS, Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, 1995); International Social Survey Programme, *ISSP 2003–National Identity II*, ZA3910 (Köln: GESIS, Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, 2003); International Social Survey Programme, *ISSP 2013–National Identity III*, ZA5950 (Köln: GESIS, Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, 2013); and Bruce Stokes, "What It Takes to Truly Be 'One of Us'" (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2017).

Table 3
"To Be Truly [National Identity], How Important Is It to Have Been Born Here?"

Country	Percent Saying "Very Important" or "Fairly Important"			
	1995	2003	2013	2016
Australia	55.7	58.8		31.0
Austria	72.2	75.3		
Bulgaria	87.6	89.9		
Canada	45.4	75.1		43.0
Czech Republic	69.4	78.5	83.8	
Denmark		67.5	58.9	
Finland		69.2	59.3	
France		61.1	64.4	47.0
East Germany	56.5	65.6	62.5	
West Germany	50.7	57.4	55.1	
Hungary	67.9	71.2	81.6	81.0
Ireland	85.9	84.7	80.4	
Japan	68.5	76.5	69.3	77.0
Latvia	66.3	71.2	70.1	
The Netherlands	52.1	49.2		42.0
New Zealand	69.4	76.9		
Norway	62.2	64.8	60.4	
Philippines	96.4	95.6	96.0	
Poland	81.5	87.8		80.0
Portugal		90.8	74.3	
Russia	72.2	84.9	87.4	
Slovakia	65.3	60.2	84.7	
Slovenia	69.1	68.3	56.4	
South Korea		80.5	82.2	
Spain	78.0	88.4	72.8	58.0
Sweden	50.4	48.2	41.0	20.0
Switzerland		52.0	52.9	
Taiwan		66.1	61.2	
United Kingdom	78.5	73.4	77.5	56.0
United States	68.8	77.4	65.5	55.0
Average across Countries	**69.1**	**72.9**	**71.5**	**53.6**

Note: The 2016 Pew Research data are for respondents reporting "very important" or "somewhat important." For 1995, 2003, and 2013, the average includes data for the sixteen countries with data for each wave. Source: International Social Survey Programme, *ISSP 1995 – National Identity I*, ZA2880 (Köln : GESIS, Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, 1995); International Social Survey Programme, *ISSP 2003 – National Identity II*, ZA3910 (Köln : GESIS, Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, 2003); International Social Survey Programme, *ISSP 2013 – National Identity III*, ZA5950 (Köln : GESIS, Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, 2013); and Bruce Stokes, "What It Takes to Truly Be 'One of Us'" (Washington, D.C. : Pew Research Center, 2017).

for redistribution in most Western countries for the past forty years.[23]

However, when the British surveys ask about support for redistribution to particular groups of welfare beneficiaries, nuances emerge. The perception that some beneficiaries are untrustworthy and undeserving has grown markedly.[24] Other European data have found that deservingness judgments are becoming more harsh toward single mothers, the unemployed, the disabled, and immigrants, but not, significantly, toward the elderly or the sick.[25] Thus, beneath the apparent stability in supporting the welfare state, there has been a decline in solidarity toward particular groups of recipients.

Similar trends have been observed in the United States. While social distance has decreased and mixed-race partnerships have increased, blacks continue to be seen by many as responsible for their own disadvantaged status. For example, the percentage of whites who believe that blacks just need to try harder to succeed increased from 70 percent in the 1970s to approximately 80 percent by the mid-1980s.[26] The passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in 1996 is often interpreted as reflecting, and further fueling, a view of the poor as undeserving. Psychiatrist Helena Hansen and colleagues have argued that these policy changes forced the poor to rely on psychiatric diagnoses to justify disability benefits, thereby stigmatizing poverty as a "permanent medical pathology."[27] The PRWORA also excluded various categories of noncitizens from benefits, shifting the boundaries of social citizenship from territorial residence to a narrower determination of legal status. For the American working class, self-reliance, laziness, and responsibility gained centrality in framing the moral stigmatization of the poor, and especially of poor blacks.[28] To this day, Americans remain approving of the rich, especially if they maintain conditions for creating wealth for all.[29] The basic American structure of moral class boundaries continues to condemn "the lower half" and to validate the "people above."[30]

This sort of "responsibilization" may be one effect of the global turn toward neoliberalism, which emphasizes the privatization of risk, market competitiveness, and a definition of cultural membership grounded in entrepreneurialism.[31] Consistent with such an argument, in France, survey data from 1983 to 2003 show that the proportion of French residents who think that welfare may lead the poor to be satisfied with their situation and consequently not want to work increased from 23 to 53 percent. The number of those who think that the poor receive too many resources from the state also rose from 25 percent in 1992 to 54 percent in 2012.[32]

Unfortunately, we do not have comparable long-term data from most other advanced economies. Crossnational surveys only started to ask about responsibility for disadvantage in 1987, well into the neoliberal era, and the questions are not sufficiently specific to get at deservingness judgments.[33] One country with long-term data on deservingness judgments, the Netherlands, appears to present a contrast to the United States and Great Britain. The Cultural Changes in the Netherlands survey asked deservingness questions about specific beneficiary groups between 1975 and 2006.[34] Survey responses show some hardening in deservingness judgments for various beneficiaries between 1995 and 2002, but this is sandwiched between periods in which attitudes became more solidaristic; the overall thirty-year trend line is positive, not negative (see Figure 2). Thus, the trend toward more exclusionary deservingness judgments does not appear to be universal.

Figure 2

The Percentage of People Who Believe That Recipients of Benefits Are Deserving of More, 1975–2006
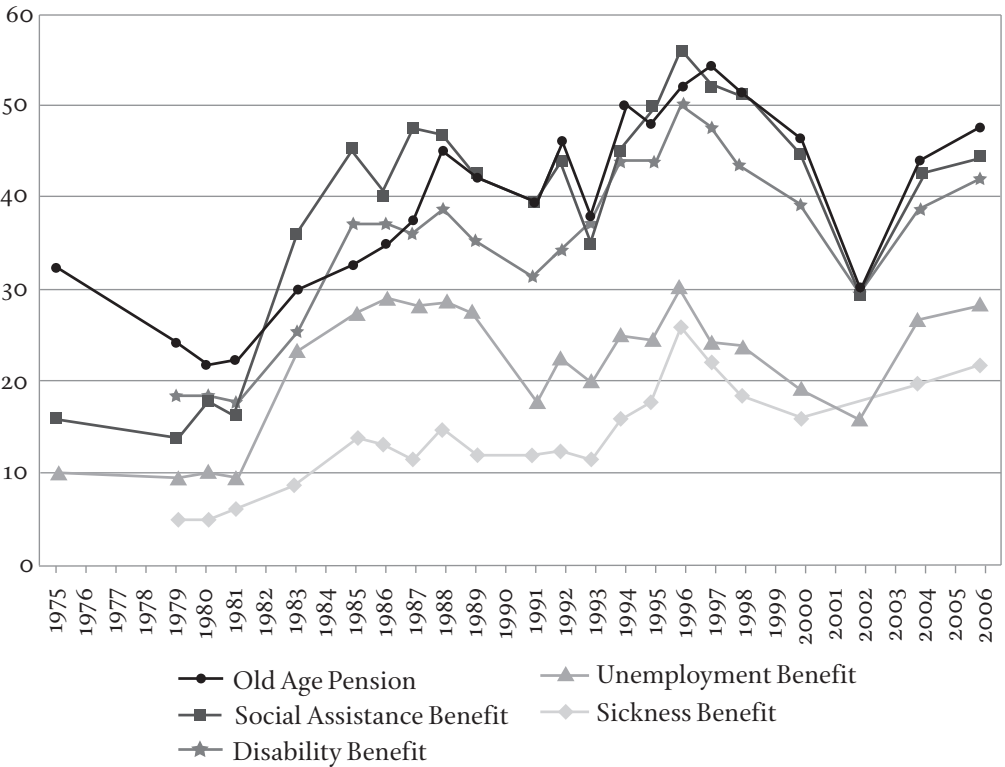
Source : Marjolein Jeene, Wim van Oorschot, and Wilfred Uunk, "The Dynamics of Welfare Opinions in Changing Economic, Institutional and Political Contexts : An Empirical Analysis of Dutch Deservingness Opinions, 1975–2006," *Social Indicators Research* 115 (2) (2014): 731–749.

Still, considering crossnational International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) data over a shorter time period, we can identify three tendencies. First, there is relative stability in citizens' beliefs regarding the deservingness of the sick and elderly.[35] Second, we find a decrease in sympathy for the unemployed: the ISSP data show a fairly consistent crossnational decline in support for the unemployed across the five waves (1985, 1990, 1996, 2006, and 2016) among sixteen of the twenty-four countries (see Table 4). And third, we see a greater likelihood to attribute societal success to hard work: that is, to see inequality in terms of

the accomplishment of deserving individuals, as opposed to more structural explanations.[36] The evidence thus remains incomplete, but it does appear that people in many Western countries are more likely to say that members of particular low-income groups are responsible for their own fate, and so disavow obligations of solidarity toward them.

Of course, deservingness judgments are not the only factor that affects attitudes about the welfare state. Political scientist Charlotte Cavaillé has argued that since the less-well-off have a strong self-interest in supporting the welfare state, they will continue to do so, even if they

Table 4

Bloemraad,
Kymlicka,
Lamont &
Son Hing

"Do You Think the Government Has a Responsibility to Provide a Decent Standard of Living
for the Unemployed?"

Country	Percent Saying Either "Definitely" or "Probably"				
	1985	1990	1996	2006	2016
Australia	59.0	55.7	65.2	57.3	55.2
Canada			65.5	63.1	
Czech Republic			44.7	48.4	48.2
France			80.9	70.2	70.2
East Germany		94.1	91.6	79.7	70.2
West Germany	85.4	78.4	80.4	66.7	72.9
Hungary		72.3	62.8	69.2	73.1
Ireland		90.6	91.5	81.8	
Israel		62.1	62.5	65.3	65.8
Palestine			85.5	60.3	
Italy	84.8	77.8	75.1		
Japan			73.0	56.5	53.4
Latvia			82.6	64.9	63.3
New Zealand			63.5	49.2	62.7
Norway		90.6	92.7	88.5	89.3
Philippines			72.5	79.3	
Poland			81.2	81.6	
Russia			80.6	68.2	75.0
Slovenia			86.4	82.8	80.0
Spain			93.9	92.8	96.2
Sweden			90.3	83.4	76.4
Switzerland			71.6	67.0	72.5
United Kingdom	85.6	80.1	78.7	57.3	60.2
United States	50.3	52.9	47.7	52.0	56.6
Average across Countries	73.0	75.5	75.9	68.9	69.0

Source: International Social Survey Programme, *ISSP 1985/1990/1996/2006 Cumulation–Role of Government I–IV*, ZA4747 (Köln: GESIS, Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, 2008); and International Social Survey Programme, *ISSP 2016–Role of Government V*, ZA6900 (Köln: GESIS, Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, 2018).

become increasingly harsh in their de-servingness judgments toward (other) recipients.[37] But she has suggested that harsher deservingness judgments are like-ly to erode support for the welfare state among the well-off, and evidence from Great Britain and Denmark seems to bear

this out (see Figure 3). If she is correct, the political impact of shifts in deservingness judgments may have been blunted due to subgroup variations in opinion.

We have evidence that over the past fifty years, definitions of *membership*

Figure 3
Predicted Support for a Decrease in Spending and Taxes :
Top versus Bottom Income Quintiles in Great Britain and Denmark

Great Britain

● Top Income Quintile   ○ Bottom Income Quintile

Denmark

● Top Income Quintile   ○ Bottom Income Quintile
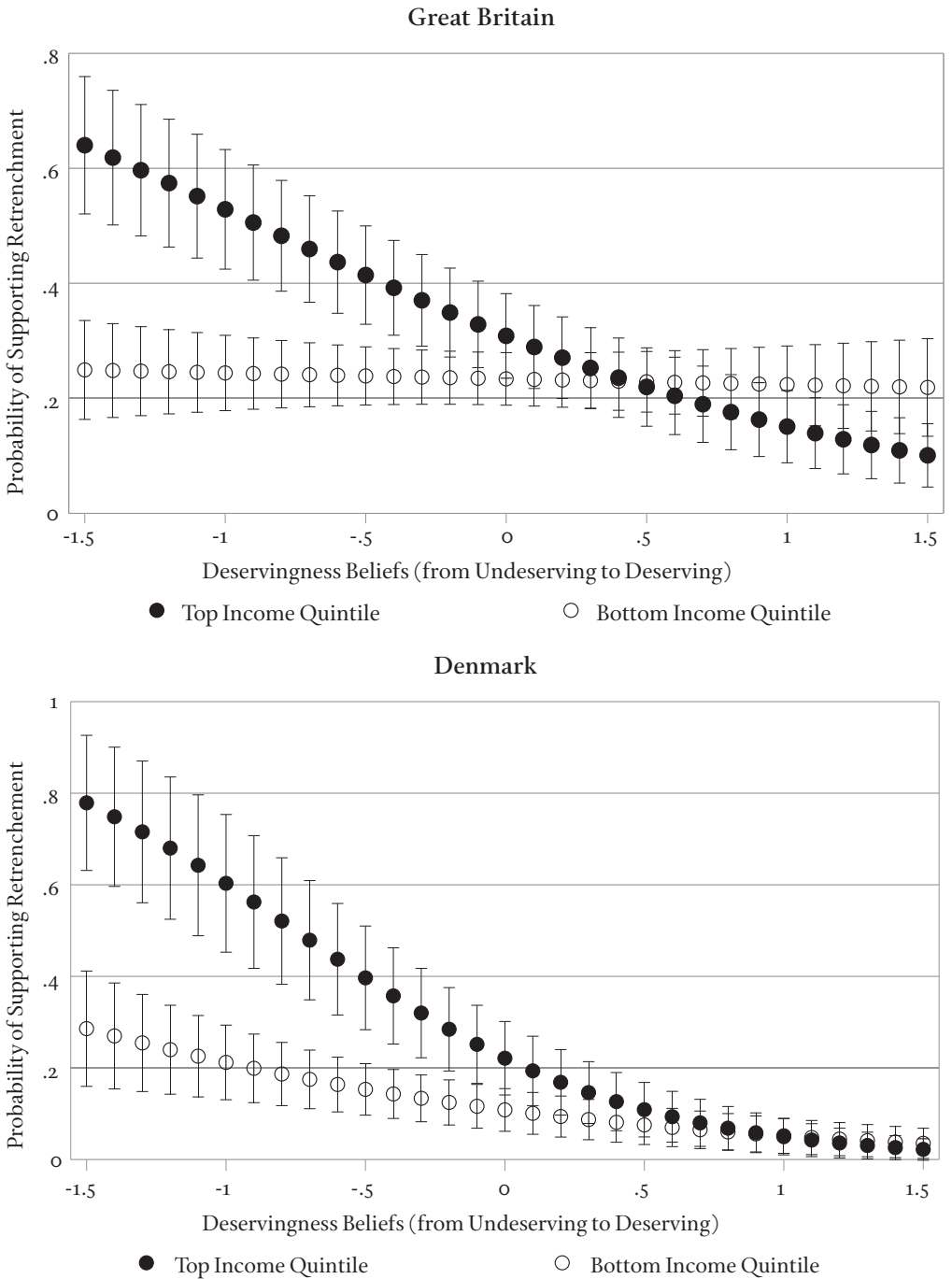
Source : Charlotte Cavaillé, "Deservingness, Self-Interest and the Welfare State : Why Some Care More about Deservingness Than Others," LIS Working Paper Series No. 652 (Luxembourg : Luxembourg Income Study Cross-National Data Center, 2015).

have become more pluralistic and inclusive, but judgments about *social citizenship* (welfare redistribution) have become more restrictive or more fraught. These two trends are not universal or linear; they vary in strength across different countries, and across public opinion and public policy. Still, we believe that these tensions are relevant for a politics of equality, and that the prospects for a more equal and inclusive society depend in part on whether we can sustain the move toward inclusive national membership while avoiding the potential for exclusionary and stigmatizing deservingness judgments.

We draw from four disciplinary perspectives to make sense of these two trends, highlighting micro-, meso-, and macroprocesses.

From the perspective of normative political theory, these trends can be understood through the lens of *solidarity*, which in turn implicates people's *sense of justice*. Here, we first describe these concepts, and then show how they can shed light on our two trends.

Political theory is a field of normative inquiry: its aim is not to explain how things are, but rather to identify how things ought to be. It is also an exercise in "practical reason": it is supposed to give us reasons for action. And, if political theory is to be action-guiding rather than idle fantasy, its conclusions about what ought to be must be feasible. Political theory is about "realistic utopias," in political philosopher John Rawls's phrase, and so must be consistent with what we know about human capacities to act justly.[38] There is little point in elaborating a vision of justice if people are unable to recognize the legitimate claims of others, or moderate the pursuit of their own self-interest to help the disadvantaged. Hobbes aside, most political theorists have assumed that people do indeed have the capacity for a sense of justice. In Rawls's

terms, people are not just "rational" in the sense of efficiently pursuing their personal good, but also "reasonable" in the sense of acknowledging the legitimate claims of others. A more egalitarian society requires that the advantaged – the strong, the fortunate, the talented – moderate their claims and forgo opportunities to exploit their power and privileges. A sense of justice can motivate the advantaged to accept these constraints in the pursuit of their self-interest.

Political theorists typically distinguish two dimensions of this sense of justice, which we might call *universal humanitarianism* and *bounded solidarity*. Universal humanitarianism is a direct response to the suffering of others, whoever and wherever they are. We can be moved to provide aid to famines in distant societies, or to provide emergency health care for tourists who fall ill, whether or not they are members of our society. Some people even protect members of other species from harm. These humanitarian responses do not depend on shared membership in a bounded community.

Other obligations, however, are tied to membership, and hence to bounded solidarity. Most political theorists include the welfare state in this category. The welfare state is not just a humanitarian impulse to relieve suffering. The welfare state, in the robust form endorsed by progressives, has historically been rooted in an *ethic of social membership*. Social justice is about the mutual obligations we have to one another as members of a shared society; it rests on some image of a decent, good, or just society that belongs to all of its members, and of the sort of egalitarian relations that should characterize it. We might say that justice among members is egalitarian, not just humanitarian.

If this is correct, it raises two questions. How are the boundaries of social

membership determined: that is, how do we determine who can claim the benefits of bounded solidarity in addition to universal humanitarianism? And what does the ethic of membership require: that is, what do we owe our comembers in regards to social rights and redistribution?

On the first question, most political theorists assume that the primary basis for bounded solidarity is the nation. There is no logical necessity for this. Throughout history, a wide range of social units have played this role, some below the nation (such as kin groups) and some above (such as global religions). But over the past two hundred years, the nation-state has become the primary focus for bounded solidarity. And many political theorists argue that nationhood is a particularly powerful basis for solidarity, since nationhood is often defined as a community of shared fate. To inculcate a sense of shared nationhood among citizens – as modern nation-states seek to do – is in part to inculcate a sense of mutual obligation, including redistributive obligations.[39]

While nationhood remains the primary basis for bounded solidarity, the evidence discussed previously suggests that definitions of national membership are changing. In the past, ideas of nationhood were culturally assimilationist and racially exclusionary. More recently, the boundaries of membership have expanded to incorporate previously excluded ethnic, racial, and religious groups. In principle, this entails an obligation to reconstruct social relations on a more egalitarian basis. If someone is a member of society, then society belongs to them as much as to anyone else, and the common institutions that govern the society should be as responsive to their interests and perspectives as to anyone else's. Unfortunately, this expansion in national membership has not been accompanied by feelings of mutual obligation, at least in relation to social rights. Access to welfare resources has eroded, or at least become more conditional on deservingness judgments, which in effect means it is not really a right of membership at all, but rather something stigmatized groups need to earn in the face of suspicions about their need or effort.

As a result, a wider range of people can now claim national membership, but the sense of bounded solidarity triggered by inclusion within the national "we" is blunted by stigmatizing deservingness judgments toward the poor and racialized minorities. Recognition of membership calls on us to care for and share the fate of our conationals, but deservingness judgments allow us to disengage morally from the fate of our fellow citizens.

Many political theorists despair about the rise of moralistic deservingness judgments, and some seek a conception of bounded solidarity that preempts questions of deservingness. However, this may not be possible. It is not enough, in making membership-based claims, to say that one is human or has urgent interests: that is the logic of humanitarianism. Rather, membership-based claims require individuals to have certain types of social relationships and affiliations. Someone is part of the national "we" because she has made a life here, complies with its social norms, shares in the burdens of social cooperation, participates in its institutionalized forms of reciprocity and risk-pooling, shows concern for its collective well-being and collective future, and contributes in ways that suit her capacities. It is these membership-based attitudes and behaviors that justify distinguishing solidaristic obligations to comembers from humanitarian obligations to tourists or foreigners.

This suggests that the demands of bounded solidarity prompt certain types of deservingness judgments. Some

commentators suggest that deserving-ness judgments reflect the triumph of neoliberal tropes about self-reliance over bounded solidarities, but in fact, bound-ed solidarity generates its own logic of de-servingness. Our solidaristic obligations to comembers depend on the assumption that they have a depth of commitment to and engagement in our society that non-members do not have. And this, arguably, is what many deservingness judgments track. Surveys suggest that deservingness judgments are composed of five dimen-sions, four of which we highlight here.[40] The first – *control*, or the extent to which someone's disadvantage was under their voluntary control – may indeed reflect neoliberal ideas of individual responsi-bility. Three other dimensions, however, seem to reflect perceptions of social com-mitment. These three dimensions are: *attitude* (the extent to which recipients are seen as accepting benefits in the spirit of civic friendship); *reciprocity* (the extent to which recipients are seen as likely to help other members when it is their turn to do so); and *identity* (the extent to which re-cipients are seen as belonging to a shared society).[41] While much of the literature on deservingness focuses on the control dimension – and hence on perceptions of laziness or work ethic – the evidence sug-gests that perceptions of social commit-ment are equally powerful.[42]

The salience of these criteria should not be surprising if, as Marshall argued, the welfare state is rooted in a "sense of community membership." Judgments of identity, attitude, and reciprocity ask whether someone displays the attitudes and behaviors that distinguish members from nonmembers (or conversely, wheth-er someone has renounced the respon-sibilities of membership and shown no commitment to society and its future).

This suggests that the problem is not that citizens make deservingness

judgments – this may be characteristic of any bounded solidarity – but that they make these judgments in biased ways.[43] All too often, citizens privilege those who belong and contribute in the same way that they do, while discounting the co-operation and affiliation of those who differ from them. Inherited conceptions of membership have been defined by and for historically dominant groups, in ways that valorize their specific modes of being and belonging. This suggests that the route to a more equal society re-quires challenging biased perceptions of the (non)contribution and (non)affilia-tion of people with disabilities, the poor, or immigrants, just as feminism chal-lenged biased perceptions of women's contributions.

In short, struggles for a more equal so-ciety require attending to bounded sol-idarity, which rests on an ethic of mem-bership, which in turn rests on expec-tations of belonging, contribution, and allegiance that underpin deservingness judgments. Insofar as these expectations are biased, a crucial political task is to de-velop new narratives of national mem-bership that recognize a wider range of legitimate modes of being, participation, contribution, and affiliation.

This may sound overly theoretical, but the real-world politics of equality argu-ably fit this diagnosis. Claims to equali-ty are rarely articulated solely in the lan-guage of shared humanity, but rather stake claims to belonging and member-ship. Equality-seeking groups typically want to be recognized, not just as fully human, but as fully American or fully French. They want to be recognized as belonging here and as participating in and contributing to a shared society.[44] Claims to membership and contribution are often central to people's sense of mor-al worth, and to the way they understand the claims they can make on others.

How then can we challenge biased perceptions of belonging? Ideas of multiculturalism might help. Multiculturalism is often understood as simply a feel-good celebration of diversity. Within political theory, however, multiculturalism does not simply celebrate diverse identities, but recognizes them as modes of participating in and contributing to the national society, and hence as valid ways of expressing an ethic of membership. A solidarity-promoting multiculturalism starts from the premise that one way to be a proud and loyal Canadian is to be a proud Greek-Canadian or gay-Canadian or Crip-Canadian, and that the activities of one's group are understood as forms of belonging and investing in society.[45] The political task of multiculturalism, in part, is to provide opportunities for differences to be visibly manifested in spaces that mark them as manifestations of civic friendship, engagement, contribution, and allegiance. In this way, a politics of recognition aimed at affirming cultural membership is intimately linked to the politics of redistribution aimed at social citizenship.

The specifics of what this would require vary from group to group, in part because the stigmas and prejudices that discount people's membership and contribution vary from group to group. But by confronting the sources of the majority's biased deservingness judgments and creating opportunities for minorities to exhibit their adherence to an ethic of membership, we might combine inclusive definitions of nationhood with social citizenship.

From a social-psychological perspective, a movement toward more inclusive national membership may result in harsher deservingness judgments for some but not others, and only in certain contexts. Social psychologists take a contingency approach: understanding responses, such as beliefs about what others deserve, result from individual differences that vary depending on the situation and context.

At an individual level, people form conceptions of their own and others' social identities that can be nested. Superordinate groups can consist of multiple subgroups. Thus, for instance, while we may all be Canadians, there are also English-Canadians, Chinese-Canadians, and so on. Notably, despite a conscious recognition that a variety of ethnic subgroups are citizens, people may hold different associations at an automatic or implicit level.[46] There is empirical evidence that Americans – of multiple ethnicities – associate "American" with the category "White" more quickly than with "Black," "Latino," or "Asian."[47] Thus, an acknowledgment of the legal membership of diverse ethnic groups may not necessarily align with an implicit categorization of who is truly one of "us." Such categorization processes are highly consequential: people have a strong tendency to ascribe more positive characteristics to, place greater trust in, and allocate more outcomes to ingroup than outgroup members.[48]

The process of demarcating boundaries between us and them is strongly determined by situational and contextual threat cues. At the most basic level, people's experience of fear can lead them to more readily designate others as outgroup members.[49] Perceiving a difficult economic context and intergroup competition can cause a rise in people's social dominance orientation (SDO), which is a general preference for group-based hierarchy, and right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), which involves an authoritarian desire to punish outgroups seen as deviant.[50] In turn, SDO and RWA predict prejudice toward immigrants because they are seen to be threats and toward the poor because they are assumed

to be ethnic minorities who are responsible for their fate.[51] An international survey found that the more cultural and economic threat respondents felt, the more they excluded those without common ancestry or birthplace from national identity.[52]

For some, the opening of civil, social, and cultural membership can act as a source of threat. For those who strongly identify with a subgroup (such as white Americans), an emphasis solely on a superordinate identity (such as "we are all Americans") threatens their distinctive identity.[53] The integration of former outgroups can be viewed as a form of cultural or identity threat (they are not really "one of us"), social threat (they are pushing to be included where they do not belong), or economic threat ("reverse discrimination harms me"). Thus, ethnic outgroup members seen as pushing for inclusion could be met with backlash consisting of sharper ingroup-outgroup boundaries and meager outgroup resource allocations.[54] These processes can be manipulated by political elites.[55] Thus, fear of outsiders can be used to bolster ingroup identities and to maintain political power.[56]

Framings of citizenship can affect these psychological processes and deservingness judgments. In countries where an ethnic model of citizenship is widely endorsed, people with a stronger national identification hold more negative attitudes toward immigrants, including the belief that the government spends too much money on them.[57] The same relation does not hold in countries where an ethnic model of citizenship is less strong. Thus, restrictive grounds for citizenship narrow conceptions of the ingroup and lead to less generosity. On the flip side, civic framings of citizenship create opportunities for inclusion. When Canadians are primed to think of Canada as including native-born people

and immigrants, attitudes toward immigrants become more positive.[58] However, the same priming does not affect German participants' attitudes toward immigrants.[59] Presumably, Canadians and Germans still differ in the malleability of their beliefs that immigrants belong to the ingroup due to differences in policy history or popular or elite discourse that employ civic (or multicultural) frames of nationality. Notably, when people are induced to consider how immigrants and the national group do not share a moral community, they show less ethical obligation for the welfare and interests of people with a different religion, ethnicity, and beliefs, and they are more supportive of social policies that restrict outcomes for immigrants.[60]

Unlike political theorists' conception of deservingness judgments, which require civic participation and reciprocity, for social psychologists, deservingness judgments are often tied to the distributive justice principle of equity. Outcomes are equitable if, as a target's inputs (such as abilities, traits, effort, and so on) increase, so do outcomes (such as money or jobs), in relation to a relevant comparison other.[61] In an ideal world, when using the equity principle, it would be possible to: identify appropriate inputs, measure these inputs accurately, and weigh these inputs appropriately. However, such judgments are prone to a variety of biases.[62]

People tend to evaluate whether outcome allocations are fair in ways that favor themselves and their ingroups at the expense of outgroups.[63] They will place more weight on inputs that favor ingroups over outgroups, while stereotypes of outgroups bias assessments of their competence and worth.[64] Both explicit and implicit prejudices affect judgments of others' deservingness and, consequently, allocation decisions.[65] Indeed,

people who more strongly believe that society is a properly operating meritocracy engage in more prejudice, stereotyping, and harsh deservingness judgments of disadvantaged group members, such as women or ethnic minorities.[66] These biases are ostensibly made on the basis of merit and, as such, people can discriminate against outgroup members without necessarily appearing prejudiced.

Political sociologists may consider the psychological processes and judgments of normal people to be unimportant if they fail to influence public policy. However, such a view ignores the importance of such judgments for people's daily affect, thought, and behavior: Whom to hire, fire, or promote? What is someone's worth? Who are desirable neighbors and friends? Such responses in turn affect marginalized group members' feelings of belongingness, experiences of discrimination, livelihoods, well-being, and health.[67]

So how can psychological processes that lead to harsh deservingness judgments be mitigated? Moreover, if societal shifts toward greater inclusion create, for some, a feeling of threat that exacerbates these processes, what might bring about greater equality and inclusion?

First, macrolevel interventions that promote a multicultural yet united national identity could lead people to be less biased in their application of the equity principle as ethnic and other minorities come to be classified as prototypical ingroup members. Second, mesolevel interventions should increase diversity in institutions such as workplaces, schools, and universities. According to the contact hypothesis, if people have the opportunity to interact with outgroup members in contexts in which they have equal status and shared goals that they work on interdependently, prejudice will be reduced.[68] Through opportunities for

sustained interaction, stereotypes can be challenged, friendships built, anxieties lessened, and superordinate identities formed.[69] This should reduce opposition to inclusion based on biases or perceived threat.[70] Further, when social relations are more proximate and marked by similarity, liking, or long-term interactions, we see a stronger preference for equality or need-based allocations than equity-based allocations.[71] Thus, judgments of deservingness could be bypassed altogether.

These interventions may, in the short term, be met with resistance, but they all draw on an understanding of how to shape people's social, economic, political, and cultural contexts so that social-psychological processes may lead, over time, to more inclusive conceptions of "us" deserving greater equality.

From a boundary perspective, the tensions between more inclusive national membership and exclusionary or tiered social citizenship are not surprising. This is because a boundary approach distinguishes between symbolic and social boundaries. Symbolic boundaries refer to the evaluative distinctions made between groups of people (class, ethnoracial, religious, and gender groups, including the poor, immigrants, and others) or through practices (such as cultural consumption, expressions of masculinity, or national sentiments). Social boundaries refer to patterns of associations as manifested in degrees of separation and proximity between groups (through intermarriage, homophily in friendship, spatial segregation, and so on).[72] Both are bases for opportunity-hoarding and closure, including access to social rights (welfare resources).[73] As such, recognition and distribution are distinct but interconnected dimensions of inequality. Recognition is about extending cultural

membership to the widest segments of the population, defining the largest number as worthy. But how this can be achieved depends on cultural processes that are different from mechanisms of the distribution of resources.[74]

A boundary approach considers the salience of boundaries, how they interact, their characteristics and properties (such as whether they are crossable, bright, or blurred), the processes of their transformation, and how cultural producers (such as politicians and journalists) make some boundaries more visible than others.[75] For instance, Michèle Lamont and colleagues analyzed the electoral speeches of Donald Trump in his 2016 presidential campaign and demonstrated how the candidate's negative and positive references to various polarizing groups (the poor, LGBTQ, illegal and legal immigrants, Muslims, and others) resonated with some of the symbolic boundaries drawn by white working-class men twenty years ago, thus helping to validate their sense of dignity and bolstering their claim of superior relative positioning.[76] A primary focus of the boundary approach is to understand how cultural membership (worthiness) is extended to various groups. This framework has been applied to cases such as the construction of the public sphere in Norway, the everyday cosmopolitanism of British blue-collar workers, how the French army excludes Muslims, the destigmatization of Turks in Germany, how noise serves as a marker of ethnic boundaries in Israel, and more.

While there is a great deal of variation in social-psychological approaches to identity, these typically focus on ingroup/outgroup dynamics at the intraindividual or interpersonal levels. The opposition between us and them is often said to result from evolution (in the form of tribalism) and to be a standard feature of human psychology. In contrast, a boundary approach explicitly frames boundaries as highly variable and tied to varying degrees of groupness.[77] Degrees of groupness result from pathways involving 1) us/them self-identification and group categorization experienced at the individual level; 2) widely available narratives about the deservingness of groups and about the institutionalization of criteria of worth (not only moral, but also cultural and socioeconomic); 3) social boundaries, or the degree of separation and proximity between groups; and 4) other background factors pertaining to the institutional and legal context, the extent of inequality, and more.[78]

The boundary approach locates individuals in multidimensional environments, with time, spatial, network, and organizational dynamics. Individual positions are defined relationally (through fields dynamics) and entail experiences of relative group position or group competition. Also, while social psychologists consider how microsituations (such as levels of interdependence) influence identity, the boundary approach is concerned with how boundary patterns change over time as well as cultural and social structuring factors, such as the taken-for-grantedness of scripts.

An important focal point is understanding stigmatization and destigmatization processes. For instance, how have groups that were formally stigmatized, such as people living with HIV/AIDS, come to be more included as compared with groups that remain stigmatized, such as the obese? Michèle Lamont and colleagues Caitlin Daniel and Matthew Clair show that the transformation of the relative inclusion of the former group involved the collaboration of knowledge producers (medical, policy, legal, and social science experts) and advocates and moral entrepreneurs (social movements leaders).[79] They mobilized widely available cultural

resources, such as the ideology of equality, to build bridges with social movements, and progressively legitimized and diffused shared cultural scripts defining the destigmatized group as rational (capable of self-control) or deserving (in terms of merit, morality, self-reliance, or other criteria). The role of the media and journalists is also important, as well as organizations that institutionalize practices reinforcing equality between groups (corporations, higher education, politics, and so on). The symbolic boundaries toward such groups (such as feelings of social distance and dislike) weaken, at the same time that individuals come to experience weaker social boundaries (through legal change and access to resources, for instance).

Power struggles around status order are central to the transformation of these social and symbolic boundaries, as illustrated in countless histories of the women's and civil rights movements. The latter require the progressive construction of groups as having agency and a modicum of cultural coherence and shared identity. Such transformations are often described in terms of available cultural/cognitive repertoires, and intergroup and organizational dynamics, which make some individual prejudices/stereotypes more or less likely. The emphasis is typically not on the immediate (proximate) situation but on mesolevel changes, even if "carried" by individuals.[80] While these frames may be contested and fought over, an agreement builds around them to the point at which they become progressively taken for granted and new collective identities consolidate, converging with the social mobilization approach described below.[81]

In this view, exclusion of the poor depends not only on shared views about their deservingness, but also on the decline in scripts about collective respon-

sibility toward the needy, and a decline of social solidarity more generally.[82] To understand these changes, one considers not only how the poor are stigmatized morally, but also broader cultural changes: the rise of market fundamentalism and individualism, shared views about what defines a polity and what are the shared responsibilities that bind comembers, and so on.[83] Such cultural changes can be studied empirically through process-tracing, which requires considering not only which groups get most excluded (illegal immigrants, the poor, Muslims) and how this varies across national contexts, but also what factors make boundaries become more or less permeable or porous.[84] For example, sociologist Andreas Wimmer gives an account for changes in boundaries, focusing on 1) the political salience of ethnic boundaries; 2) social closure and exclusion along ethnic lines; 3) cultural differentiation between groups; and 4) stability over time.[85]

An advantage of the boundary approach is that it does not predefine what arguments ground the beliefs of ordinary people concerning similarities and differences between us and them, whether that we are all worthy as "children of God," human beings, consumers, citizens, or conationals. The salience of arguments is studied empirically and is generally found to vary across populations. This contrasts with sociologists Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thevenot's work on *cités*, which predefines orders of justification that are used across types of situations.[86] Their approach specifies criteria based on types of logic of legitimation found in the political philosophy literature (such as criteria of industrial efficiency, market rationality, civic bonds, "domestic" proximity, and so on). The boundary approach instead proceeds inductively to document the relative salience of arguments about worth, and to account

for patterns in reference to macrosocial changes, such as the diffusion of neoliberal arguments concerning who is worthy (such as the association of worth with financial success and self-reliance).

What does the boundary approach suggest concerning how to extend cultural membership to the largest number? Institutions and cultural repertoires play a crucial role in providing shared scripts about the positive and negative definition of groups. Laws and policies are central to conveying such messages. For instance, the adoption of same-sex marriage legislation in thirty-two American states led to a 7 percent decline in suicide attempts among LGBTQ-identified high school students.[87] Moreover, various groups of knowledge and cultural producers (journalists, social scientists, medical, legal, and policy experts, and artists in the performing and visual arts) contribute to shaping shared representations of groups. By studying how destigmatization has operated in the past through process-tracing, it is possible to better understand how such professional groups can contribute to social change, especially when collaborating with social movement activists and religious and political organizations concerned with social inclusion. Such groups may be particularly well equipped to amplify the impact of transnational cultural repertoires, such as human rights and neoliberal frames, that influence who can be included among those worthy of protection and solidarity, and under what conditions.

Our interest in deservingness judgments is animated by a normative concern over socioeconomic inequality, a concern that we believe should be addressed by some degree of government action rather than just private charity. What then drives state action? So far, we have considered normative ideals, cognitive schema, and cultural scripts. The ideals, schema, and scripts in people's minds may be consequential if we believe that public opinion has a direct influence on the provision of social benefits and enactment of policies that enhance social citizenship. However, public opinion can be divided, and political decisions invariably entail much more than aggregated public opinion. Here we direct attention to an analysis of power and political institutions: who or what shapes laws and institutional processes, how, and for what reasons? These questions draw attention to political conflict and the institutionalization of "winning" outcomes.

Public opinion may matter. In democracies, we presume that public opinion – based on notions of solidarity, ingroup affinities, and symbolic boundaries, as detailed above – has an impact on social policy through the electoral process. Public opinion could also provide guidance to nonelected officials, including administrators and judges, shaping their decisions. But a "democratic" politics is not necessarily inclusive, as can be seen in Donald Trump's election to the U.S. presidency or the success of far-right parties across Europe. Considering the tensions between broadening membership and restricting social citizenship, lack of inclusion may flow from biases in the public's assessments of contribution, exclusionary views of prototypical members, or stigmatization of certain groups. Greater inclusion would thus require shifting the hearts and minds of the public.

Yet it is not clear that public opinion drives political decision-making or administrative rule-making when it comes to allocating rights, resources, and recognition. Some researchers argue that narrow subsets of the population or particular interest groups dominate policy-making, including on issues of solidarity or equality. Who has the right to vote, and

who actually casts a ballot? In general, voters tend to skew richer, whiter, and older than the general population. As political scientist Kay Schlozman and colleagues have concluded, studying political engagement in the United States, "those who are not affluent and well-educated are less likely to take part politically and are even less likely to be represented by the activity of organized interests."[88] The apportionment of seats in the legislative body might favor rural interests over urban ones.[89]

Imbalances in who has a voice might grow after the votes are counted. Once elected and faced with crafting policy, politicians may listen more to the views of rich constituents or business interests that can fund their next campaign, or who share their backgrounds and worldviews. Public policy scholar Martin Gilens has argued that in the United States, when the policy preferences of low- or middle-income Americans diverge from those of the affluent, policy outcomes are more likely to align with the preferences of the well-off and rarely reflect the wishes of the less advantaged.[90] The implications for our puzzle may be that inclusive formal membership is pushed by businesses that benefit from immigration or tapping talented minorities and educated women, but these same businesses do not support redistribution. Those who would favor redistribution have few resources to fight for such policies. In this scenario, expanding membership, twinned with harsh deservingness judgments, reflects the relative power of groups in a political system.

An implication of such an analysis is that the norms and cultural views of elites matter more for the institutionalization of inclusion and equality than broad-based feelings of solidarity among the public. Earlier, we noted that elites embedded in more cosmopolitan world cultures may push inclusive membership further than some members of the public want. Economic or ideological elites may also advance harsher deservingness judgments than many in the public support, in part out of belief in meritocracy. Research on elite education suggests that many elites believe in merit and ignore their own structural privileges, partly because this offers a positive story about how their position derives from their own talents and abilities.[91] If ascriptive discrimination has been eliminated in formal law and policy, the thinking goes, then residual inequality must be based on individual achievement. Elites may thus support expanded political, social, and cultural membership, but put up less of a fight over social redistribution or affirmative action.

If elites have political, economic, or moral power, then they – and the institutions they direct and the laws that they pass and enforce – can produce or reinforce symbolic and social boundaries. Laws, for instance, carry a moral weight that can reconstitute notions of deservingness. This can work in inclusive or exclusionary ways. U.S. welfare reform legislation in 1996 strengthened the idea that social benefits should only go to citizens by excluding various classes of noncitizens from access. Conversely, California's decision to charge undocumented residents the same tuition fees as other California residents at public colleges and universities reduced stigma for "illegal" students and drew a more inclusive "Californian" membership circle.[92] Depending on who has the levers of power, laws, rules, and resources can shape inclusionary or exclusionary dynamics in a top-down direction. This shapes notions of solidarity among the public and can spur claims-making by excluded groups.

Institutions can also affect membership and social citizenship by channeling

the ebb and flow of claims-making. So-
cial spending data suggest a paradox:
there is not much evidence that countries
are spending less on social policies, even
if voters want to spend less money on cer-
tain types of people. One possible reason
is that governments have "veto points" in
which organized collective interests can
exert pressure to stop policy changes. Po-
litical actors can appeal to the executive
branch to stop the legislative branch's
actions, or push one legislative chamber
to block another, as when lobbyists turn
their attention from the House of Rep-
resentatives to the U.S. Senate. In fed-
eral systems, organized groups – from
business interests to social justice move-
ments – can pit levels of government
against each other.

Attention to veto points and institu-
tions raises important questions about
whether the legislative, executive, or ju-
dicial branches are more open to inclu-
sive membership or expansive social cit-
izenship. For instance, in most liberal
democracies, citizens can challenge pro-
posed policy in the courts. The decision
by the Trump administration to bar peo-
ple from certain Muslim-majority coun-
tries from entry, including settled per-
manent residents, was halted by court
injunction, modified, and then further
fought through the court system. This
can be read as a battle over the boundar-
ies of membership. In the United States,
courts have historically deferred to the
other branches of government when it
comes to regulating migrants' entry into
the United States, even as U.S. courts
have also expanded membership at var-
ious times to racial or sexual minorities.
Courts also tend to be more likely to pro-
tect "negative" rights related to antidis-
crimination measures, which may ad-
vance inclusive membership, than to en-
force "positive" rights to social benefits,
leaving the contours of social citizenship

more open to the ebbs and flows of legis-
lative decision-making.

More generally, a focus on politics and
power draws our attention to contesta-
tion and change. Our earlier discussion
of normative ideas, cognitive schema,
and cultural scripts is relatively silent on
the question of how social change occurs.
How do people make claims to member-
ship or advance social citizenship? How
do political institutions shape who is
heard and has power? Drawing on our
earlier discussion, in battles over the di-
rection and purpose of state action, nor-
mative narratives can matter. In the lan-
guage of social movement scholars, these
are battles around "framing" an issue,
which involves "the struggle over the
production of mobilizing" and "counter-
mobilizing ideas."[93] Such ideas iden-
tify what is wrong and why, and what
needs to be done. As other political ac-
tors articulate different frames, fram-
ing contests are carried out in legisla-
tures, courtrooms, and the media on is-
sues ranging from sexual harassment to
immigration.[94] Framing contests provide
a bridge between attention to power and
institutions, on one hand, and notions of
solidarity, judgment, and cultural scripts,
on the other.

Still, the success of a political movement
almost never turns on only the resonance
of an idea. One must pay attention to the
resources deployed by different political
actors, be they financial, human, or orga-
nizational, and the "political opportunity
structure" of institutions that constrain
or channel action. If we consider the icon-
ic twentieth-century movement for full
membership of the U.S. black civil rights
movement, the ideals of racial equality as
articulated by charismatic leaders such as
Martin Luther King Jr. clearly mattered.
But so did black churches as mobilizing
structures for direct protest, the tactics of
nonviolence used by demonstrators, the

role of legal activism, the human and financial resources provided by white supporters of the movement, and the context of the Cold War, which influenced the domestic calculations of the White House in the face of continued congressional opposition to voting rights or racial equality legislation.

Thus, a political sociology of membership demands attention to multiple levels of analysis, from public opinion and voting behavior to the actions of collective groups and analysis of institutions. It directs attention to identifying who advances inclusive or exclusive views of membership and how much power they have to diffuse these ideas and embed them in policy. Consider, for instance, noncitizen permanent residents' access to social benefits. In the mid-1990s, some scholars claimed that civil, political, and social rights were increasingly given to residents based on universal humanity, a "cosmopolitan" view grounded in residence within a liberal, democratic state. Universal personhood norms and human rights were held by lawyers, judges, and other elite actors who institutionalized these views in international or regional bodies such as the European Court of Justice or within the domestic judiciary, an institution somewhat insulated from the countervailing public opinion pressures faced by politicians.[95] Yet, as immigration, citizenship, and migrants' rights became increasingly politicized in the twenty-first century, political entrepreneurs in far-right or even center-right parties adopted exclusionary membership ideals and appealed to voters on that basis. Many such parties gained significant electoral ground. In both cases, membership narratives matter, but in radically distinct ways.

Some pessimists argue that the only clear route to more inclusive membership and robust social citizenship is old-fashioned power politics. For example, in some countries, immigrants over time will gain enough voting clout to muscle their way into the welfare state, even in the face of xenophobia. But the willingness of states to grant citizenship to immigrants depends in part on perceptions of their membership and contribution, so it is not clear that this route avoids the need to confront deservingness judgments. A simple "politics and power" approach risks reducing the social world to clashing resources, and outcomes to one group's mastery of the institutions that determine policy and enforce it through laws. We believe that power matters, but so does paying attention to normative claims and cultural scripts, which adds an important ideational and cultural element. A successful politics of inclusive solidarity requires rewriting cultural narratives of membership and belonging alongside the exercise of political muscle.

One response to the tensions between membership and social citizenship is to articulate an ethic of solidarity and contribution that is genuinely multicultural. But while this approach provides an objective to which we can aspire, it is silent on the means required to enact it. Here, social psychology helps us to identify mechanisms by which ideas about status or meritocracy are enacted in particular contexts. Existing research suggests that more expansive, plural membership views should come with more generous deservingness judgments. To the extent that we do not see this, at the collective level, we must consider the impact of threat perceptions in reinforcing exclusionary ingroup boundaries. From a boundary approach, those wishing to advance inclusionary membership and social citizenship must destigmatize groups such as the poor and immigrants, redefining symbolic boundaries.

But how do we enact social change? Clearly this can occur from the bottom-up: changing norms of interaction among people at a local level can be diffused through social movements, and then enshrined in law or policy, thanks to changing cultural norms or the electoral pressures of public opinion. But just as clearly, this can also be a more elite-driven process, involving top-down restructuring of norms, cultural scripts, and social interaction patterns (such as through the influence of knowledge-workers, the media, or affirmative action policies). Many progressive changes to advance equality have led rather than followed public opinion, from views on interracial marriage to the extension of public resources to undocumented immigrants.

The accounts we elaborate differ somewhat in identifying who serves as a vector of change, and the processes by which symbolic boundaries of the ingroup shift. A power-and-politics approach is attentive to who has financial and political power, and the people and institutions that define and interpret legislation. A boundary approach points to the ideational work of knowledge producers and mesolevel organizational infrastructures that affect how we interact at work, at school, and in our leisure time. Both believe that social movements matter, but neither offers magic formulas for how they can be successful.

In all of this, there are framing contests. Thus, while cultural repertoires matter, multiple narratives of merit or blame, deservingness or stigma, coexist and vary across place and subgroup. These narratives can be in strong competition. How do we understand which ideas "win"? This is an important agenda for future scholarship. From a power-and-politics view, researchers must pay attention to resources, political opportunity structures, and the "rules of the game" shaping decisions about law and policy. Once enacted, policies generate new cultural schema. What we know from social psychology suggests that people strongly desire a positive self-image and react negatively to perceived threats to their status or interests; inclusive narratives must be framed so as to reduce threat and mitigate ingroup/outgroup distinctions. How much of this foundation is laid by routine interactions in workplaces and neighborhoods, and how much of this can be shifted by political entrepreneurs or social movement advocates? Given the current politically fraught moment, as populist narratives of exclusion challenge alternative narratives of inclusive membership, the challenge has never been greater.

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ENDNOTES

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Failure to Respond to Rising Income Inequality: Processes That Legitimize Growing Disparities

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Abstract: Why is there not more public outcry in the face of rising income inequality? Although public choice models predict that rising inequality will spur public demand for redistribution, evidence often fails to support this view. We explain this lack of outcry by considering social-psychological processes contextualized within the spatial, institutional, and political context that combine to dampen dissent. We contend that rising inequality can activate the very psychological processes that stifle outcry, causing people to be blind to the true extent of inequality, to legitimize rising disparities, and to reject redistribution as an effective solution. As a result, these psychological processes reproduce and exacerbate inequality and legitimize the institutions that produce it. Finally, we explore ways to disrupt the processes perpetuating this cycle.

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The last few decades have seen a marked trend toward rising income inequality in many nations, rooted in an increasingly large share of wealth controlled by the rich.[1] Heightened income inequality within a society has been linked to adverse outcomes, including reduced social capital, trust, and community support; higher rates of mortality; and increased violent crime.[2] Under such conditions, people – particularly those disadvantaged by inequality – might be expected to protest income inequality and vote for politicians who promise to reduce it. Such an assumption is contained in classic public choice models of self-interested, rational voters, such as the Meltzer-Richard Model (MRM).[3] This model contends that, as income inequality increases – and the median income drops in relation to the mean income – the median voter will prefer greater redistribution, vote accordingly,

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and thereby influence tax and public goods policies that counter excessive income disparities. Yet in many nations, this is not the case. Instead, public opposition to escalating income inequality and support for redistribution are often surprisingly underwhelming.

In this essay, we consider the social-psychological processes that contribute to the maintenance and acceleration of inequality, particularly in a highly unequal environment. We propose that, as income inequality grows over time, some people may indeed recognize and revile it. However, the very context of rising inequality may trigger processes that dampen opposition to inequality. As inequality rises, people may become increasingly blind to its true magnitude. Heightened inequality may lead people to rationalize and legitimize greater disparities, and to find redistribution inappropriate. We articulate how each of these psychological processes are situated within and causally connected to broader, multilevel systems (such as media and political processes) that trigger them.

To analyze these processes systematically, we use the influential MRM as a foil. Although many theorists challenge the assumption that rational voters make informed choices, the model has nonetheless motivated an enormous amount of research in fields such as political science, political economics, and sociology.[4] Many of these studies have failed to find support for the MRM. Most of these studies, however, have not considered the failure of this intuitively appealing model through a social-psychological lens. Thus, we provide a novel contribution to a variety of disciplines by analyzing the social-psychological processes that can disrupt each step in the MRM.

We structure this essay by breaking down the MRM into its principal assumptions, key constructs, and evident paths,

noting also the constructs and paths that we believe are missing, or are only implicit, in this model. We consider and provide examples of how people's experiences and responses to income inequality are affected by, and in turn can reciprocally influence, macrolevel factors (such as cultural narratives and economic conditions), mesolevel factors (such as spatial segregation based on socioeconomic status), and microlevel factors (such as rationalization processes). The purpose is to use the model as a tool for breaking down the distinct perceptual, behavioral, and institutional steps that would have to occur for the context of rising inequality to result in greater redistribution, thereby illuminating why this outcome so rarely occurs.

We present three models of reactions to income inequality. In Figure 1, we depict the processes explicitly hypothesized by the MRM.[5] In this model, as objective levels of income inequality increase within a nation, the median voter will prefer greater redistribution (path 1). Preferences for redistribution are expected to result in more support for the candidate promising redistribution (path 2). Finally, this public support is expected to result in the implementation of policies supporting greater redistribution (path 3); that is, public policy will be responsive to public opinion. Consequently, equilibrium is predicted: as macrolevel income inequality increases, there will be greater macrolevel redistribution (path 4). However, evidence reveals that increases in income inequality are only rarely linked to greater redistribution, and often predict declining generosity of the welfare state instead. To understand why the MRM is so often empirically refuted, we must consider each of the steps in the model and interrogate the social-psychological processes underlying each assumption.[6]

Figure 1
Meltzer-Richard Model of Redistribution
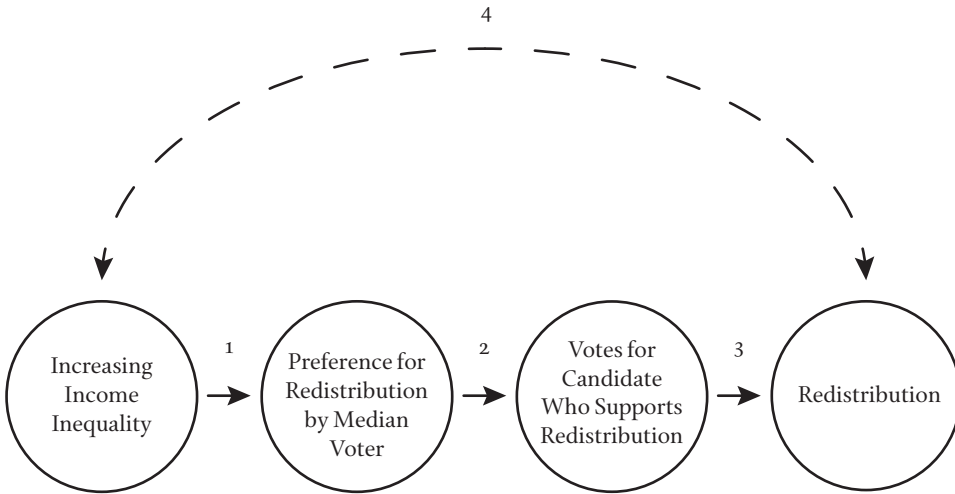
Note: The model specifies the steps of the original Meltzer-Richard Model: objective inequality to redistribution. Assumptions/boundary conditions include majority rule, decisive median income voter, single issue election, and universal suffrage. Source: Allan H. Meltzer and Scott F. Richard, "A Rational Theory of the Size of Government," *The Journal of Political Economy* 89 (5) (1981).

In Figure 2, we provide an Extended MRM, which makes explicit those implied microlevel processes intervening between macrolevel income inequality and preference for redistribution by the median voter. The top row outlines the MRM. The shaded circles and paths A, B, C, D, and E outline what we add to the model by unpacking potential psychological mechanisms at work. Here, the MRM implicitly assumes a positive path A: as objective income inequality increases, people will accurately perceive more inequality. In contrast, we propose that due to socioeconomic residential and work segregation, and to social comparative, informational, and motivational factors, path A will in fact be weak or nonsignificant. The MRM implicitly

assumes a negative path B: as people subjectively perceive more income inequality, they will evaluate it less positively. We propose instead that the heightened inequalities people do perceive will often be rationalized and justified due to processes of legitimization. Thus, we expect a positive path B: those who perceive more inequality may evaluate inequality more favorably. Path C depicts how people's evaluations of inequality are related to their preference for redistributive policies. The MRM implicitly assumes that path C is negative: people who judge inequalities more unfavorably should support more redistribution by the government. However, we propose that even if people believe that there is too much income inequality, they may not believe

Figure 2
Extended Meltzer-Richard Model of Redistribution
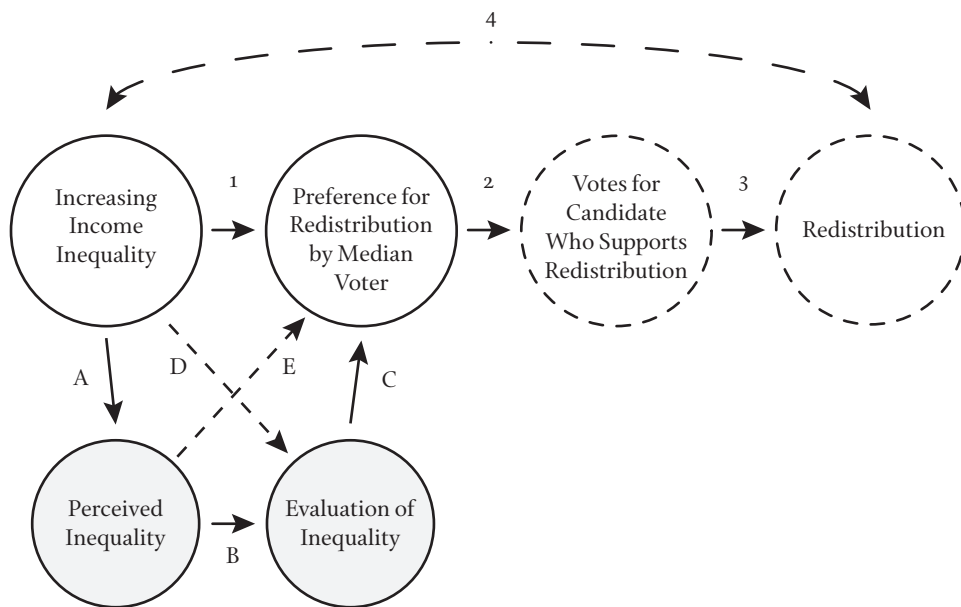
that redistribution by the government is appropriate, effective, or fair. Thus, path C may be weak. We also note path D and E in Figure 2: some research we reviewed examines the link (path D) between objective inequality and evaluations of inequality (without measuring subjective perceptions of inequality), or the link (path E) between perceived inequality and redistribution demand (without measuring evaluations of inequality). We suggest that these paths are likely mediated through the variables we identify in Figure 2 and, because of the processes outlined above, are likely to be weak. Of course, for each of these paths, significant individual differences in beliefs about and attitudes toward inequality can feed into and/or moderate these processes. Therefore, we discuss for whom these effects are more or less likely.

Paths 2 and 3 of the Extended MRM again depict how greater preference for redistribution leads to more support for the candidate promising redistribution, which translates to actual redistribution. We denote these circles in the model with dotted (rather than solid) lines. We consider this process, but in relatively less depth due to our focus on the social-psychological processes that disrupt the explicit and implicit assumptions of the MRM. We assert that although paths 2 and 3 from public opinion to votes to policy are assumed to be positive, these links are likely attenuated or disrupted by a variety of political processes that are themselves affected by levels of income inequality.

In Figure 3, we depict how macro-, meso-, and microlevel factors can affect, moderate, or be influenced by the pro-

Figure 3

Son Hing-Wilson-Gourevitch Multilevel Model

Macrolevel Factors
Economic Conditions
Political Institutions
Cultural Norms, Narratives, Myths
Mainstream Mass Media

Increasing Income Inequality

Preference for Redistribution by Median Voter

Votes for Candidate Who Supports Redistribution

Redistribution

Perceived Inequality

Evaluation of Inequality

Mesolevel Factors
SES Spatial Segregation
Homophily
Ethnoracial Inequality
Information Echo Chambers
Participation in Political Processes
Political Polarization
Intergroup Relations

Microlevel Factors
Socioeconomic Status
Threat, Uncertainty, Disillusionment
Motives to Rationalize Status Quo
Meritocracy & Social Mobility Beliefs
Social Comparison Processes
Social Dominance Orientation
Sociopolitical Orientation
Prejudice & Stereotypes

cesses by which people respond to increasing inequality (see the inner lighter circle). First, macro-, meso-, and microlevel factors may act as antecedents of elements in the inequality model. For instance, macrolevel cultural narratives and myths about meritocracy or poverty can affect people's preference for redistribution. Second, macro-, meso-, and microlevel factors may moderate the processes or paths within the model. For instance, the strength of the relation between objective income inequality and people's perceptions of such inequality may depend on the mesolevel spatial segregation that exists along socioeconomic status (SES) lines. Third, the processes whereby people experience and respond to income inequality can also affect broader macro-, meso-, and microlevel factors. For instance, the rationalization of inequality can lead to prejudice toward the poor and more conflictual intergroup relations: examples of consequences that extend beyond public support for redistribution itself.

As inequality rises, broader contextual and social-psychological processes will impede the likelihood of people correctly recognizing high inequality, evaluating it as extreme, and supporting greater redistribution. A critical point of our essay is to articulate the conditions that result in blindness to, legitimization of, and reproduction of inequality, thereby allowing us to consider how to facilitate the conditions that could result in less, rather than more, inequality. To begin, let us consider the most basic test of the MRM: do systems and people act to maintain some equilibrium between inequality and redistribution over time?

Meltzer and Richard offer a self-correcting model of how democracies keep inequalities in check: when inequality rises too much, voters mobilize to demand

better balance. The model has been tested in a variety of ways. The first component always represents objective income inequality operationalized with measures such as the Gini index. Some studies examine how inequality leads to *demand* for redistribution (public opinion); other studies assess *actual* redistribution (redistributive policies, social spending). There is good reason to presume that demand for redistribution will not always map onto actual redistributive policy.[7]

Redistributive policies can take various forms, including new tax rates, welfare support, social security, public health care, public education, unemployment insurance, and old-age pensions. Whereas some policies are more directly redistributive (like welfare), others can be categorized as social safety nets (like unemployment or pensions) or as public goods fostering equality of opportunity (like public education).[8] Although different types of redistribution may be viewed quite differently by the public, here they are all treated as metrics of the same overarching construct of redistribution.

According to the MRM, as levels of income inequality increase, so should demand for redistribution (see Figure 1, path 1) and actual redistribution (path 4). In general, support for path 4 – objective inequality leading to more redistributive policies or actual redistribution – is mixed. Some analyses find support or mixed support, others find no relationship.[9] Indeed, some researchers find the *opposite* pattern: in both crossnational and longitudinal studies, greater objective inequality sometimes predicts *lower* levels of redistribution.[10]

Does rising inequality prompt the hypothesized demand for redistribution, even if not always translated to policy? Support for path 1 is also inconsistent: Some analyses suggest that high inequality increases demand for redistribution;

other studies link higher inequality to lower support for redistribution, across countries or within-country across time.[11] For instance, as income inequality rose over twenty-five years in the United Kingdom beginning in the mid-1980s, public support for redistribution fell.[12] Other studies examining multiple nations find no consistent relation between objective inequality and public demand for redistribution.[13] Given the mixed evidence, we conclude that the MRM's hypothesized positive links between inequality and redistribution (Figure 1, paths 1 and 4) appear to be largely unsupported.

A related body of research, however, demonstrates that although *actual* inequality fails to predict support for redistribution, higher *perceived* levels of inequality are sometimes linked to both greater demand for redistribution (Figure 2, path E), and more generous redistributive policy.[14] It makes sense that public opinion would be shaped more by the inequality people perceive than by what goes unnoticed; these findings point to a meaningful disconnect between actual and perceived inequality levels (Figure 2, path A). How accurate are people's judgments of income inequality?

Implicit in the MRM is the assumption that people estimate with reasonable accuracy the level of inequality in a society at any given time (Figure 2, path A). However, there is good reason to doubt that people's subjective perceptions correctly track objective levels of income inequality. Psychological mechanisms may inhibit the detection of true levels of inequality; paradoxically, estimates may become *more* inaccurate as actual inequality levels rise. Across forty countries, people were quite poor at guessing their nation's pattern of wealth distribution: in only five of forty countries were estimates correct

more than 50 percent of the time.[15] Furthermore, people seem to be limited in their ability to track large-scale changes in inequality over time. Although income inequality rose dramatically in the United States between 1980 and 2000, one-quarter of Americans reported being unaware of any change.[16] Likewise, longitudinal, multinational studies have revealed at times no link between objective levels of inequality and perceptions of inequality and, at other times, only a small association, leaving considerable room for slippage.[17]

Knowing that people incorrectly estimate levels of inequality does not tell us whether their perceptions are under- or overestimates. Evidence is mixed, but most frequently, people's misperceptions of inequality err in the direction of underestimation. For example, Americans estimated that the richest quintile owned 59 percent of the wealth, while the bottom two quintiles combined controlled roughly 10 percent; in fact, the richest quintile controls 84 percent of the wealth and the bottom two quintiles – the bottom 40 percent of Americans – control 0 percent.[18] The phenomenon seems to be driven especially by underestimation of the staggering incomes and wealth controlled at the top, as well as dramatic underestimation of the economic disadvantage still faced by minority groups such as Black Americans.[19] This underestimation is not a uniquely American phenomenon; it has been demonstrated internationally, with the most pronounced underestimations in countries with the highest levels of actual inequality.[20] Underestimation is significant because people who do perceive higher levels of inequality tend to report greater support for redistribution (Figure 2, path E).[21]

Although misperceptions often underestimate inequality, any bias that sometimes veers in one direction can conceivably also lean in the opposite direction.

Accordingly, evidence suggests that although respondents from many nations tended to underestimate inequality on average, respondents from some nations were fairly accurate and others tended to overestimate true levels of inequality.[22] Political leaning may also play a role: in one recent study, American political liberals were more likely than conservatives to overestimate rising inequality.[23] Taken together, the available evidence suggests that people's ability to track real levels of inequality is tenuous at best, often underestimated, sometimes overestimated, and can be affected by how the question is asked and by preexisting ideologies.

What affects people's perceptions of inequality levels? People do not form their impressions of inequality levels after poring over years of data; they rely on cognitive shortcuts and highly accessible information.[24] It is important therefore to understand the micro-, meso-, and macro-level contextual factors (Figure 3) that can shape perceptions of inequality and contribute to the disconnect between objective and perceived levels of inequality.

First, media portrayals of income inequality may be a macrolevel contextual factor that weakens the link between objective income inequality and its accurate recognition (Figure 3). People rely on the media to make sense of complex issues when information is otherwise not available to them, and media coverage can affect people's beliefs and positions on economic issues.[25] Awareness of levels of inequality could rise during periods of increased coverage (such as during Occupy Wall Street). However, mainstream media provide incomplete information about economic issues, such as the implications of the Bush 2001 and 2003 tax cuts for income inequality.[26] Further, news coverage does not necessarily track actual economic trends.[27] In the United States, as inequality rose between 1980 and 2000, print media reporting on this issue declined.[28] Media and political narratives may be crafted by economic and political elites to shape public opinion.[29] Under conditions of greater inequality, economic elites have an even larger share of control over these forms of influence, along with a heightened incentive to discourage unwelcome scrutiny.[30]

Second, there are mesolevel or socially contextualized ways in which people access media – and more recently social media – that could influence how people perceive income inequality (Figure 3). People may choose partisan media and curate social media networks that create informational echo chambers limiting exposure both to ideas inconsistent with their ideology and to people dissimilar from them.[31] Such informational echo chambers are increasingly intensified by online algorithms selectively providing attitude-consistent stimuli and undercut the likelihood that people will receive accurate information about inequality.[32]

It is also worth acknowledging differential access to institutional sources of knowledge other than media. People do not experience "inequality levels" directly via lived experience; rather, they experience levels of economic hardship relative to those in their local environment. People's awareness of actual levels of inequality may be contingent on formal education and access to and ability to critically evaluate aggregate evidence. As rising inequality compounds educational disparities, access to detailed aggregate information about economic inequality might increasingly become available mainly to the wealthy.[33]

Third, accurate perceptions of inequality may be inhibited by mesolevel factors, such as spatial segregation based on SES (Figure 3). Because people tend to cluster in socioeconomically homogenous rural/

urban milieus, neighborhoods, and social networks, they may have little first-hand knowledge of "how the other half lives."[34] This tendency toward residential segregation on the basis of income has become increasingly pronounced as inequality has risen, especially for black families.[35] Hence, rising inequalities can paradoxically shield people from recognizing the full extent of the economic gap. Residential and spatial segregation limit awareness of the true range of economic circumstances in broader society; at the same time, it further perpetuates inequality over time via access to resources, education, jobs, and mates.[36]

Fourth, at a microlevel, social comparison processes work in tandem with increasing residential segregation to disrupt accurate comparative assessments of inequality (Figure 3). Because social comparisons are predominantly made with relevant, close others, people may limit comparisons to people in their (increasingly) income-segregated networks. As a result, comparisons may fail to gauge real levels of societal inequality and may dampen dissatisfaction with one's rank.[37] By comparing themselves with economically similar others, the poor overestimate their societal-level SES and the rich underestimate theirs, contributing to underestimations of overall inequality in both cases.[38]

Fifth, at the level of culture, people may limit the economic information that is visible, displayed, or willingly shared. Open talk of money and wealth can be taboo, especially among the wealthy.[39] Further, aware that mounting resentment of the rich can have unwelcome consequences for them, elites may avoid full disclosure out of self-interest (which is also reflected in their opposition to formal pay-ratio disclosures such as in Dodd-Frank). The likelihood of actively hiding assets to evade taxes and scrutiny

rises sharply with people's wealth.[40] If people base their judgments on what they can observe (such as conspicuous consumption patterns), they may underestimate the wealth of the rich, who spend far less of their available money.[41] Conversely, talk of debt may be uncomfortable or embarrassing for the disadvantaged, rendering it invisible and subject to pluralistic ignorance. In addition, low-income people often use credit to access consumption goods they could otherwise not afford (obscuring their genuine level of disadvantage). Middle-class households, too, may incur considerable debt to meet local standards or gain entry into good neighborhoods and schools.[42] Because the rich may hide their wealth while the poor hide their debt, the extent of income inequality is further masked.

The MRM contends that rising objective inequality will increase demand for redistribution. A key (implicit) assumption of this model is that people's subjective perceptions of inequality accurately track its reality (path A). Evidence overwhelmingly fails to support this assumption. We offer a multilevel account for the disconnect between actual and perceived inequality, and argue that subjective estimates may become increasingly inaccurate as inequality rises.

The Extended MRM (Figure 2) suggests that as objective levels of income inequality increase, people should come to judge the level of inequality more harshly (a negative path D). However, repeated studies of crossnational differences reveal no relation between actual levels of income inequality and people's belief that income differences are too large.[43] This nonsignificant path D may be a consequence of the disconnect between objective and subjectively perceived inequality. People will not decry inequalities that they fail to perceive. But when people do

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subjectively perceive heightened levels of inequality, does it predict more negative evaluations of the disparity?

The Extended MRM in Figure 2 suggests that when people perceive increased income inequality, they should come to evaluate it more disapprovingly (an inverse path B). This relationship has been tested in numerous studies; however, findings are complicated because "evaluations of inequality" can be conceptualized and tested in multiple ways that reveal different patterns of findings. We summarize two central patterns that at first blush appear contradictory, but that can both be understood as psychological responses to rising inequality. First, research shows that when people are asked whether levels of inequality are "too large," they often indicate that high inequality is indeed excessive. This pattern suggests a negative path B (higher perceived inequality leads to lower approval). But a second pattern emerges when people are asked to estimate how much inequality exists (their descriptive beliefs) *and* indicate how much inequality *should* exist (their prescriptive beliefs). Measured this way, a positive path B emerges: the more inequality people believe there *is,* the more they believe there *ought* to be. We suggest that these different patterns are not simply a methodological artifact. Rather, these distinct patterns each provide critical information about how people respond to inequality and how these evaluations change over time.

First, in cross-sectional studies in which people were asked whether income inequalities in their nation were "too large," evidence has been generally consistent with the Extended MRM. Perceptions of greater income inequality predict less positive evaluations of income inequality. In these studies, inequality evaluations are typically conceptualized as the belief that income inequality

in their nation is "too large." Ample evidence points to people's disapproval of high inequality. In a study of thirty countries (from 1999 to 2000), 45 percent of respondents strongly agreed that income differences were too large.[44] Subjective perceptions of higher inequality predicted judgments of "too much" inequality across twenty-three countries.[45] American participants who learned how much inequality had risen expressed stronger beliefs that levels were too large, unnecessary, and chiefly beneficial to the rich.[46]

We propose that those who evaluate income inequalities as *too* great do so because they view the disparity as unjust. High levels of income inequality may be seen as violating the distributive justice principle of equity.[47] The equity principle states that fair allocation of outcome (pay, rewards) should be based on inputs (that is, by merit: effort, skill).[48] If some people are rewarded far more handsomely for their inputs than others, this equity violation should result in disapproval of the disparity. Supporting this justice-violation view, people are more likely to see income inequalities as too large if they believe that nepotism and intergenerational advantage (as opposed to merit) determine outcomes in life.[49]

People vary in the degree to which they care about equity. People who believe more strongly that outcomes ought to be distributed on the basis of merit are more apt to oppose exceedingly high inequality. In our own recent research, we found that those who believed more strongly that outcomes should be merit-based reported greater disapproval of very high CEO-worker wage gaps because the excessive disparity violated equity principles.[50]

Together, evidence supports the contention that, at a single point in time, people who perceive more income inequality will evaluate that inequality as too

large because the disparity violates equity. However, these patterns reflect what occurs in a snapshot in time, when people face the inequality before them. What happens over time, as people process and understand the income inequalities they perceive around them?

As noted earlier, although one pattern of evidence reveals that people who perceive higher inequality judge it as too large, a second pattern shows that the more inequality people believe there is, the more they think there ought to be. Before exploring that second pattern, let's consider the relation between these conceptualizations.

For people to judge income disparities as too large, they must have made two appraisals: what level of inequality they believe to exist, and what level they believe to be ideal. If the actual level of inequality far outstrips the ideal, they are likely to judge inequality as excessive. Supporting this view, respondents in multiple countries who perceived a greater gap between what the wage gap is and what it should be more strongly agreed that income differences in their country were too large.[51] What, then, predicts people's judgments of how much income inequality ideally *ought* to exist?

A remarkably strong predictor of people's ideal levels of income inequality is their perceptions of *actual* inequality (now suggesting a *positive* path B). The greater a wage gap between low and high occupational wage earners that people *perceive* to exist, the greater a wage gap they believe *should* exist.[52] In one study of twenty-seven countries, fully 78 percent of the variance in people's beliefs about how big the wage gap should be was explained by their perceptions of the actual wage gap.[53]

This pattern is not simply an artifact of similarly worded questions asked contemporaneously. Longitudinal studies reveal that over time, people come to believe that growing inequalities are legitimate.[54] For instance, as levels of inequality increased in the United States from 1987 to 1999, people's judgments of appropriate wage gaps widened.[55] An international longitudinal study found that increases in perceived levels of income inequality mediated judgments of preferred disparity, especially during rapid political and economic change.[56] Moreover, when people are experimentally exposed to higher levels of income inequality (versus a no-information control condition), the level of disparity they judge as legitimate increases.[57] Across these many contexts, the more inequality people think there is, the more inequality they believe there should be.

Putting these pieces together, we propose that the relation between perceiving greater income inequality and judging inequality as excessive flips, depending on whether we are considering a cross-sectional perspective (differences between people at any point in time) or a processual perspective (differences over time). On one hand, people who perceive more income inequality to exist will, all else being equal, judge those inequalities as excessive compared with those who see less inequality. On the other hand, as people come to experience greater and greater levels of inequality over time, they will come to view higher levels of income inequality as increasingly appropriate and even desirable.

How can it be that, despite sensitivity to equity violations discussed previously, people can witness spiraling income inequality and judge it to be good? This may be due to a general psychological tendency for people to believe that what *is* (the status quo) is what *ought* to be.[58] Two theories describe people's powerful motivations to legitimize injustice (including excessive income inequality):

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"belief in a just world" and "system justi-fication theory."

Belief in a just world. First, people are motivated to believe that the world is a fair place in which good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people.[59] This conviction can lead to the legitimization of income inequalities. This motive is heightened when confront-ed with more threatening injustices.[60] For instance, American income inequality from 1973 to 2006 rose in tandem with be-lief in a just world.[61] Individual differenc-es in this belief matter too: people with a stronger belief in a just world evaluate income inequality more favorably when they learn a big income gap exists.[62] Over-all, when faced with evidence of unjustly high income inequality, people's desire to see the world as a fair place can motivate them to believe that vast economic dis-parities are deserved and appropriate.

System justification theory. Second, and similarly, the motivation to uphold the status quo and therefore to rationalize its institutions could lead to the legitimiza-tion of income inequality. According to system justification theory, when peo-ple are faced with their own illegitimate low status and their personal lack of ac-tion to correct it, they either live with un-comfortable cognitive dissonance or they rationalize the inequalities as fair to alle-viate discomfort.[63] This view contends that people are motivated to legitimize income inequality, even when it conflicts with self-interest, because of its palliative function.[64] In countries with higher lev-els of objective income inequality, people more strongly endorse system-justifying statements like "In general, I find soci-ety to be fair."[65] Thus, as people face ris-ing income inequality, they may become increasingly motivated to rationalize it as justified.

How do people justify a system with high inequality? Inequality can be ex-cused by drawing on legitimizing ideas about how such inequalities emerge and what their consequences are.[66] Key ide-ologies that provide seemingly legitimate reasons for inequality include 1) beliefs that society is meritocratic; 2) beliefs in social mobility; and 3) beliefs in the mar-ket system.

Meritocracy beliefs. First, the belief that outcomes currently are distributed on the basis of merit (not to be confused with the justice principle that outcomes *ought* to be distributed by merit) predicts acceptance of income inequality. The be-lief (however unwarranted) that society is currently a meritocracy serves to legiti-mize inequalities because those at the top are seen as deserving of their better out-comes and those at the bottom are seen as underserving.[67] The more people be-lieve that outcomes are rewarded on the basis of ability and hard work, the more they accept income disparity as accept-able and even as necessary.[68] Notably, crossnational evidence shows that people endorse stronger meritocracy beliefs as income inequalities rise over time.[69]

Social mobility beliefs. The belief that so-cial mobility is possible can also justify rising income inequality. The notion that people, through their own hard work, can rise through the ranks to a status higher than their parents can be comforting and empowering. People who more strong-ly endorse the possibility of social mo-bility view income inequality as more de-sirable.[70] Further, when Americans were experimentally induced to believe that there is greater social mobility, they re-ported greater tolerance for income in-equality in their country.[71]

Market system beliefs. Third, ideologies concerning how markets operate can also serve to legitimize inequality. If peo-ple believe that incentives and competi-tion are necessary to motivate hard work, and that large income inequalities have

positive economic consequences, such as spurring economic prosperity, they evaluate larger wage gaps as desirable.[72] Further, in new market democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, the more people believe that the market economy improves the standard of living for ordinary people, the less they evaluate current social inequalities in their country as too large.[73]

Although it may be the case that, at any single point in time, people who perceive greater income inequality will be more apt to judge it as excessive; over time, we have little reason to expect a negative evaluation of objective or perceived inequality as suggested by the Extended MRM. Instead, due to a desire to see the world as fair and one's system as legitimate, people are likely to justify growing inequalities as meritocratic, aiding social mobility, and creating competitive markets. Consequently, over time, it becomes increasingly more likely that people will judge the income inequalities they see as warranted and acceptable (a positive path B). However, the proposed positive link between inequality and its evaluation is qualified by several factors. As we will discuss, people do not always correctly perceive income inequalities as they grow. Further, in some cultural and economic contexts, it should be harder or easier to legitimize income inequality; some people will be chronically more likely to legitimize inequalities than others.

W hat affects people's evaluations of inequality? Our Multilevel Model (Figure 3) explores these factors. First, how people respond to inequality should be affected by broad macrolevel factors, such as cultural scripts. There are large crossnational differences in ideas about meritocracy. For instance, a greater percentage of Americans, compared with

Europeans, believe that hard work pays off in the long run.[74] The more consensually people within a country endorse ideologies of meritocracy, social mobility, and the market system, the more individuals accept high levels of inequality.[75]

Second, macrolevel economic factors are likely to condition people's responses to income inequality. For instance, in nations that are less prosperous (as measured by GDP) or that have low social mobility, people are more likely to evaluate levels of income inequality in their countries as too large.[76]

Third, a society's economic system may predict attitudes toward income inequality. Specifically, between 1987 and 1992, as post-Communist Central and Eastern European countries transitioned into free-market systems, their residents increasingly desired greater wage gaps between skilled and unskilled workers.[77] However, countries that had more successfully transitioned to a market economy (such as East Germany, the Czech Republic, and Germany) showed more acceptance of inequality than countries with less successful transitions (Russia and Bulgaria).[78] These data suggest that tendencies to legitimize inequalities will be constrained by macrolevel conditions: when one's sociopolitical and economic reality is too dysfunctional, disruptive, or despairing, people are less likely to legitimize it.[79]

Fourth, our Multilevel Model takes demographic and individual difference variables into account. For instance, consistent with our model, people who personally have higher income or status tend to prefer a higher level of wage inequality than less advantaged respondents.[80] Chronic personality differences matter, too. For instance, people high in social dominance orientation (a sociopolitical ideology that purports that inequalities between groups are natural

and desirable) perceive *less* inequality to exist between the rich and the poor and are more accepting of greater wage gaps between CEOs and bottom line workers.[81] Finally, we theorize that these processes should depend on people's political orientation. International surveys reveal that those who identify on the political right are less likely to judge income inequality in their nation as too great.[82] Conservatives may favor income inequality in part because they more strongly endorse system justification ideologies that legitimize inequality. For instance, conservatives believe more strongly that the current system is a true meritocracy, overestimate social mobility, and assert that "economic positions are legitimate reflections of people's achievements."[83] Internationally, greater income inequality predicts lower trust in institutions for those on the political left, whereas those on the right appear to be impervious presumably because their beliefs legitimize the system producing the disparities.[84]

In sum, the Extended MRM may not hold because people may fail to correctly perceive the level of inequality in the first place, or come to see higher levels of inequality as desirable. Despite the fact that people are concerned about income inequality, would prefer less of it, and may regard it as inequitable, we suggest that, over time, many are also motivated to legitimize the inequalities they see.[85] Processes of legitimization should be less likely in failing political systems and where cultural narratives do not assume meritocracy, social mobility, or market ideals. Finally, people higher in SES, social dominance orientation, and right-wing political ideology should be more prone to legitimizing income inequalities.

We have considered how rising inequality sometimes leads people to judge inequality levels as excessive, and other times to legitimize the disparity. Now we consider the implications of people's evaluations of income inequality on public demand for redistributive policies. The MRM contends that as inequality rises, support for redistribution should increase. Indirectly, this implies a negative path C of the Extended MRM (that as people judge inequality levels more unfavorably, demand for redistribution should increase). We argue that although judging inequality as excessive can increase support for redistribution, the link is likely to be weak and influenced by numerous factors that reduce the likelihood that redistribution will be seen as the right solution. For instance, people's beliefs about how markets function, their trust in government, and harsh evaluations of the economically disadvantaged can all moderate support for redistribution.[86] We also outline how redistribution beliefs are affected by macrolevel processes, such as the elites' power to control media narratives; mesolevel processes, such as increased income-based segregation; and microlevel factors, such as personal income, personal mobility, and feelings of threat.

Does the judgment that income inequality is excessive result in demand for redistribution? Although a strong link is sometimes observed, the effects are typically weak.[87] For instance, across twenty-seven European countries, participants' belief that income inequality is excessive accounted for just 3 percent of the variance in redistribution policy support.[88] Given the weak direct link, it is important to consider factors that might moderate this link: when does decrying inequality result in demand for redistribution?

Although people often would prefer a society that is less unequal than their current reality, these preferences do not

readily translate into increased demand for government redistribution.[89] Some of this ambivalence may be due to an incomplete understanding of how redistributive policies affect inequality.[90] People may also react differently to redistributive programs perceived to increase equality of opportunity versus equality of outcome: education or health care policies, for instance, may be more popular than social support for the poor.[91] Although a detailed analysis of specific redistributive policies (and how these policies are framed or perceived by the public) is beyond the scope of this essay, these variations clearly matter.[92]

Why might people fail to support redistribution even when they see excessive inequality? There are multiple microlevel factors that might affect support for redistribution (Figure 3). First, consistent with MRM assumptions, economic self-interest plays a role: the wealthy are less apt to demand redistribution.[93] Even those who expect to become wealthier (believing themselves upwardly socially mobile) show less support for redistribution.[94] In fact, the rich appear to become even *less* generous as inequality rises: in higher-inequality contexts, wealthy individuals adopted less generous views of redistribution due to a heightened conviction that they were entitled to their wealth.[95] It may be unremarkable that the rich oppose redistribution, however there are too few very wealthy individuals for their votes to represent a majority in a democracy. More interesting to consider is why the nonrich also often fail to support redistribution.[96]

People may oppose redistribution (even when they believe inequality is excessive) because they believe that inequality is necessary to motivate hard work and striving.[97] Internationally, there is strong support for the notion that large income disparities are necessary for a country's prosperity.[98] Although this functionalist view that inequality is needed typically predicts less disapproval toward inequality, people can simultaneously believe that large differences in income are necessary *and* that there is too much inequality.[99] Notably, the belief that inequality is necessary for competition and prosperity dampens demand for redistribution.[100]

Furthermore, the more people believe in the existence of a meritocracy that rewards hard work and talent, and that enables upward social mobility, the less they support redistribution.[101] In contrast, beliefs that luck and social location strongly determine outcomes is linked to both desired and actual redistribution.[102] Because rising inequality may intensify people's belief in status quo–legitimizing ideologies such as meritocracy and social mobility, mounting disparities may paradoxically dampen support for redistribution just when it is (arguably) most warranted.[103]

When people believe that the poor deserve their own fate, they tend to oppose redistribution. This belief is tied to the legitimizing ideologies previously described: if an individual believes the system is meritocratic and social mobility is possible, they are more likely to blame the most disadvantaged for their misfortunes. These assumptions undermine support for redistribution that benefits the disadvantaged.[104] The irony is that because conditions of excessive inequality tend to amplify legitimizing beliefs, the poor may be *most* likely blamed for their fate under the very conditions in which they are *least* able to escape their disadvantage.

Further, attitudes toward the poor and support for redistribution can depend on respondents' beliefs about the ethnoracial composition of beneficiaries of redistributive policies. In nations where a visible minority group is poor (or perceived

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to be poor) relative to a dominant majority, redistribution can be seen as disproportionately benefiting minorities.[105] When paired with the view that the poor are lazy or undeserving of help, redistribution support wanes. Stereotypes of the disadvantaged may be exacerbated by minority status (for instance, poor Blacks are viewed as less hard-working than poor Whites).[106] Thus, white voters, even those at an economic disadvantage, may vote against their own redistributive interest if they believe (typically incorrectly) that benefits will go primarily to outgroups.[107] Versions of this pattern are evident internationally, and countries with a larger poor ethnoracial minority tend to have a smaller public sector, suggesting effects on actual redistribution.[108] It is important to emphasize that it is not ethnoracial diversity itself that drives opposition to public goods, but the economic disparity between ethnoracial groups. When an ethnoracial minority group is poor relative to the dominant majority group, the majority opposes redistribution.

People also may not support government redistribution even when they view inequality as excessive because they do not trust government to do the job of redistribution. Increased mistrust in government reduces support for government redistributive programs in favor of private charities. Notably, rising income inequality can itself result in greater mistrust in government.[109] Across twenty democratic European countries, higher levels of objective income inequality predicted lower trust in, and satisfaction with, political institutions.[110] Thus, in the very context in which redistribution is needed – high income inequality – people are least likely to trust the government to do this job, which in turn can lead to a cycle of even greater inequality and further mistrust.

What affects people's support for redistribution? Certainly, favorability toward redistribution varies across macro-level economic factors, such as national wealth (GDP) or type of welfare regime (Figure 3).[111] Public support for redistribution can also be shaped by communications from political elites (who themselves may have a disproportionate incentive to maintain the status quo, and power to influence narratives under conditions of high inequality). For instance, political scientists Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson describe twin U.S. right-wing political strategy and rhetoric that involves first sabotaging effective governance, then decrying government as dysfunctional, exemplified in Ronald Reagan's often-repeated quote : "the nine most terrifying words in the English language are : 'I'm from the government, and I'm here to help.'"[112] To the extent that fostering mistrust in government fuels opposition to redistribution, this may well be an effective strategy for antitaxation elites.[113] Intergroup hostilities can also be ignited top-down by powerful communicators, divisions further fueled by the anxiety of rising economic inequality. For example, politicians can strategically shift support away from redistribution (and even toward policies that overbenefit the wealthy) by not only drawing on existing outgroup prejudice (for instance, toward poor ethnoracial minorities), but also by actively fostering racial resentments and contributing to the creation of new animosities.[114] Political and economic elites may focus blame on powerless minorities to shift scrutiny away from their own role in perpetuating economic hardship.

Earlier we noted that the mesolevel process of SES-based segregation likely inhibits accurate perceptions of inequality. We also contend that residential and workplace segregation likely reduces support for redistribution, both due to

underestimations of inequality and to an inflated belief that differences are merit-based. People are increasingly only exposed to others of a similar income bracket at work. Infrequent contact with those of disparate incomes may constrain social comparisons to limited networks in which meritocracy appears to work relatively fairly (such as more competent and hardworking people getting promoted).[115] This may lead to the erroneous belief that meritocracy works at a societal level too, even though the range of incomes they see within their workplace is but a small fraction of the wage discrepancies that exist within society. Likewise, income-based residential segregation may contribute to the illusion that merit is linked to mobility within narrow social contexts. Further, by limiting social comparisons to economically similar others, even the relatively wealthy may feel that they need more of their income to compete in their social networks (reducing redistribution generosity).

Finally, in terms of microlevel factors, rising inequality makes social mobility (or the "American dream") increasingly unattainable for the disadvantaged, while, at the same time, intensifying people's *belief* in social mobility. This may lead to a cycle of false hope, failure, self-blame and shame, and threatened self-worth. People are particularly likely to lash out at outgroup members when their self-worth has been threatened.[116] When the disadvantaged are faced with a choice between blaming themselves for failure to achieve social mobility (ostensibly due to lack of merit) and the alternative view (often provided by political elites) that undeserving minorities – via unjust government redistribution – have cut ahead of them in line, they may find scapegoating the more palatable option.[117] Hence conditions of rising inequality once again provide the backdrop

needed to fuel increased intergroup hostility, expressed in part through opposition to redistribution.

So far we have considered multiple factors that might lead people to either high or low support for redistribution. The MRM assumes that voters who support redistribution will also vote for it (Figures 1 and 2, path 2). Is this assumption warranted? That is, does public support for redistribution, particularly among lower-income individuals, reliably translate into votes?[118] Support for redistribution translating to action may be dampened – even among those who would benefit from it – by the mesolevel political process of "policy bundling." For instance, in the United States, the Democratic Party has come to represent racial/social progress *and* redistribution; the Republican Party has come to stand for racial/social conservatism *and* opposition to redistribution. Therefore, voters must align with the issues they prioritize most even if all of their interests are not represented. In such cases, people may vote against their own redistributive interests in order to express support for some identity or culturally relevant value.[119]

Further, although the Meltzer-Richard hypothesis assumes that all eligible members of a society are equally likely to vote, this is rarely the case. Asymmetry in voting patterns is well-documented: people who are lower-income, less educated, and a minority ethnicity are relatively less likely to vote.[120] Moreover, lower-income voter turnout is particularly dampened under conditions of high inequality.[121] Rising inequality may affect voting asymmetries by exacerbating the structural barriers to voting among lower-SES people (that is, less time, knowledge, and resources), decreasing their psychological sense of power, control, and political efficacy.[122] Rising income inequality

therefore begets political inequality, which in turn begets greater income inequality. These microprocesses dampening voter turnout are worsened by meso- and macrovoter suppression mechanisms that disproportionately affect lower-income and minority voters, including residence requirements, voter ID laws, limited early voting, and felony disenfranchisement. All of these laws affect poor and minority voters disproportionately: for example, one in thirteen African American men are unable to vote due to (often lifetime) felony disenfranchisement. The disproportionately high arrest rates among minority and low-income groups exacerbate this disparity.[123] Stifled political participation matters: support for redistributive policies is higher when voter turnout is high.[124]

The final link in the MRM (Figures 1 and 2, path 3) presumes a simple direct step between demand for redistribution (via voting) and actual generous, effective redistributive policies. However, the link from public opinion to policy is far from straightforward. Even when support for redistribution is high and reflected in voting patterns, policies may not be responsive to demand due to the realities of the political process, particularly in contexts of rising inequality.

First, the nature of national political institutions strongly shapes the degree to which aggregate preferences lead to responsive policy. Different institutions produce divergent policy outcomes, even holding preferences constant. The voting system (such as proportional representation versus majoritarian once-past-the-post rules, presidential versus parliamentary institutions, federalism, two-party versus multiparty systems) meaningfully impacts this relation (path 3). Further, gerrymandering alters the outcomes of an election as district boundaries are strategically redrawn to concentrate a particular party or group in some districts and weaken its numbers in other districts, thereby diluting representation of some groups relative to others. Thus, not all preferences are weighed equally in election outcomes.

Further, although the democratic ideal assumes each person's preference is weighed equally in determining outcomes, reality often diverges. Not all people's preferences matter equally to political decision-makers. The public opinions voiced by high-income voters are more likely to hold sway among politicians than the opinions of middle- or low-income voters, particularly for economic (versus social) policy.[125] How does this happen? First, higher-income voters engage in more political action, including donating to political candidates, and as such, the wealthy exert more influence on who runs for office and whose concerns are heard.[126] Here again, institutions play a key role in the disconnect between preference and policy. On one hand, the interests of the affluent are likely to align with many lobbyists, special interest groups, and political action committees, which have increased dramatically in number and influence as inequality has risen; on the other hand, interest groups representing the less affluent (like unions) have declined precipitously in number and power.[127]

Finally, we point out a psychological side effect of the impact of institutions that fosters inequality of voice. The disadvantaged in society may correctly perceive that even when they vote or publicly express their preferences, their preferences are rarely borne out in observable policy change. This apparent lack of impact may reduce voter trust and confidence that the government can be relied upon to effect positive change.[128] It may also increase feelings of powerlessness

and system inescapability for the poor, which can heighten the tendency to justify the status quo and thereby reduce their support for redistribution.[129] Over time, the attitudes of the poor toward redistribution follow those of the rich and become more conservative.[130] However, in some circumstances, people may opt for resistance instead, attempting to dismantle the system they recognize as unfair or illegitimate.[131] Disillusionment with political elites, paired with anger about economic circumstances, may lead to attempts to change an ineffective political system. Status quo–rejecting gestures like the Brexit vote, rising popularity of populist movements, and support for authoritarian leaders with disregard for democratic norms may all be responses to the perception that the system has failed the people.[132] As Bill O'Reilly opined, "They want someone to blow that system to hell. That's why Trump is winning. He pinpointed festering disenchantment long before anyone else."[133] Of course, Trump's version of populism criticized the system and decried both corrupt elites *and* low-power minority groups such as undocumented immigrants and Muslims. Disillusioned voters may be swayed by different aspects of this rhetoric, with some taking aim at the powerful and others tempted to blame minority groups for their struggles. Following his election, it became evident that Trump would not act to dismantle the status quo benefiting the rich (instead exacerbating it with further tax cuts for the wealthy), but would instead be increasingly willing to follow through on scapegoating the powerless.

Although the Meltzer-Richard Model of voter behavior (assuming rational, self-interested voters consider policy implications) is common in much of the literature, the validity of this model of voter behavior is highly questionable. Indeed,

social scientists Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels offer a compelling alternative account.[134] Often, voter behavior is derived from ingroup identification rather than substantive policy preference. Thus, it is more likely for voters to start with their party affiliation, work backward to determine what policy positions they hold (that is, those espoused by their party leaders), and then develop post-hoc rationalizations for policy support.[135] Psychologists, too, have recognized that party affiliation can often override policy content, especially when it serves belongingness or identity needs.[136] People may become more likely to vote against their interests economically in times of rising inequality because economic uncertainty heightens the need to belong to a tribe.[137] Economic inequality has also been linked to higher political polarization, which heightens the inclination to uncritically accept ingroup views and to reject anything the opponent group prefers.[138]

This essay considers a nearly worldwide phenomenon: the dramatically rising levels of economic inequality. There are many reasons to imagine that in a democracy, people would perceive these trends, judge them as undesirable, and demand a strengthened welfare state via redistribution. Although public outcry in the face of such extreme gaps in income seems both warranted and intuitively plausible, evidence for it is strikingly hard to find. Indeed, there is clearer evidence that in the face of rising inequality, public transfers and various redistributive social programs often become markedly less generous.

To explore the factors that produce or hinder support for redistribution in the face of high inequality, we have used the simple and elegant logic of the MRM as a means of systematically unpacking the considerably more complex and nuanced

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reality.[139] We show why this model's lack of support can be understood by considering the host of psychological processes that can contribute to slippage between each of the links in Figure 2. Ultimately, we build a multilevel account for why rising and extreme inequality so often fails to prompt action.

First, does greater objective income inequality lead to greater perceptions of inequality (path A)? No. People are often inaccurate, both about the extent of inequality and their own rank in the system. The context of rising inequality contributes to the residential segregation, comparison patterns, and cultural norms that underlie this phenomenon.

Second, do perceptions of greater inequality lead people to evaluate it negatively (path B)? Although people are likely to judge high perceived levels of inequality as too large, over time, they tend to legitimize rather than revile it. Neoliberal societies are particularly rife with legitimacy-supportive ideologies (such as that markets are highly meritocratic and foster social mobility or that individuals are responsible for themselves) that justify the system.

Third, does evaluating inequality as excessive lead to support for redistribution (path C)? Surprisingly often, the answer is no. Inequality may trigger intergroup divisions that reduce willingness to reallocate to outgroup members perceived as undeserving. Rising inequality may hinder trust in the government to solve the problem, resulting in a feedback loop producing greater inequality and yet more mistrust.

Finally, we consider both psychological and institutional reasons why a preference for redistribution may still not translate into votes (especially among low-income voters), and the broader political and institutional reasons why public opinion and votes of lower- and middle-income citizens may not translate into policy (relative to policy preferences of the affluent). Each of these processes in turn exacerbates inequality, reinforcing the cycle of status quo–legitimizing perceptions and further contributing to voter disillusionment.

Our primary focus is on microprocesses: that is, the psychological reasons why rising inequality may indeed sometimes produce perceptions of rising inequality, negative evaluations of it, and a preference for redistribution, but also – in stark contrast to the expected outcry – inequality blindness, system-legitimizing responses, victim blaming, and rejection of redistribution as a solution. However, we situate those microprocesses within the context of macrolevel factors like other economic conditions and media coverage and mesolevel factors such as social networks, political institutions, and neighborhood and work segregation (Figure 3). As a result, we reveal some ways that social and psychological processes may influence groups and institutions, and also how macroforces like rising inequality foster legitimizing processes, feelings of threat, perceptions of blame, and loss of trust that have profound effects on intergroup animosities. In turn, waning feelings of trust and solidarity as a nation may deeply affect people's faith in government contributions to the public good.

The Meltzer-Richard Model assumes a linear process from conditions of inequality to political backlash toward it to policy outcomes that correct it. Similarly, the Extended MRM and the structure of our analysis may still invoke the assumption that people consider their available evidence (however imperfect), evaluate the evidence, and make a judgment about their policy preference. In contrast, our Multilevel Model suggests that the processes at play are circular

and crosscutting. As a case in point, political identification has been recognized in our analysis as a driver of perceptions and evaluations of inequality, fundamental beliefs about meritocracy and personal responsibility, rejection of redistribution, and voting behavior. More centrally, we propose that people's perceptions of how much inequality is excessive is itself influenced by the level of inequality, which feeds on itself through cultural, social, political, and psychological processes. In other words, income inequality over time generates self-reinforcing processes and leads the disadvantaged to adopt self-defeating beliefs.

Because our main focus is to add a psychological lens to understanding reactions to income inequality, the bulk of our analysis ends with the issue of voter support for redistribution. Although we recognize that public opinion alone does not determine redistributive policies, its role is nonetheless important. Politicians and special interests spend vast sums to influence public opinion. Voters can, in some cases, contribute to dramatic change in public policy, for instance by voting for a drastic leadership change (such as populist or authoritarian leaders who eschew political conventions) or for democratic shifts such as the American New Deal, the French Popular Front, or the British Labor Party triumph of 1945.[140]

Further, public opinion – or more specifically, people's beliefs about inequality – carry weight in the social world. If the context of rising inequality triggers psychological processes and motivations that lead people to blame the disadvantaged for their outcomes, to believe outcomes in the world are merit-based and anyone can achieve rags to riches, it forms the backdrop for a society of rising intergroup animosity and mistrust, more racial discrimination (if disadvantaged minorities are cast as the undeserving recipients of redistribution), more political polarization, and more social uncertainty and instability. All of these processes triggered by rising inequality may result then in societal-level increases in opposition to redistribution, which then contributes to the perpetuation and reproduction of the same cycles of inequality. However, understanding these processes may also illuminate levers for change. What can be done to intervene in these processes to reduce income inequality?

It is possible to identify points of intervention for any component or path within our Multilevel Model. We highlight just a few that specifically target psychological processes that lead people to misjudge or legitimize inequality.

First, at multiple points in our analysis we highlight the importance of SES-based segregation (residential, organizational, educational). As people's social worlds become more homogenous because their neighborhoods and workplaces afford little opportunity to interact with those of a different income bracket, people are less able to identify where they fall in the economic hierarchy or correctly perceive the amount of income inequality that exists. People are also more apt to overestimate meritocracy and social mobility because they appear to operate effectively within their narrow social context, increasing legitimization of income inequality and reducing support for redistribution. Accordingly, we propose that interventions should broaden people's social worlds and provide opportunities for positive intergroup contact: by creating housing developments in mixed-income neighborhoods, by supporting income-contingent affirmative action programs for elite postsecondary institutions, and by facilitating interactions among those at the top (higher

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earners) and bottom (lower earners) of the organizational hierarchy.[141] Contact yields greater benefits when groups are of relatively equal status, when there is interdependence and shared goals, and when there is a common, valued identity, making workplaces, schools, and neighborhoods excellent contexts for cross-SES contact.[142]

Second, because many people tend to legitimize the systems in which they are embedded, they come to see higher levels of income inequality as increasingly desirable and necessary. Inequalities are often legitimized by appealing to deservingness and meritocracy, making redistribution appear unfair. To disrupt this cycle, emphasis should be placed on *predistributive programs*: policies that minimize initial levels of income inequality in the workplace by increasing the minimum wage, employee gain-sharing, increasing employee benefits, and capping CEO salaries. Rather than fighting the norms for meritocracy and competition, predistributive policies can appeal to these same valued principles. CEO salaries could be better calibrated against lower-level employees, and bonuses could be more closely tied to longer-term firm performance rather than short-term gains.

Third, for many people, the American dream casts high inequality as a motivator for social mobility when in fact excessive inequality inhibits mobility. This faulty narrative could be adapted to a new one that emphasizes the value of shared public goods.[143] The ways in which redistribution policies heighten equality of opportunity and support genuine social mobility should be heralded, and social safety nets can be framed as essential components of a system aimed to provide the security necessary for people to innovate, take risks, and get ahead. Moreover, given that inequality has prompted declining trust in government,

politicians – even liberal ones – have increasingly avoided highlighting the (positive) role of government and indirectly capitulated to the notion that less government is better.[144] Ironically, this hesitancy to celebrate government programs may be an additional reason people undervalue the importance of public goods and redistribution: they fail to recognize the benefits they actually receive. Political scientist Susan Mettler describes how redistributive programs are often designed to be nearly invisible and hence are underappreciated by many citizens.[145] This may suggest that trust in the government to manage redistribution effectively may increase to the extent that the "submerged state" is surfaced and its invisible benefits become more evident.[146]

In this essay, we identify how psychological factors (in concert with larger institutional- and societal-level processes) may operate to hinder the workings of effective democracy in which the interests of the few are balanced against those of the many. Most worrisome, these counterproductive processes are especially likely in the context of rising inequality in which redistribution may be most warranted. Although we articulate how these processes may trigger a self-perpetuating cycle of increasing inequality, we also illuminate some interventions that might disrupt these processes and contribute to the societal rebalance promised by a healthy democracy. Critically, these processes operate at multiple levels and target social, cultural, and economic factors. This approach underlines the value of interdisciplinary collaboration for integrating research insights and translating them into practical strategies for mitigating inequality.

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The Difficulties of Combating Inequality in Time

Jane Jenson, Francesca Polletta & Paige Raibmon

Abstract: Scholars have argued that disadvantaged groups face an impossible choice in their efforts to win policies capable of diminishing inequality: whether to emphasize their sameness to or difference from the advantaged group. We analyze three cases from the 1980s and 1990s in which reformers sought to avoid that dilemma and assert groups' sameness and difference in novel ways: in U.S. policy on biomedical research, in the European Union's initiatives on gender equality, and in Canadian law on Indigenous rights. In each case, however, the reforms adopted ultimately reproduced the sameness/difference dilemma rather than transcended it. To explain why, we show how profound disagreements about both the histories of the groups included in the policy and the place of the policy in a longer historical trajectory of reform either went unrecognized or were actively obscured. Targeted groups came to be attributed a biological or timeless essence, not because this was inevitable, we argue, but because of these failures to historicize inequality.

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Efforts to legislate or judicially confirm rights to equality often prove disappointing, even for those with clear-eyed aspirations. There are many reasons for the gap between the aspiration and the result, but a deceptively simple one is that political actors define equality in ways that restrict its scope and substance. On some accounts, the problem can be characterized in terms of the sameness/difference dilemma.[1] Equality sometimes has been defined as meaning that members of the disadvantaged group should be treated the same as members of the advantaged group. Yet disadvantaged group members *are* different. They have different needs and priorities. To treat them the same as members of the advantaged group takes as universal the needs and priorities of the advantaged. However, when policy does recognize different needs and priorities, pitfalls emerge. Categories meant to ameliorate inequalities may become the

basis for evaluating group members in ways far beyond the arena originally targeted.[2] Whether or not group members are stigmatized, they may be essentialized: expected to have the same needs, abilities, and priorities, now and forever.[3]

The problem for political actors – activists and policy-makers alike – is to define equality without succumbing to the deforming effects of the sameness/difference dilemma. This essay analyzes three cases in the 1980s and 1990s in which political actors appeared to have solved the problem. That is, they put forth policies that accommodated various forms of difference as they promoted equality. In the United States, reformers sought both to eliminate the barriers that excluded women and racial and ethnic minorities from clinical research, and to require that researchers analyze differences in findings across groups. They sought to treat members of diverse groups both as the same as white male research subjects, and as having different characteristics and needs. In the European Union (EU), feminists developed a discourse of equal opportunities in order to claim that real gender equality required some special opportunities for women. Simple equal treatment was inadequate. In Canada, Indigenous activists critiqued state promises to treat all individuals equally and asserted equal status as nations. Their points of reference for equality were the collective rights of peoples, not the human rights of individuals.

In each case, political actors used novel combinations of sameness and difference to pursue equality. However, the results, while hailed as victories by many participants and observers, fell short. Each reform ultimately reproduced rather than surmounted tensions between sameness and difference. The puzzle is why.

The answer, we argue, is not that equality and difference are inevitably at odds;

that one cannot have equality with difference. Rather, the answer lies in the ways that reformers situated difference and equality in time. Key actors differed over how to account historically for the origins and perpetuation of inequality. Multiple historical narratives vied to become the departure point for policy. These contests over history were sometimes unacknowledged by, and even invisible to, key actors. Yet their stakes for equality were high. In each of our cases, deeply historical understandings of difference were replaced or sidelined by ones that set difference against a shorter-term horizon. In Braudelian terms, *longue durée* explanations of inequality conflicted with, and eventually lost ground to, "event-ish" ones.[4] Transformative, equality-producing change required policy that took account of the former; yet forces both pragmatic and ideological strengthened the latter's gravitational pull. What we term *dehistoricized* understandings of difference and inequality won out.

Simply calling the problem one of dehistoricization, however, risks missing the complex ways in which history was invoked and obscured, unrecognized and misrecognized. We identify two dehistoricizing dynamics: one linking past to present, the other linking past to future. In the first, political actors were ultimately unable or unwilling to recognize the histories built into the categories on which policy was based: racial and ethnic minorities, women, Indians. They failed to recognize inequality as a process sustained through informal norms as much as formal policies, often by mechanisms distinct from those that created inequality in the first place. They likewise failed to discern the very different histories of groups that were included in the same categories. They either presented membership in the category as natural or treated it as the result of implicit societal

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consensus. This simplification flattened differences of need and priority *among* groups. Advocates for particular groups then found themselves having to protest, often futilely, that the multiple groups lumped into the disadvantaged category were different both from each other *and* from the advantaged group in consequential ways.

In the second dehistoricizing dynamic, political actors made conflicting assumptions about how past inequality would yield to future equality. Apparent consensus about the prospects for remedying inequality through reform sometimes concealed real differences about *how* that would happen *over time*. Again, activists and policy-makers arrived at negotiations with each other via distinct historical trajectories. Accordingly, they situated the resulting policy in distinct ways. Policies that policy-makers saw as the capstone to reform were often only a first step for activists. Such differences did not prevent policy from being made in the moment, but they did lead to conflicting assessments of what the reform represented, what it could accomplish, and what to do next. In another version of this problem, reformers took up essentialist (and thus ahistorical) conceptions of difference strategically – and sometimes, they believed, temporarily – to advance future equality for the group they represented. In the end, however, these actors underestimated the inertia of essentialist conceptions, especially when those conceptions coincided with long-held stereotypes.

Admittedly, the self-interest of powerful groups aligned with these dehistoricized understandings of difference. In the case of American biomedical reform, pharmaceutical companies had a stake in defining racial differences as biological and therefore pharmaceutically treatable. In the EU, policy-makers in a

period of neoliberal reform preferred approaches to gender inequalities that justified their reluctance to intervene in "private" life. In Canada, a government that faced land claims and international pressure to consult Indigenous peoples resisted dynamic definitions of the collective rights of Indigenous peoples in favor of frozen bundles of individual rights. The surprise is not that those with power acted in ways consistent with their interests. The surprise is that reformers were either unable to prevent or actively acquiesced to the rise of dehistoricized – and sometimes essentialist – understandings.

The conflicts we describe took different forms. In Canada, the conflict was between diverse Indigenous activists and various levels of government actors; in the EU, it was among activists ostensibly on the same side; and in the United States, there was little conflict among political actors at all. Yet we see continuities across the cases with respect to how inequality, equality, and difference were represented in time. After providing somewhat schematic accounts of each case, we highlight these parallels. In so doing, we point to obstacles that characterize efforts to combat inequality more generally.

We consider first the reform of biomedical research in the United States. In the early 1990s, a group of advocates, politicians, bureaucrats, and scientists mobilized to combat inequalities in Americans' health by transforming the practice of biomedical science. Along the lines of an equality-as-sameness argument, reformers demanded that women and racial and ethnic minorities be included as subjects in biomedical research. At the same time, and along the lines of an equality-as-difference argument, reformers demanded that researchers measure differences among groups before generalizing findings. They challenged what they

saw as the false universalism of medical research: the assumption that findings from the study of adult white men could be generalized to the population at large.[5]

Reformers were, by some measures, extraordinarily successful. Beginning in 1993, a series of federal laws, policies, and guidelines were created to transform the paradigm of biomedical research, currently a $94 billion industry in the United States. Scientists came to see the inclusion of diverse populations in clinical research as both ethically important and as good science.[6] The reforms encouraged the new science of genomics, which initially refused to recognize racial difference, to energetically commit to remedying racial disparities in health.[7] And they led pharmaceutical companies, which had vehemently opposed the reforms on the grounds of their cost, to eventually embrace race-, ethnicity-, and gender-based medicine.[8]

And yet, the reforms were also responsible for the development of expensive drugs targeted, variously, to African Americans, certain ethnic groups, and women on the basis of questionable science.[9] And they ended up producing distinctively individualized understandings of group inequalities, even by genomic scientists who were committed to the notion that health disparities reflected social conditions.[10] In these respects, the reforms failed to lessen inequalities in health.

What explains these paradoxical results? When reformers called on medical researchers to compare drug effects and biological processes across racial groups, they did not intend it to be the end point of analysis, with the differences attributed to putative racial biologies, rather than to experiences of poverty, stress, discrimination, and poor medical care that combined and persisted over generations. Medical researchers

themselves recognized that differences in populations were, at most, averages and therefore not easily translated into treatment for individuals. So why were those views sidelined in favor of essentialist and reductionist explanations that made biological difference the source of health disparities? Timing is part of the answer. The fields of genomics and of ethnic and racial health disparities emerged at the same time, and the former energetically and effectively staked a claim to the latter.[11] Pharmaceutical companies' economic interest in biologically reductionist conceptions of difference is another part of the answer.

But we focus on yet another development. Reformers and researchers knew the federal categories – American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, White, and so on – were administrative, not biological. They justified using these categories in research nonetheless because of how they fit them into a longer history of reform. As researchers and reformers saw it, treating race *as if* it were a discrete biological category was part of the effort to bring about a racially egalitarian society, and it was temporary: the development of "personalized medicine" would make reliance on group categories as proxies for genetic variation obsolete.

However, those justifications for using race as a research category had the effect of keeping in circulation folk understandings of race as discrete groups whose biological traits matched their physical appearance and were passed across generations intact. These folk understandings persisted alongside newer nontypological understandings of race, even after the much-vaunted individualized treatments became available. Moreover, insofar as cutting-edge genomicists pushed beyond stereotyped understandings to view race in terms of statistical continuities in

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gene frequencies, the individualizing approach that came with that view – again, enabled by a narrative that race would become obsolete – made it more difficult to recognize difference as the result of group inequalities. Paying attention to the ways in which reformers and researchers historicized the reform, and the categories that made it up, thus helps to explain the otherwise surprising embrace of essentialism by people who were sensitive to its dangers.

The policy process. To call efforts to reform biomedical research a "movement" risks overstating its grassroots character. While grassroots AIDS, feminist, and disease advocacy groups both raised public consciousness and served as models for how to bring publicity to bear on legislators, the key actors in pressing for reform were professionalized advocacy organizations and establishment insiders: staffers at the National Institutes for Health (NIH), the world's largest funder of biomedical research, and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which licenses new therapies for sale.[12]

Women's health advocates' first wins were a 1985 Department of Health and Human Services report calling for more research on women's health, and a 1986 policy encouraging NIH-funded clinical trials to include women.[13] When the report and the policy were largely ignored by researchers, a new advocacy organization, the Society for the Advancement of Women's Health Research, joined with the Congressional Women's Caucus to push for reform. Advocates took advantage of the fact that the NIH was up for reauthorization to include provisions in the bill for women's inclusion in health research.[14]

The text of the reauthorization bill initially referred only to women. However, the Black Congressional Caucus had focused on racial disparities in health outcomes since a federal task force in the mid-1980s cited sixty thousand annual "excess deaths" among African Americans.[15] The Caucus called for the inclusion of racial and ethnic minorities in the bill to combat those disparities. Accordingly, reformers added "and minorities" to the reauthorization bill.[16]

The NIH Reauthorization Act passed in 1993. The FDA followed suit, eliminating barriers against the inclusion of women in testing in 1993 and, in subsequent years, issuing guidelines that called for the inclusion of women and minorities in testing, the assessment of drugs' safety and efficacy across subpopulations, and the reporting of race and ethnicity information in applications for FDA drug approval. In 2001, the NIH mandated the use of federal categories in reporting race and ethnicity: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, White, Hispanic origin, and not of Hispanic origin.[17] From that point on, what sociologist Steven Epstein calls "the inclusion and difference paradigm" diffused through other federal bureaucracies, the pharmaceutical industry, and biomedicine generally.[18] Researchers should seek to include diverse groups in their studies and they should compare biological processes and treatment effects across those groups.

Historicizing equality. If one's concern were with racial disparities in health outcomes, why focus on differences in how blacks and whites metabolized a protein or responded to a diabetes medication? No one was claiming that race as a variable impacted, say, the progression of heart disease more than income or insurance status did. And insofar as race was associated with patterns in heart disease, was that not likely to be as a result of poverty, stress, discrimination, and other social factors? Viewing health disparities in terms of biological difference risked

raising one dimension of difference into the sum total of the explanation for those disparities. It risked shifting attention away from the social and economic causes of health disparities.[19] There was another risk. Often, the subgroup comparisons that the reforms required did lead to the identification of differences, but these were in group averages. For example, one meta-analysis of clinical trials of antihypertensive drugs found that although whites on average responded better to beta blockers than blacks did, and blacks on average responded better to diuretics than whites did, 80 to 95 percent of blacks and whites had similar responses to both treatments.[20] Treating the average differences as categories might lead to improper treatment for any one individual. Moreover, even if the reason for a documented difference was unclear or spurious (often, subsequent studies revealed no difference at all), pharmaceutical companies could then market the treatment to the group.[21] As we will show, this ended up being more than an abstract risk.

That women's advocates were relatively indifferent to the risks of emphasizing biological differences is perhaps not surprising. The Society for the Advancement of Women's Health Research, which led the reform effort, was firmly committed to the project of sex-based medicine, which it pursued into the 2000s.[22] The greater surprise is that concerns about biological reductionism were not voiced by advocates for people of color. Like women's health reformers, minority health reformers were mainly medical professionals who favored a biomedical rather than a public health perspective on minority health generally.[23] Still, after World War II, scientists had largely abandoned biological conceptions of race and accepted social scientists' view of race as a social construct.[24] Why did researchers and

reformers now embrace the inclusion and difference paradigm's reliance on ostensibly biological categories of race? And why was the use of racial categories not criticized more forcefully as the paradigm diffused across science, pharmaceutical development, and medicine?

To be sure, there were some critics. Otis Brawley, who headed an office of "special populations" at the NIH, opposed the Revitalization Act for "foster[ing] the racism that its creators want to abrogate" by relying on essentialist conceptions of race.[25] Later, especially with the introduction of race-targeted medicine, charges of "racial profiling" in medicine began to surface.[26] Still, the fact that medical researchers, pharmaceutical executives, policy-makers, and advocates for racial and ethnic minorities so enthusiastically embraced the use of racial and ethnic categories in medical research and drug testing deserves explanation.

The explanation lies, in part, in two accounts of the place of race in biomedical research that circulated during this period. Both accounts were historical, although one was about the future more than the past, and the other was embedded in the very categories themselves rather than recounted explicitly. Invoked by advocates, policy-makers, administrators, researchers, and pharmaceutical executives, these accounts defended essentialist conceptions of race against critique.

In one account, subgroup comparisons were harnessed to the cause of racial justice. The categories themselves were a legacy of the civil rights movement: they were first used by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which was created by the 1964 Civil Rights Act to combat workplace inequality. The categories were thus not only administratively familiar, but also associated with the cause of racial equality. The categories' political past and purpose thus

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legitimated their use in biomedical research. Leaders of the Human Genome Project, for example, initially rejected race as a valid biological category, insisting that all DNA was "equal" and relying on DNA samples of convenience from around the world. After the institutionalization of the federal standards, however, project leaders began to claim that genomics could combat racial and ethnic health disparities.[27] Genomicists abandoned their earlier unwillingness to recognize genetically meaningful racial categories as they promised to identify the racial and ethnic basis of disease susceptibility. They used the language of "social justice," according to sociologist Catherine Bliss, "a kind of health-focused Affirmative Action."[28]

At the same time, and this was the second historical account, the use of race in medicine was treated as a "way station," a "step," a "phase," a "temporary stage" between a past of one-size-fits-all medicine and a future of treatment tailored to each individual's genetic makeup. As an official at the FDA put it, to treat race as biological was a "stepping stone" to "target treatment."[29] Even researchers who criticized the concept of race wrote: "There is potential utility in using race labels as a surrogate for genetic information, as a means to the ultimate goal of individualized therapy."[30] In this account, researchers justified treating race as a bounded concept because it was only for the short term.

Race-based medicine. Accounts connecting the use of biological concepts of race and ethnicity to the past of civil rights activism and the future of individualized medicine were evident in the announcement of the first of several race-specific drugs. The FDA proudly hailed BiDil, a treatment for congestive heart failure in self-identified black Americans, as "a step toward the promise of personalized medicine."[31] The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the oldest American civil rights organization, partnered with the drug's manufacturer to help company representatives promote it in black communities.[32] For the NAACP, as for the federal government, BiDil was an advance for the cause of individualized medicine and an advance toward a society characterized by racial equality.[33]

In fact, it was neither. When researchers first came up with the drug, which combined two generic vasodilators, they sought approval for it from the FDA for general, not race-specific, use.[34] Because the study they cited had been conducted for purposes other than testing the drug and lacked proper statistical controls, however, the drug was not approved. But at that point, researchers noticed that the small number of African Americans enrolled in the study seemed to have benefited more from the drug than others. (As we noted earlier, it is not uncommon to see subgroup differences that turn out to be spurious.) Researchers sought a patent for the drug and conducted a larger study, enrolling only African Americans. The drug showed such benefit to subjects relative to a placebo that the study was ended early and BiDil was approved in a dramatically shortened review for self-identified blacks suffering from congestive heart failure. The drug was priced at six times the price of the two generic drugs that made it up and Wall Street analysts predicted sales of $1 billion by 2010.[35]

Despite the FDA's bold proclamation that BiDil was an advance for personalized medicine, no genetic mechanism accounting for BiDil's effectiveness was identified. Rather, self-identified race was accepted as a proxy for unexplained genetic variation. This was true even though the study provided no evidence that there *was* genetic variation.

After all, the study included only African Americans.

Although BiDil's profitability did not live up to expectations, drug companies developed and marketed other ethnic- and gender-targeted drugs to capitalize on the potential for niche-based marketing that BiDil revealed.[36] There was certainly a financial motivation to believe genetic differences caused racial health disparities. However, BiDil was embraced not only by pharmaceutical companies, but also by federal government officials, medical professionals, scientists, and advocacy groups. Again, an essentialist conception of race became acceptable, both in the development of BiDil and, more broadly, because it seemed to be a temporary measure on the way to a postracial science in a postracial society.

Yet these essentialist understandings of race were not temporary. Even when genetic information became available that made individualized medicine possible, medical researchers still relied on racial categories. For example, in establishing the proper dosing for Warfarin, an anticoagulant, researchers found that once patients' genetic factors were taken into account, race was irrelevant to the drug's efficacy. Yet they still advised physicians to use a race-based dosing regimen.[37]

What legal scholar Jonathan Kahn calls the "inertial" power of race is also evident in interviews with primary care physicians in the 2010s about their views of genomics. Physicians talked frequently and confidently about personalized medicine being "just down the road" or "coming down the pike": again the story of future promise.[38] None of the fifty-eight physicians who were interviewed actually used genetic testing. But they did pay attention to family ancestry – when the patients were white. When the patients self-identified as Black, Asian, and/or Latino, they paid attention to racial and ethnic group physical markers. Physicians took racial appearance as a proxy for genetic variation in people of color. As one physician explained:

> The Human Genome Project has proved beyond a doubt that African American males get prostate cancer at younger ages, African American hypertensive patients respond better to certain classes of medications. So to operate blindly, literally, blind to the ethnic and racial is, I think, ridiculous. Because the medical science is there now to say, "No you have to consider it." … You know, "You happen to be Black so we should put you on this."[39]

The Human Genome Project showed none of this. But the story of individualized medicine on the horizon justified physicians' folk understandings of race in the meantime.

Indeed, when the researchers asked physicians what would make genetic science more useful to their clinical practice, fully 20 percent of respondents skipped personalized medicine altogether and asked for more guidance on how to treat people differently by race. One commented, "When they develop drugs, if they could tell us how the drugs react with different races. We already know that some diseases are more prevalent in different races. So to know the effects that drugs have on different races would be quite useful."[40] In other words, the notion of a future of personalized, "precision" medicine made acceptable the use of racial categories in the present, but it also sat comfortably alongside the assumption that such categories were not historical but biological, and thus timeless. Because race is still so deeply embedded in American institutions, it remains, as anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss would have put it, good to think with.[41] Stories of the categories' history and their provisional status in medicine

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accompanied rather than undermined beliefs about their naturalness.

Genomicists construct race. By the early 2000s, many genomicists had broken decisively with a view of races as discrete categories.[42] And contrary to early predictions that they would ignore the social causes of health disparities, genomicists have sought to capture the interplay of genetic and social factors in accounting for disease and disease disparities. However, genomics research has still given short shrift to the social, economic, and political realities of race, whether because genomicists have the upper hand in collaborations with social scientists or because efforts to understand gene/environment interactions define and operationalize "environment" in ways akin to a gene: an individual attribute that produces health risks at the molecular level.[43]

Interesting, in this regard, are genomicists' relationship to the classifications created by the NIH reform. The researchers interviewed by sociologist Janet Shim and colleagues used the NIH categories for the sake of convenience.[44] But they also criticized the categories for arbitrarily lumping together people of diverse ancestries and experiences. Researchers were more excited about the use of Ancestry Identity Markers (AIMs) to classify subjects. AIMs identify proportions of an individual's genetic ancestry originating in different geographical regions. Researchers' excitement stemmed not from the immediate utility of AIMs (which have not yet provided clues to disease risk), but from the prospect of a classification system that reflected the precise and unique genetic makeup of individuals in a world, they said repeatedly, that was becoming more ethnically diverse and multiracial. AIMs had social and ethical value because they captured the complex mix of ancestries in any one individual. They had value, in other words,

insofar as they described a future world, a world that researchers referred to admiringly, in which individual differences would eclipse group-based ones. For Shim and her colleagues, the danger was that researchers' valorization of a measure capturing the ancestral complexity of an individual *as an individual* made it easy to skip over the disease risks that people confronted as members of *groups,* risks that arose from discrimination, poverty, environmental toxicity, and so on. Once again, difference was dehistoricized; made into a characteristic of individuals rather than the outcome of unequal relationships. And once again, that dehistoricizing tendency was made possible by a story that was told about a future free of group-based inequalities.

Difference and history. Scholars have argued that efforts to alleviate inequality by recognizing disadvantaged groups' difference from advantaged groups inevitably stigmatizes that difference. But in this case, as in the two others, that denouement was not inevitable. Rather, it owed to the ways in which the emphasis on difference was accounted for historically. Scientists, policy-makers, and advocates knew race was a historical and political category, but they believed they could treat it as a fixed and biological one because doing so would help advance a racially just society, and because they would only do so temporarily. However, these understandings of what it was that they were doing, and how long they would be doing it for, made it difficult to challenge those who believed race was a "natural" category.[45] When genomicists later rejected the notion of race as a discrete category, their ability to develop classificatory tools that prefigured a world in which individuals were equally diverse made it easy to ignore the continuing salience of race as a group category. In both cases, the stories that reformers and researchers

told about the past and especially the future of race and inequality made it more difficult to combat racial inequalities in the present.

Varied understandings of historical cause and ideal future likewise impacted gender policy in the European Union. The European Union paid precocious attention to equality between women and men; the 1957 Treaty of Rome included Article 119, a commitment to "maintain the application of the principle that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work." But the constitutional treaty said nothing about how to achieve equality, and the sameness/difference dilemma confounded policy actions over decades.[46]

Should women be treated the same way as men via equal treatment or did historically generated gender inequalities require different treatment to achieve equal opportunities? This second position eventually became a call for "positive action" in the form of preferential treatment (quotas on company boards or political party lists, for example) or neutral treatment that would benefit women most (childcare available to all employees, for example).[47]

Each of these positions historicized claims and actions differently. The temporal horizon was short for those embracing the equal-treatment strategy. The relevant difference was essentially the sex of individual workers, and the source of inequalities was discrimination against women in the employment office or workplace. The horizon of those calling for positive action was longer. They identified recurring cultural and socioeconomic processes as the causes and perpetuators of unequal gender norms and relations. To remedy inequality, then, would require intervening in that range of processes. For them, antidiscrimination policy efforts could be only part of a much larger agenda of necessary interventions.

In the first decades of the European project from the late 1950s through the 1970s, feminists claimed and policy-makers addressed inequality via equal treatment. But then over the following decades, feminists pushed the EU to institute programs to advance their vision of equal opportunities, which was derived from second-wave feminists' use of the concept of difference in theorizing gender inequality.[48] And they were quite successful. Feminists worked for several years to prepare important policy changes.[49] Programming and funds followed.[50] Through the 1990s, the broader agenda and its understanding of the historical roots of gender difference and inequality seemed to predominate, but it was ultimately pushed aside in favor of a return to an antidiscrimination approach.

The policy process – stretching history. The 1970s was the era of equal treatment.[51] Direct discrimination could supposedly be overcome with legislation requiring equal treatment; five EU directives between 1975 and 1986 sought to do this.[52] But feminists and some EU institutions knew that discrimination did not have to be direct to have real effects. By the early 1980s, the European Court recognized the possibility of indirect discrimination and propounded the concept of "disparate impact" on women and men, measured statistically, while the European Commission came to understand that apparently neutral measures could have a "preponderant effect on workers of a given sex."[53]

These measures shared the goal of ensuring that women could function in the labor market in the same ways and under the same conditions as men. In order to achieve the capacity to function like men, they might require some recognition of bodily difference (pregnancy, childbirth,

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size and strength standards for jobs, and so on). But the overriding goal was to reach similar levels and kinds of labor force participation by eliminating discrimination against the category "woman." The general strategy was to limit corrective actions to employment. The presumption was that women arrived at the employment office or the workplace unencumbered, and that discrimination arose from inappropriate actions of employers or coworkers. These actions could be discouraged by making discrimination – direct and indirect – illegal.

There were, however, feminists already working in the Commission and elected to the European Parliament who promoted other views on the sources of gender differences and inequality. Already by the late 1970s, they were working with feminists outside the European institutions to develop policies in line with a more historicized understanding of women's inequality. They understood that "equal treatment of unequals only reproduced the existing inequality between women and men."[54] Changing such norms and practices required positive actions that recognized, and could ultimately overturn, the historical positioning of women as unequal because of the gender roles assigned to them.

Ironically, even as the Commission authorized only a narrow view of the sources of women's inequality, it provided institutional support for Eurocrats within EU institutions and in alliance with civil society feminist groups to promote actions that were more ambitious. In line with usual practice, the existence of directives required that the European bureaucracy engage in institutional stabilization of its approach.[55] A first step was the creation of a Women's Bureau (later the Equal Opportunities Unit) to monitor member state compliance. That unit developed close ties with the increasingly feminized European Parliament and its Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM). It also had strong connections with social movement organizations, particularly those based in national women's movements or fostered (or at least supported) by the EU itself.[56] In search of legitimation strategies to overcome the widely evoked "democratic deficit," the EU provided plentiful funding for transnational organizations, including the European Network of Women, the European Expert Network on Women in Decision-Making, and the European Women's Lobby (EWL), which was created and funded by the EU in 1989 as an umbrella organization for national-level women's groups and an active intervener in policy discussion and design.[57] Generous research grants also went to academics studying gender relations, whose results circulated back to the Equal Opportunities Unit and the EWL via conferences and meetings organized by the Commission. The Equal Opportunities Unit policy machinery also included several European networks on equal opportunities funded by the Commission to recruit outside expertise.[58] The outcome was a dense network of activists, advocates, elected officials, and feminist Eurocrats that stood behind an agenda of equal opportunities.

Many in this network identified a historical source of gender inequality that reached well beyond discriminatory practices in the labor market. They argued that by the time women approached the factory or office door, historically powerful social and cultural effects already situated them in a position of "difference" that made formal commitments to equal treatment far too limited a tool to create equality. Commitments to human rights, important as they were, were insufficient to overcome the conditions of women's and men's lives, including

the cultural norms about care and parenting and male superiority that underlay the social construction of gender relations. They adopted the by-then standard feminist position that the unequal distribution of responsibilities for care – for children, vulnerable family members, the house – needed to change, as did cultural values that diminished women and their contributions to work and society, which were in turn often made through care work. Women needed access to political and cultural as well as economic power. For example, pressed by FEMM and the Parliament more generally, the Commission's Action Programme (1991 – 1995) asserted that the member states needed to go beyond attention to equal pay to promote the active participation of women in decision-making.

A network of collaborating feminists sought to move the agenda out of the narrow realm of jobs (pay, benefits, and working conditions) and called for a broader understanding of the many spaces where inequality was socially constructed.[59] This understanding of the historical nature of inequality led to policy demands for childcare support, parental and maternity leaves, as well as protection from sexual harassment, overcoming cultural stereotypes and stigma, and increasing women's involvement in decision-making. All of these policy demands were significant themes in the Action Programmes through the 1990s.[60] Such changes could, feminists claimed, alter the behavior of men and male-dominated institutions so as to provoke a cultural revolution in practices, within families and civil society alike.[61] Feminists targeted the distribution of care work, particularly the "double day," and claimed "sharing" of care was an essential outcome they could promote through good policy design.[62] They pushed, for example, for parental leaves that gave fathers

incentives to take time off from work to care and thereby develop more responsibility for children. They argued for gender quotas in elected and civil-society decision-making, and they pressed for more women in leadership positions in business and science. For these feminists, meaningful equality required overcoming long-standing differences between the lives of women and men.

Feminists in these networks kept up pressure to harness the influence and power of Europe to make cultural change; at the start of the 1990s, EU institutions responded.[63] Much of the EU institutional machinery and several member states nonetheless continued to reject any historical narrative of the inequality-generating norms and consequences of family relations and care work. Thus, even as the network concerned with gender equality grew more dense, proposed directives (legislation) were weakened and "often turned into much less potent recommendations and resolutions."[64]

The preference for an ahistorical understanding of inequality was strong. For example, because the European Court of Justice saw its jurisdiction as covering only work, and therefore only workers, it refused "to resolve questions relative to the organization of family life or to modify the distribution of responsibilities within the couple."[65] The Commission and Council seemed to agree with the Court about not crossing the public-private divide. In the context of rising neoliberalism that turned individual rights and market fundamentalism into the new common sense, proposals that involved social engineering to change gender relations in the private family or private sector provoked skepticism. EU enlargement did not help: a more diverse set of member states made finding consensus even more difficult. It was easier to maintain a short temporal horizon

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focused on employment offers and hiring than to tackle concerns about the conditions under which women might undertake an employment search, or about the type of job they might consider desirable given their circumstances. This horizon ensured families' decisions about reconciliation of work and care responsibilities stayed in the "private sphere." At the same time, however, and in line with the goal of making women workers more like men, increasing support for childcare was justified as removing a barrier to employment. In this policy pirouette, the treatment of gender inequalities was assimilated into other hindrances to employment, for men as well as women, that required various kinds of policy tools, such as training, human capital investments, and other actions designed to overcome blockages to the EU's economic development. Policies to improve reconciliation of family and work appeared as "an element contributing to a good working environment for all."[66] This sidelined other norms and relations that shaped women's lives before they appeared at work or during their double day of care for family and home.

Other movements, other times. By the late 1990s, childcare and practices to promote equal opportunities had become policy tools that enabled rates of female employment to rise significantly but were stripped of broader goals to alter cultural and social norms. Or rather, the focus was on changing women workers' behavior, not changing male workers' behavior. By then, moreover, member states were generally disgruntled about overly ambitious social goals pursued by the Commission.[67] Therefore, less ambitious actions to promote gender equality conformed to the EU's concentration on market-building and ensuring the labor force needed for it.

The EU's formal commitment to equality between men and women was never jettisoned, however; indeed, major attention to preventing violence against women was added in 1997 and continues today. There was also a reinforcement of the reliance on equal treatment as the policy solution.[68] This return was not only because of retrenchment in the social domain, but also because from the late 1990s into the new century, multiple social movements that focused on structured inequalities and claims for inclusion had joined the conversation about sameness and difference. Movements for sexual rights, antiracist movements, and movements of immigrants and Roma all mobilized around claims for antidiscrimination protections and equal treatment in the labor market and beyond (for example, in family law about marriage and adoption). Moreover, activists had made intersectionality a common theme, as they argued for the multiplication effects of cross-cutting and reinforcing inequalities. For many activists, social categories were fluid, rooted not in social structures but in identity, whether of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or race. These movements also demanded recognition and inclusion as proponents and protectors of equality for numerous categories of individuals, and they began to gain political space (and funding) in the European institutions.[69]

As social movements' approaches to identity and equality diversified, the feminist movement itself divided. Some feminists resisted this shifting focus toward a multiplicity of diversities and their intersections. Instead, they adopted a "parity" stance, in which they essentialized difference when making claims to equal numbers of women and men in political representation. This position was announced in the Athens Declaration of 1992, a document signed by twenty prominent feminists after a summit organized by the European Women's Lobby, the Expert

Network on Women in Decision-Making, and the European Commission.[70] The parity movement that emerged after Athens argued that gender difference was biological and binary. In this way, adherents of the parity position made a significant change; they dehistoricized where previously they had insisted on historically constructed gender inequalities. For them, the world was divided into two sexes, a division they took as fundamental to humankind. It thus merited unique treatment in representation.[71] The parity movement embraced one difference as different from all others, and based claims for equal access to political power on that difference. Other social movements contested this narrative that elevated biology to primordial status, even when its application was limited to elections. These social movement organizations disputed the very binary of female and male. In their own claims-making, these movements sought equal civil rights for their chosen identities and protections against discrimination.

In other words, by the late 1990s, there was no standard social movement narrative motivating claims for gender equality and equal treatment.[72] For some, the problem remained inequalities in the gender division of labor, both in employment and in the family, and positive actions were required. For others, the problem was racism, and antidiscrimination measures were needed. For yet others, it was antipathies to sexual difference and respect for sexual orientation, and equal rights was the solution. And even for some, the issue was the cultural embeddedness of certain religions in European history, and greater willingness to accept cultural difference was needed.

This variety enabled EU institutions to continue to drive toward bundling multiple differences together under a diagnosis of the need for equal treatment. In the mid-1990s, Article 13 of the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam confirmed the constitutional competence of European institutions to "take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation." Although Article 2 of the same treaty insisted on one form of inequality ("In all its activities, the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women"), inequalities between women and men quickly became one of several forms of inequality, rather than the priority. The EU assumed a "similarity of inequalities."[73]

In its policy actions, EU institutions dusted off the antidiscrimination equal-treatment stance initially developed for women in the 1970s in order to apply, elaborate, and institutionalize it with respect to race and ethnic origin. In 2000, two directives legislated the requirement for member states to implement more stringent equal treatment with respect to race and ethnicity than had previously been done for gender; in effect, the requirement, for the first time, reached well beyond labor market considerations. Four years later, a matching directive for gender discrimination narrowed down broad feminist demands, thereby revealing "that anti-discrimination had become the driving area at the European level and that gender equality policy had to conform to this anti-discrimination model."[74] All used an equal-treatment approach.[75]

With these actions, the EU moved back to "a rights-based, anti-discrimination approach [that] necessarily involves an individualist approach in the EU context."[76] This position avoided conflict with many social movements, for which intersectionality and the fluidity of difference were to be celebrated. They defined lived experience as fluid and

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identities as multiple, generating claims of the right to be different in multiple ways. Gender equality had been folded into ongoing, well-rehearsed antidiscrimination discourse that relied on rights-based frames to achieve "sameness" of rights. While "history" had a place in each narrative, it was not the same history. Each located the source of women's disadvantage along a different historical trajectory; in turn this oriented them toward a distinct future horizon.

Our third case study of the process through which Canada constitutionalized "Aboriginal and treaty rights" complicates our story in interesting ways. Here, the sameness/difference dilemma was mapped out not simply onto the binary of individual/group rights, but onto plural sovereignties. Although Indigenous actors eschewed the vocabulary of equality, they sought a kind of equality among nations. Arguments for plural sovereignties challenged the federal government's foundational assumptions about the basis of the nation's legitimacy. This was – and remains – a big ask.

In the early 1980s, many observers saw Canada at the global forefront of efforts to reconcile difference and equality within its legal order. Canada was the first country to constitutionally protect multiculturalism and its wide-ranging bill of rights incorporated language, education, Indigenous peoples, and gender equality.[77] Its Constitution Act (1982) comprised the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guaranteed equal rights to individuals, and also section 35 (s.35), which constitutionally entrenched the group rights of Indigenous peoples. This was, in the words of political scientist Kiera Ladner, a "monumental achievement" for Indigenous peoples.[78] The prophylactic outcome alone was important: combined with section 25, s.35 prevented

diminishment of Indigenous rights under the Canadian legal order.[79] More expansively, s.35 was considered by many at the time to be a "box of treasures" poised to advance legal pluralism and decolonization.[80] On several counts, s.35 appeared a victory. The government squared group rights with its commitment to individual equal rights. Indigenous peoples spoke up and prevented diminishment of their rights. All this was a full quarter of a century before the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Yet s.35 has fallen short of these anticipated gains. Since 1982, Indigenous peoples have had relatively little success attaining self-government or acquiring jurisdiction over their territories. Facing profound limitations and inertia at government negotiating tables, Indigenous peoples have pursued their rights incrementally through the courts. Scholars debate whether s.35 has done harm or good. For some, it is an "empty box"; for others, it is "another colonial disaster" that limited Indigenous freedom.[81] Thus, Ladner sees it not only as a "monumental achievement," but also as a "monumental defeat"; in other words, "an Indigenous constitutional paradox."[82]

We can unlock this paradox if we situate it in time. Careful attention to what came before and after the constitutional struggles shows that Indigenous leaders and federal politicians did not simply have competing policy agendas. They engaged, rather, in fundamentally distinct historical projects. Every side (and there were more than two) sought to implement its own concept of sovereignty rooted in its own constitutional order, an order whose primacy each side took for granted. They came together from different places; having met, they headed again toward different destinations.

This divergence results from Canada's settler colonial status. Any democratic

settler state in pursuit of equal rights for citizens confronts a contradiction: its existence as a nation that champions equality depends upon abrogation of Indigenous rights and occupation of Indigenous lands. In settler states, serious friction exists between equal individual rights and the rights of original peoples. Like citizens of other settler states, Canadians have been slow to acknowledge this friction.[83] Conflicts between group and individual rights are not unique to Indigenous struggles: in Canada, feminists and Québécois nationalists likewise have challenged individualized definitions of equality in favor of collective conceptions of historical disadvantage and contemporary rights. Yet the stakes of Indigenous struggles remain distinct because they question the settler nation's claim on democratic values in any form, individual or collective.

The constitutional conversations of the 1980s became a way station – albeit an important one – that failed to divert any of the parties from its own historical pathway onto that of another. Each subsequently resumed course on a distinct time line that stretched forward to its own anticipated horizon: Canada toward a multicultural nation rooted in singular sovereignty; Indigenous peoples toward self-determination embedded in plural sovereignties.

The reform effort: Converging and diverging time lines. Prior to 1982, only the British Parliament could alter the Canadian Constitution. In the late 1970s, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau sought to change this. The Constitution was a double-sided plank in Trudeau's equality agenda: with it he sought to guarantee equal rights and to sever residual colonial ties to Great Britain. In Trudeau's terms, the former task advanced equality among individuals; the latter equality among nations.

For Trudeau, Confederation (1867), the Bill of Rights (1960), and the Human Rights Act (1977) were signposts along the way to the human rights–based legal order that he sought to institutionalize.[84] Patriation was the necessary next step. His anticipated obstacles lay in Quebec and the Western provinces; Indigenous peoples were not on his radar.[85]

Indigenous activists and leaders traveled a different road to the constitutional discussions and protests of the late 1970s. For Indigenous peoples, treaties, declarations of alliance, wampum belts, territorially based practices – in short, their own legal and constitutional orders – marked the time line that led to the present moment. Moreover, activists and leaders of the 1970s were the first in a generation to grow up when political organizing was not illegal. Their generation had first mobilized to defeat the 1969 White Paper, another of Trudeau's equality proposals. The White Paper proposed to eliminate legal distinctions – including treaties and reserves – between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The White Paper was the liberal tradition's "equality as sameness" par excellence, and Indigenous activists resoundingly rejected it. For these leaders and activists, the source of Indigenous inequality lay neither simply with disregard for the human rights of Indigenous individuals, nor with the existence of their collective differences. It lay with the settler state's denial of their collective rights and order as Indigenous *peoples*. The White Paper's individualizing impulse toward sameness, they argued, would not render them equal to Canadians, but would instead culminate longstanding assimilation efforts.

And so, in Trudeau's efforts to patriate the Constitution, Indigenous activists perceived a new threat to an ongoing movement.[86] But in addition to a threat, they saw opportunity. They seized upon the national interest in Trudeau's agenda to attract publicity and international

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attention to their cause. Indigenous leaders astutely turned the trajectory of their long-term self-determination project to intersect with the federal constitutional program. Thus, the constitutional protests and negotiations prior to 1982 became moments of convergence engineered by Indigenous strategists between distinct historical time lines.

Indigenous leaders and activists who turned to engage the federal patriation agenda were diverse; there was no single "Indigenous movement." Multiple Indigenous agendas intersected with the federal one, each grounded in its distinct historical trajectory. Coalitions formed, dissolved, and re-formed multiple times over the course of the constitutional debates and protests.[87]

Indigenous diversity – political, cultural, economic, linguistic – predated European arrival. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial and state powers drew new distinctions (and thereby new differences) among Indigenous peoples based on factors ranging across an individual's gender, marital status, place of residence, education, and treaty status. By the 1970s, such legal distinctions were generations-old lived experience. By this time, an Indigenous individual might find that Canada understood her to be a "status Indian" (under the Indian Act), an Inuit (an "Indian" under the British North America Act of 1867, but not under the Indian Act), or, if the state denied her indigeneity altogether, a "non-status Indian" or Métis.

These historically produced categories carried material implications. The stakes of what stood to be lost or gained varied by one's historical experience. Accordingly, many who sought to make their voices heard used these categories as their basis for political organization. Three nationwide Indigenous organizations existed in the late 1970s: the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) represented status Indians; the Native Council of Canada represented off-reserve, non-status, and Métis people; and the Inuit Committee on National Issues represented the Inuit.[88] Provincial- and tribal-level organizations also played important roles, as did the Native Women's Association of Canada.

Each organization's position shifted over time, as did relations between membership and leadership. All organizations shared at least one thing in common: a claim to differential treatment as the remedy for present-day legacies of injustice. They rejected the antidiscrimination tenet that being treated the same as other individuals within the Canadian polity would generate equality for them. They demanded instead to be treated in ways that were the same as, or at least analogous to, other nations. While Canada sought national maturity by cutting its colonial ties to Great Britain, Indigenous peoples brandished their historic ties to the British Crown as evidence of their jurisdictional and self-government powers.[89]

Beyond this commonality, the path forward was unclear and contested. Some organizations believed constitutional entrenchment of their rights would preserve nation-to-nation status; others believed it would be its death knell. Leadership struggled to stay aligned with shifting views among members, many of whom engaged in large direct-action campaigns and street protests. If we situate Indigenous peoples in time, these shifting positions are unsurprising. But government actors held an ahistorical orientation that branded such differences as factionalism; they expected Indigenous organizations to work in concert. This was only sometimes possible.

For example, the NIB was the first organization to intervene. In 1978, it demanded entrenchment of Aboriginal and

treaty rights and a seat at the negotiating table. The federal government responded with an invitation for all three nation-wide organizations to attend upcoming first ministers' meetings as observers.[90] To the extent that it conceded a measure of Indigenous participation in the process, the federal government sought a single solution for distinct Indigenous groups where none existed.

Each organization responded to opportunities to engage with government in its own way. The NIB launched a campaign that put its nation-to-nation claim into practice. In July 1979, it led several hundred delegates to London to petition the Queen to block patriation. At its 1980 general meeting, it adopted the "Declaration of First *Nations*." And in 1982, it re-formed into the "Assembly of First Nations."[91]

The NIB allied with the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), an organization of nations with unceded, untreatied territories. The UBCIC was adept at mobilizing direct action and attracting media attention. They launched the "Constitution Express" train that gathered protesters as it traveled from Vancouver to Ottawa. Like the NIB, they developed tactics that enacted their self-conception as nations. They strategized a British court action and sent delegations and petitions to the United Nations in New York, the International Court of Justice in the Hague, the Fourth Russell Tribunal on the Rights of Indians of the Americas in Rotterdam, and the World Council of Indigenous Peoples in Canberra.[92]

Colonialism rendered it less straightforward for non-status peoples to demand and exercise nation-to-nation status. Recognition as a "status Indian" was a form of discrimination, but nevertheless it was a position from which "Indians" might argue for their due as members of Indigenous nations. Métis and non-status people, on the other hand, started from a different place: one in which government was reluctant to admit they were Indigenous at all. For example, where status Indians lived on reserves – tiny, remote, and barren as these were – Métis communities resided on the road allowances that the Crown set aside for road construction.[93] Whether they conceived of themselves as members of sovereign nations – as many did – the initial step for Métis and non-status people was necessarily different than for status Indians. They were a long way from equality with status Indians, let alone non-Indigenous Canadians. When opportunity arose to communicate with a Special Joint Committee of the House of Commons and Senate, the non-status organizations, as well as several tribal-level, status-Indian organizations, participated; the NIB and the UBCIC boycotted.

Indigenous organizations did not reach a lasting consensus. Nor did their efforts to halt patriation in the British courts succeed. But their direct action and legal efforts put serious pressure on federal and provincial governments.[94] Forced to respond, the government turned to constitutional entrenchment, an option that most Indigenous organizations opposed. The alternative route to nation-to-nation status, the one favored by most Indigenous organizations – halting patriation altogether – would have derailed Trudeau's ambitions. In turning their struggle to intersect with Trudeau's, Indigenous peoples had done more than cross paths; they created a roadblock.

Faced with this roadblock, the government took up the position of the minority of organizations that supported entrenchment. Other federal parties got behind it, too. The progressive federal party, the New Democratic Party (NDP), analogized across women, ethnic

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minorities, and Indigenous peoples and assumed that entrenchment would serve them all, even though each group was disadvantaged in historically distinct ways. The federal "equality as sameness" proposal that sought social justice for everyone through a single policy – rights guaranteed under the Constitution – relied upon a synchronic snapshot of inequality. But inequality existed in time; a diachronic perspective was necessary to make headway. Because groups were unequal for different historical reasons, they required different future solutions.

NDP MP Ian Waddell and the Aboriginal rights lawyer Jack Woodward helped draft the clause that became s.35.[95] Indigenous leaders and activists did not. The NDP expended its political capital for an Aboriginal rights clause that ultimately satisfied almost none of the Indigenous stakeholders; the Métis Association of Alberta was s.35's sole Indigenous supporter in the end. When the Constitution Act passed, the NIB declared a day of mourning. The UBCIC branded Indigenous participation in patriation celebrations a "treasonous act against the Indian nations and their citizens."[96]

Deeply contested, the victory of entrenchment was also inherently incomplete. S.35 created a new legal category called "Aboriginal and treaty rights." It did not, however, specify their nature or scope. This vagueness was intentional. Greater specificity would have forced to the fore the divergent worldviews, assumptions, and interests of the federal government, provinces, and Indigenous peoples that s.35 papered over. Greater specificity would likely have scuttled the clause entirely. The chosen wording shielded existing rights from erosion until agreement on the nature of "Aboriginal and treaty rights" could be reached. Section 37 of the Act mandated a series of conferences between Indigenous

representatives, the prime minister, and the provincial first ministers for this purpose. These conferences – four of which were eventually held in 1982, 1984, 1985, and 1987 – failed to significantly specify s.35's scope.

Horizons of equality – and possibility. The late 1970s through the final constitutional conference in 1987 was a historical moment when distinct nation-building projects intersected. A problem of scale characterized the meeting of Indigenous and government actors at this crossroads. For Trudeau, pressured by successful Indigenous lobbying and media tactics to somehow accommodate Indigenous leaders, s.35 became a necessary part of a larger whole: the effort to patriate the Constitution and pass the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In so doing, he sought to concede to Indigenous peoples the minimum necessary to allow his own agenda to proceed. For Trudeau, the major goal – patriation – was achieved in 1982; the conferences were a formality.

For Indigenous peoples, the inverse was true. The battle over patriation was no end in itself. It was an installment in a centuries-long sovereignty struggle. For them, there was real work to do at these mandated conferences, the work of reconciling a multiplicity of Indigenous constitutional and legal orders with that of the Canadian state. These conferences were the moment when the potential promise of s.35 – unsatisfying on its own – might be realized.

Nowhere were the unequal temporal horizons and different historical trajectories more apparent than during these conferences. Participants' vastly different orientations toward the substance and stakes of the agenda doomed the meetings to failure. After passing the Constitution Act, the federal government had little political incentive to elaborate the definition of "Aboriginal and treaty

rights" in the thorough, transformative fashion that Indigenous leaders wanted. The conferences became an elaborate show in which the federal government's minimal tolerance for the exercise of Indigenous constitutional order – self-determination in the language of the day – was on display. It was easy for each side to view the other's position as unreasonable, ill-mannered, and overreaching because each side saw something different when it looked back over its shoulder, and each had its gaze fixed on a fundamentally different endpoint.

Consequences. After the failure of the constitutional conferences, Indigenous peoples looked to a different, more adversarial policy-making body to define s.35: the judicial system. In this setting, as in 1982, it is still not Indigenous people, but mostly non-Indigenous actors – notably, Supreme Court of Canada judges – who define the scope of Aboriginal and treaty rights. The results so far have been disturbingly restrictive and ahistorical. The Supreme Court's 1996 *Van der Peet* decision introduced a test to identify s.35 rights.[97] The test requires demonstrated continuity with precontact practices that are "integral to a distinctive culture." Consistent with other rights-based jurisprudence, *Van der Peet* defines Aboriginal rights in piecemeal fashion through protection of specific practices conducted by *individuals*.[98] It does not recognize these individuals as members of sovereign collectives. Moreover, to meet the test, the claimed rights must be found in the past. This follows an "originalist" approach that is common in the United States but infrequent in Canada where "living-tree" interpretations dominate constitutional law *except* in the area of Aboriginal rights.[99] *Van der Peet*'s precedent-setting "frozen rights" or "permafrost" approach relies upon outdated, ahistorical stereotypes of primitive,

authentic cultures. It defines the Indigenous differences that matter as belonging inexorably to the past. In so doing, it dehistoricizes Indigenous people and peoples by fetishizing their history, effectively placing them *out* of time.

The s.35 jurisprudence since *Van der Peet* has produced increasingly racially based, culturalist definitions of Indigenousness as a bundle of traits that inhere within the individual. The Supreme Court of Canada rejects the assertions of living Indigenous people that their difference inheres instead in the exercise of collective political rights. This approach is discriminatory in multiple ways and scholars have critiqued it heavily.[100] From the vantage point of today, the results of s.35 jurisprudence appear to have been foretold in 1981 by Chief George Manuel, former president of the UBCIC and the NIB, who wrote: "When the Government talks about Aboriginal Rights it means no more than our cultural rights to perform Indian dances and songs, and to make bannock."[101]

As long-time Indigenous rights activist Mildred Poplar put it, s.35 set diverse Indigenous peoples along a path not of their own making: "In some ways, s.35 has diverted our people, and the new leadership instead of fighting for our rights, is negotiating to help Canada and the provinces define them."[102] This work of definition has incorporated diverse Indigenous peoples into settler institutions that set the terms to which Indigenous people must adhere if they are to be legible to the state. S.35's affirmation of Aboriginal and treaty rights set in motion several counterintuitive maneuvers that have defined group rights in an individualizing manner; dehistoricized Indigenous peoples by relegating them to the past; and lessened rather than increased Indigenous access to freedoms enjoyed by Canadian citizens at large. As Poplar urged people to remember in 2003, "We were never

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fighting for s.35, we were fighting to pre-serve our Nation-to-Nation relationship, for recognition as Sovereign Nations, and to re-build and Decolonize Our People."[103] But the story is not over yet. S.35 lies within the Constitution like an "encrypted code" for realizing decolonization, thus far "the road not taken."[104]

Taken together, the reform efforts we describe differ in many ways, yet nevertheless share some instructive features. Each effort initially seemed to avoid the sameness/difference dilemma. And each ultimately fell prey to it. Our analysis shows that this outcome was not a foregone conclusion. It derived from historically contingent processes, from the ways in which political actors understood inequality in time – in relation to past, present, and future.

At a minimum, history mattered here in the familiar sense of chronology or timing. In the case of biomedical reform in the United States, the field of genomics emerged as new federal standards encouraged researchers to take up the question of race. The field of genomics, in turn, powerfully shaped the way researchers used and understood racial categories. In the case of gender policies in the EU, the sidelining of ambitions for "social Europe" and the rise of neoliberal commitments made policy-makers less likely to adopt solutions that they castigated as social engineering. In the case of constitutional reform in Canada, the federal government's rights-based liberalism generated political conditions that failed to take Indigenous peoples specifically into account, and that nevertheless provided them the opportunity to enter the national stage. In each case, the historical timing of the reform partly accounted for its effects.[105]

We have focused, however, on a more substantive, less well-recognized way

that history mattered: not as a set of facts about the past, but as contested, or contestable, stories or schemas.[106] These understandings of the past shaped actors' views of the viability, necessity, and desirability of present-day actions and future outcomes. One such set of understandings identified the sources of the inequality somewhere in the past, and a second placed the reform in a future-oriented trajectory of efforts to remedy inequality. Together, they shaped and limited the practical possibilities that accompanied the reform.

In each of the cases, activists and sometimes policy-makers recognized that the unequal status of the disadvantaged group or groups had been socially produced over a long historical duration. Minority health advocates in the United States firmly believed that differences in group responses to treatment were more likely to lie in history than in biology: that is, in long-term experiences of discrimination, poverty, and associated stresses. Problems like these required reform outside the field of medical research and were unlikely to draw pharmaceutical companies as partners. That such an agenda was overshadowed in some respects by a focus on the putatively biological causes of health disparities was not activists' or policy-makers' intent. In Europe, the pursuit of a "difference" agenda by feminists in the 1980s and 1990s included significant efforts to stretch the temporal horizon of policy analysis and policy-making. They argued that longstanding social relations of gender not only placed women in social and political positions unequal to men as they sought employment and political office, but that these ongoing and historically rooted structures of inequality had to be changed by interventions that addressed power relations in a wide variety of realms before women could achieve

full equality. This history required what they called an equal opportunities policy treatment rather than simple protection against workplace and other discriminations. Indigenous activists in Canada likewise referenced centuries-long inequality-producing processes. In their case, colonialism had undermined their distinct status as self-governing nations. They sought "equality" – though they did not use that term – through a major reallocation of authority that would entail recognition of plural sovereignties within the Canadian state.

These deeply historicized arguments for recognizing difference would have changed the circumstances of the advantaged groups and disadvantaged groups alike. In all three cases, the "haves" would have been required to give something up in order to advance equality for the "have-nots." These historicized perspectives understood resources such as time and land to be finite, rather than ever-expanding. Asserting the group's difference was one way to draw attention to the deeper roots of the problem at hand and highlight the need for more thoroughgoing reforms. In this sense, demands for recognition and redistribution were fundamentally connected: to recognize the group's difference was to recognize the historical processes that produced and sustained that difference.

Yet in each case, assertions of historically produced difference either evolved into or were sidelined by essentialist claims. In the United States, the new federal standards were appropriated by medical researchers and pharmaceutical companies in the drive to identify and treat racial and ethnic diseases. The fact that all actors – reformers as much as pharmaceutical executives – embraced an account in which the identification of group-based genetic differences was a stopgap measure on the way to

individualized medicine made it difficult for anyone to challenge the use of biologically reductionist and essentialist explanations for health inequalities. In the EU, feminists called for systemic change in deeply rooted and socially produced historical patterns. Antidiscrimination measures were insufficient; creating equality required interventions in private life. This stretch of public action was resisted both by institutions under the influence of neoliberalism, with a short time horizon about the source of inequalities, and by activists who rejected binary difference in gender and sexual identity and norms. This new political coalition sidelined the more ambitious reform agenda. The policy world preferred short temporal horizons and "rights fixes" matched well with fluid, cultural conceptions of identity. Indigenous activists in Canada, for their part, staked claims to dynamic, collective forms of political power and membership by invoking treaties, covenants, and proclamations from previous centuries. This activist pressure resulted – albeit unsatisfactorily and somewhat inadvertently – in constitutionally protected "Aboriginal rights." Yet when it fell to the Supreme Court of Canada to define these rights, it did so in essentialist ways that fixed those rights in a primordial past, severely limiting their material bearing on present and future configurations of Canadian jurisdiction and sovereignty.

Interestingly, of the cases at hand, Indigenous peoples alone staked a claim for permanent recognition of difference. In the other two cases, actors placed a time limit on the need to recognize difference. In the United States, differential treatment of racialized groups was meant to be a stepping stone to a future in which everyone enjoyed the benefits of individualized medicine. In Europe, the goal was to achieve the same equality for women

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and men, by means of an equal-opportunities strategy of different treatment.

In every instance, policies and/or practices were eventually based on dehistoricized – prejudicial, partial, or otherwise imperfect – understandings of the source of inequality. Each policy "victory" failed in the end to account for the processual nature of the originating and ongoing causes of inequality.[107] Each was dually myopic: in how it looked back and in how it projected forward. This was despite many activists understanding the deep historical roots of the problem and offering concrete policy solutions that could have been enacted.

What are the implications of our cases for efforts to reduce inequalities by way of government action? Our cases call for greater scrutiny of the stories circulating among reformers that link present inequalities to their past causes and future remedies. Such stories or schemas shape the reform effort's trajectory and likelihood of success, yet they are rarely laid out in full. This may be, in part, because to do so would reveal that the processes targeting some groups for remedy and excluding others are political rather than natural or consensual. Or it may reveal that members of the reform coalition in fact work from quite different stories and histories about the place of their efforts in a longer trajectory. Or it may simply be that the stories mesh with widespread, seemingly commonsensical ideas about the inevitability of progress. Whatever the explanation, our cases show that disadvantaged groups lost the most from the failure to confront the historical assumptions embedded in these distinct stories.

Our cases also suggest the utility of reframing the so-called sameness/difference dilemma. The challenge is not so much to decide between an emphasis on sameness or difference. Rather, the challenge is to gain recognition – in policy as well as public discourse – for historically produced differences, without allowing recognition to remake those differences into a biological or otherwise timeless essence.

Finally, our cases demonstrate the risks of basing long-term, often costly policy decisions on dehistoricized explanations for inequality. Such explanations gain traction for many reasons, and often appear to point toward expedient or useful policy solutions. But as these cases show, apparent victories can fall short in startlingly disappointing ways. If inequality is recognized as a process – or better, as multiple processes – then efforts to remedy it must attend to the deeply rooted, ongoing character of those processes. Policy must combine temporal horizons: combatting discrimination in the here and now while taking account of the continuing effects of earlier exclusionary histories. Short-term policy time lines may be politically inevitable, but it does not follow that the policy, in its conception, must be tethered to short-term horizons. We insist instead that policy can accommodate deeply historicized understandings of difference; indeed, that it must do so if it is to advance equality fully, over the long term.

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Political Inequality, "Real" Public Preferences, Historical Comparisons & Axes of Disadvantage

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Abstract: The essays in this issue of Dædalus *raise fascinating and urgent questions about inequality, time, and interdisciplinary research. They lead me to ask further questions about the public's commitment to reducing inequality, the importance of political power in explaining and reducing social and economic inequities, and the possible incommensurability of activists' and policy-makers' vantage points or job descriptions.*

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The essays in this issue of *Dædalus* are fantastically provocative and informative. That is no surprise. They are written by many of the Western world's leading scholars of inequality; they have germinated and developed over many years and many drafts; they combine moral passion with empirical and analytic rigor. The three dominant themes – integrating scholarship across disciplines, taking time seriously as an explanatory force, and directly connecting three levels of analysis with one another – are important, innovative, and revealing. Although I venture no predictions about economic inequality itself, I confidently predict that scholars, students, and even policy analysts will be reading and discussing this issue of *Dædalus* for years to come.

Before burrowing into the academic's favorite habitat of critique and query, let me embody that praise by pointing to particular arguments in each essay that seem to me to get at the heart of their

innovation. Each of these arguments is a direct progenitor of one or more of my comments below. David Grusky, Peter Hall, and Hazel Markus, in "The Rise of Opportunity Markets: How Did It Happen & What Can We Do?" develop the rich concept of opportunity markets, showing when and how individuals and institutions can create and reinforce trajectories of inequality while simply going about their usual, essentially benign business. Americans endorse public education, meritocratic rules, a family's right to help its children, markets, and equal opportunity: all perfectly defensible norms and practices that nonetheless culminate in a new "inequality regime that functions so smoothly that its many interlocking components can be invisible." The idea that I found most compelling was almost a throwaway line:

> Our instinct is that present-day Americans likewise lack the stomach to deal directly with the causes of unequal opportunity . . . but that is not reason to despair. It only means that we must find another way.

And they do find another way, a relatively small and targeted policy intervention that "could trigger a norm cascade that would counter the rise of opportunity markets and lead to a substantial increase in social mobility."[1] What liberating ideas: that social scientists need not tether themselves to tight causal explanations of important problems in order to think incisively about effective solutions, and that seemingly small solutions may under the right conditions have big effects.

In "'Superstar Cities' & the Generation of Durable Inequality," Patrick Le Galès and Paul Pierson also produce a depressingly compelling structural explanation of rising inequality.[2] The concept of agglomeration perfectly captures an individual, organizational, and economic process: how many department chairs have done what I am now doing, enticing a job candidate and her partner to accept a job offer from my university in part by pointing to so many other exciting scholars in the vicinity, so many job opportunities for the partner, so many cultural amenities and good local schools? The movement from country to city is centuries old, has never been voluntarily reversed, and is perhaps reaching its inevitable climax. And yet, Le Galès and Pierson, like Grusky, Hall, and Markus, point us toward policy interventions that can ameliorate if not eliminate the most harmful or inegalitarian features of the trajectories they so convincingly depict.

"Membership without Social Citizenship? Deservingness & Redistribution as Grounds for Equality," by Irene Bloemraad, Will Kymlicka, Michèle Lamont, and Leanne Son Hing, directly targets an issue that many left activists have evaded for some decades: can a society effectively engage with more than one major dimension of inequity at a time? That is, can intersectionality move beyond being an important academic trope into being a sustainable focus for political mobilization and policy intervention? Bloemraad and her coauthors worry that full-fledged attacks on multiple axes of disadvantage cannot be, or at least so far have not been, sustained. As the authors put it:

> Whereas national membership has expanded [to incorporate women, ethnic or racial minorities, and immigrants – and I would add people with disabilities and individuals with unconventional sexual orientation or gender identity], the segment of the population seen as deserving of redistributive support has arguably shrunk.[3]

That is, to put the point more crudely, as leftist positions on race, gender, and nonnormative behavior have gained ground, leftist positions on class and

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material distribution have lost ground. There is no logical reason for that seesaw, but there is plausible empirical reason to fear its occurrence.

Son Hing (again!), Anne Wilson, Peter Gourevitch, Jaslyn English, and Parco Sin explore, in "Failure to Respond to Rising Inequality: Processes That Legitimize Growing Disparities," an updated version of Werner Sombart's classic question: "Why no socialism in the United States?" Just as many of the essays in this issue move across levels of analysis, so does the issue as a whole, with this essay focusing substantially on the micro, Jane Jenson and her colleagues on the meso, and Le Galès and Pierson on the macro. Son Hing and her colleagues answer Sombart with arguments not about the structure of capitalist production, but rather about the many ways in which people in the bottom half of the economic distribution experience what the old Marxists would have called false consciousness. There are a surprising number of ways in which rational self-interest – which in a majoritarian democracy should lead to downward redistribution in response to rising inequality – gets deflected. The authors wrestle those ways into an analytically coherent catalog of how psychological processes that should lead to calls for less inequality in fact "activate the very psychological processes that stifle outcry, causing people to be blind to the true extent of inequality, to legitimize these disparities, and to reject redistribution as an effective solution."[4]

Possibly the most frustrating of all the explanations for inequality presented in this issue of *Dædalus* lies in "The Difficulties of Combating Inequality in Time," by Jane Jenson, Francesca Polletta, and Paige Raibmon. In none of the three cases that they describe – disparate and fascinating – was there inegalitarian villains to persuade or override; all actors favored greater equality for groups that all saw as being unfairly disadvantaged, with the only question being how best to promote equality. Nonetheless, the outcome at best was ambiguous and at worst harmed the people ostensibly being granted their just desserts. Jenson and her colleagues show vividly how difficult it is to grant genuine recognition, balance the equally compelling claims of sameness and difference, and put ideological commitments of passionate advocates through the meat grinder of a political system. Time is an active force in this essay as both a cause of deep structural inequality and a challenge to efforts to overcome it, joining perhaps inevitably conflicting perspectives of judicial systems, bureaucratic standard operating procedures, and politicians dependent on election. As the authors put it: "pitfalls emerge."[5]

Despite the near despair of their authors, the quality of the essays in this issue makes them exhilarating to read. That quality also spawns observations and questions.

First, a particular complaint with larger ramifications for the goal of ameliorating inequality: As a card-carrying political scientist, I was disturbed not to see more attention in these essays to the issue of *political* inequality.[6] The authors addressed ways in which a political system has tried, can try, or should try to alleviate social, economic, educational, psychological, or cultural inequality; a few analyses even invoked power. But none discuss felon disfranchisement, registration and voting restrictions, gerrymandering, geographic imbalances of the Electoral College and Senate, the rich-tilting elements of campaign finance law, descriptively unrepresentative legislative bodies, the wealth of members of Congress, the costs of judicial redress, imbalances between interest and advocacy groups,

undocumented migrants' statelessness, or equivalent inequalities in the design and practice of purported democracies outside the United States. This list represents more than the solipsistic wish that my own issues mattered as much to the authors as they do to me. Although some of these issues might individually be too narrow in scope for this issue of *Dædalus*, collectively the list points to an inequality of human dignity that arguably matters as much as do failures to recognize and redistribute in the society and economy. The list might even point to an underlying inequality of power that *causes* failures to recognize and redistribute. If the United States and other Western nations were more truly democratic, might elected officials be more easily pushed into finding ways to offset structural, economic, and recognition failures?

Perhaps not; these authors provide many explanations for why the pursuit of greater equality could readily be derailed even in a more democratic polity. But the issue of political inequality and its manifestations points to three questions about the relationship between citizens' activity and policy outcomes.

First, what if policy-makers in Western countries *are*, roughly speaking, democratically responsive, and the real issue is that a majority of voters do not want more equality, or at least not as much as they want something else? That is, the authors in this volume assume that reducing inequality is normatively and empirically necessary (as do I), and that the failure to do so is what needs to be explained. But what if the failure to reduce inequality has a straightforward explanation: even left-leaning voters care as much or more about something else? In one recent survey, almost as many Democrats want their party's top priority to be making gun laws stricter (34 percent) as combatting economic inequality (37 per-

cent).[7] In another, Democrats' highest priority for the nation is improving the health care system (31 percent), followed by reducing economic inequality (21 percent) and reducing discrimination (18 percent).[8] As many or more young adults identify health care (37 percent), racism and education (23 percent each), terrorism (19 percent), the environment and climate change (18 percent), immigration (18 percent), or gun control (17 percent) as a more important problem for the United States than taxes, the national debt, or income inequality (14 percent each).[9]

Scholars have given us many reasons to discount survey results and even election outcomes, and the essays in this issue add powerful new reasons. I do not want to claim that surveys report "real" opinions or that electoral totals reflect "real" voter preferences – never mind the fact that deep structural forces can swamp any set of opinions, votes, or policy preferences. Nonetheless, we need to engage seriously with expressed opinions and cast votes if we are to claim democratic legitimacy for the fight against inequality. After reading these essays, I am left wanting more direct wrestling (by these or other authors) with the assumption that the disadvantaged ought to place a very high priority on redistribution and recognition, or that they do hold those priorities but are always thwarted.

This wish for more direct wrestling with expressed views and political actions points to my second question about the relationship between citizens' activity and policy outcomes. The essays in this issue of *Dædalus* all focus on explaining rising inequality. Yet, at various points over the past century, residents of Western nations *have* sought and their policies *have* promoted a diminution of inequality. These essays could give us more help in understanding the circumstances under which inequality has been reduced.

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Can we simply take the theories and explanations proffered here and add a "not" to them to explain those opposite trajectories? Surely not. Alternatively, were the forces that promoted equality at some point in the past unique and nonreplicable? Perhaps, but it would be useful to see those analyses. Thus, ironically, I wish that some of these essays were even more historically oriented than they are already, so that they gave readers a greater understanding of when, how, and why inequality might decline as well as increase.

To focus on only one example: Bloemraad and her colleagues point out that "one of the striking successes of the last half-century is the struggle against exclusionary definitions of national membership. . . . The formal rules for acquiring citizenship or nationality have become more open. . . . There are also changes in public perceptions of cultural membership" for women, racial and religious minorities, LBGTQ individuals, and people with disabilities.[10] These were momentous reductions of inequality, attained only after intense and sometimes murderous conflict. And although the authors do not so characterize them, these changes manifest a dramatic lowering of the barrier of deservingness. People with disabilities are no longer warehoused; gays and lesbians must no longer hide; racial apartheid is no longer legal; women can no longer be sexually assaulted with legal impunity. These are indicators of newly recognized deservingness. Furthermore, many members of these groups have been incorporated economically in a way that they were not a half-century ago; arguably more than half of the population in many Western countries who had been denied Marshall's "right to a modicum of economic welfare and security" can now lay claim to social rights.

None of that is to deny continuing denigration, discrimination, inequality, injustice, or the fact that citizens of many Western nations are less willing to redistribute downward and more willing to blame the poor for their plight compared with some years or decades ago. My point is rather that we would learn a great deal if Bloemraad and her colleagues, as well as other scholars of inequality, paid attention to when societies *do* promote greater recognition, redistribution, and social rights as well as to when they do not.

It is useful to bring in the essay by Son Hing and her colleagues here. They do such a fine job of showing why people do not seek redistribution (or recognition) when basic theory suggests that they ought to that we are left with an incomplete understanding of when they do demand social citizenship. As the authors note, there have been periods of "public outcry in the face of rising income inequality" – under what conditions, and through what dynamics, does that occur?[11] Perhaps perceptions of the level of inequality change, or people reverse their understandings of what constitutes a just world or merited advantage, or routinely accepted inequities come to be seen as intolerable. Political scientist Ira Katznelson once commented that the most important question in social science is "under what conditions?" I interpret that to mean, "the stronger an explanation, the more essential it is to set boundary conditions." These authors hint at those boundary conditions, but it would be illuminating if they spelled them out more clearly.

I can make the same point more briefly in reference to two other essays in this issue. As Grusky and his coauthors point out, the "cultural and institutional commitment to allocate scarce goods and services through markets" promotes "the rise of opportunity markets" in schools that "create the perception that merit just happens to coincide with money."[12] That dynamic now makes schooling in

the United States, and presumably elsewhere, an engine for reinforcing economic inequality and inhibiting upward mobility. And yet, as the authors also point out, in earlier eras, Americans vastly increased the number of schools, children's access to grade school then high school then college, and public commitment to (if not usually the practice of) equal educational outcomes for all. Schools were, at least sometimes, the engine of upward mobility. When, and why? The huge expansion of high schools, for example, occurred in the early decades of the twentieth century: not an era with less commitment than the present to allocating scarce goods and services through markets, or less commitment of wealthy parents to opportunity hoarding. So, what was different then, and can any of those historical forces be reinvented and newly harnessed? Perhaps not, but knowing that too would be illuminating.

Finally, on this point, as Le Galès and Pierson observe, in the latter third of the twentieth century, "analyses typically . . . dealt with urban decline: New York's bankruptcy, massive deindustrialization, or low quality of life." Now, the largest cities are so vibrant, wealthy, and exciting that their very success is an engine of inequality for countries, regions, and individuals. The authors' depiction of how cities are "extraordinary agglomerations of wealth" is so compelling that it makes one wonder why they have not always been so, and whether we can learn anything from eras in which "urban" and "nonurban" did not connote what now seems like an irreversible gulf between doing better and doing worse.[13]

My last question about the relationship between citizens' activity and policy outcomes is more speculative: is it ever possible to mediate different visions of equality, or to reduce simultaneously multiple dimensions of inequality? Or is

politics always and inevitably a struggle among incompatible goods as well as between good and evil? Bloemraad and her colleagues argue that as recognition of ill-treated groups rose over the late twentieth century, so that categories of citizenship and inclusion expanded in law and became more generous in spirit, willingness to redistribute to the needy shrank in policy and became more mean-spirited. My brother claims that there is a conservation of bustedness, such that if you repair your dishwasher, your refrigerator will break. Perhaps there is (also?) a conservation of social rights, such that if a polity shrinks one dimension of inequality, it enables another to expand. The logic here, beyond my brother's excuse for home-repair inaction, is that the well-off and powerful can be induced or pressured to yield only so much of their advantage. If recognition becomes so widespread as to threaten meritocracy and prestige, *and* if redistribution becomes so extensive as to threaten economic hierarchy, those with power will ensure that one or another change is curtailed or even reversed. Bloemraad and her colleagues do not say that, but their analysis points in the direction of the conservation of social rights.

Jenson, Polletta, and Raibmon point even more explicitly to the struggle among incompatible goods.

> Categories meant to ameliorate inequalities may become the basis for evaluating group members in ways far beyond the arena originally targeted. . . . Each reform [analyzed in the essay] ultimately reproduced rather than surmounted tensions between sameness and difference.

The authors explain the frustrating outcomes for African Americans in American health research, European women in EU regulations, and Indigenous peoples in Canada's constitutional law through the lens of time: "Each policy 'victory'

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failed in the end to account for the processual nature of the originating and on-going causes of inequality."[14] Different actors operated from a different sense of the relevant historical trajectory and appropriate goals for the future. Seldom has time been portrayed as such a vivid and impelling causal force.

All of this is richly described and analyzed, but I see a simpler, perhaps even deeper, incommensurability in these cases. Policy actors view the world, and behave, differently from advocates and activists; the two groups need dissimilar resources to do their jobs and follow different imperatives to achieve their goals. In the Canadian case, for example, "the policy world preferred short temporal horizons and 'rights fixes,'" and had no incentive to upend repeatedly several centuries of practice and law around government sovereignty. That is neither surprising nor nefarious, given the vantage points and constraints of public officials and agencies. In the Indigenous population, in contrast, "each organization's position shifted over time, as did relations between membership and leadership....The path forward was unclear and contested."[15] That too is neither surprising nor reprehensible, given the vantage points and constraints of morally driven activists venturing into new terrain. But even setting aside their different temporal horizons and definitions of equality, the two sets of actors were almost inevitably on a collision course.

A similar tension between imperatives of policy-making and activism holds for biomedical research. Even though all actors understood that U.S. federal racial and ethnic categories are "administrative, not biological," agencies and corporations had to have *some* fixed categories with which to do their work from day to day. They also needed stable categories to be able to fund and regulate research or develop new drugs over many years. Researchers and reformers, in contrast, could more readily change or dissolve categories as appropriate in their work, and in fact they often want to do so: promoting fluidity and reinvention may be an intrinsic part of their mission of rectifying inequities in health care and, more broadly, in group recognition. But the tension here is deeply embedded in the structures of governance and reformist activism – neither nefarious nor, perhaps, correctable.

In the third case, on gender issues in EU policy-making,

> as social movements' approaches to identity and equality diversified, the feminist movement itself divided . . . shifting focus toward a multiplicity of diversities and their intersections. . . . By the late 1990s, there was no standard social movement narrative motivating claims for gender equality and equal treatment.

Reformers focused variously on the gendered division of labor, racism, intolerance for normative sexual orientation, or religious and cultural disrespect. That array may make good sense to activists and researchers, who can specify historical dynamics, future trajectories, contemporary evidence, and policy proposals as warranted for each narrative. But it is something of a nightmare for policy-makers who, among other things, needed to develop consensus for innovation among fifteen (and later more) disparate countries. No wonder that the EU "bundl[ed] multiple differences together under a diagnosis of the need for equal treatment" – and that many aspirants to equality were disappointed.[16]

Both Jenson and her colleagues and Bloemraad and her colleagues assert that there is no necessary conflict between equality and difference, among types of equality, or between recognition and re-

distribution. But there are certainly tensions – across time, activists, norms, and institutional imperatives – and perhaps clashes among actors with different priorities are inevitable. What comes through most strongly to me as a scholar of public policy is that egalitarian commitments that feel essential to intense policy demanders may feel impossible or irresponsible to policy officials who must try to implement any new program. It would be fascinating to see how a legislator, regulator, or judge would analyze Jenson and her colleagues' cases, or would adjudicate among the dynamics that promote inclusion but weaken interclass solidarity.

To repeat: these are fascinating essays on a crucial subject. The cross-cutting themes are important; the idiosyncratic analyses are intriguing; and the commitment to greater equality is inspiring. I hope this issue of *Dædalus* has the lifespan it deserves.

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ENDNOTES

1 David B. Grusky, Peter A. Hall, and Hazel Rose Markus, "The Rise of Opportunity Markets: How Did It Happen & What Can We Do?" *Dædalus* 148 (3) (Summer 2019): 20.

2 Patrick Le Galès and Paul Pierson, "'Superstar Cities' & the Generation of Durable Inequality," *Dædalus* 148 (3) (Summer 2019).

3 Irene Bloemraad, Will Kymlicka, Michèle Lamont, and Leanne S. Son Hing, "Membership without Social Citizenship? Deservingness & Redistribution as Grounds for Equality," *Dædalus* 148 (3) (Summer 2019): 78.

4 Leanne S. Son Hing, Anne E. Wilson, Peter Gourevitch, Jaslyn English, and Parco Sin, "Failure to Respond to Rising Income Inequality: Processes That Legitimize Growing Disparities," *Dædalus* 148 (3) (Summer 2019): 105.

5 Jane Jenson, Francesca Polletta, and Paige Raibmon, "The Difficulties of Combating Inequality in Time," *Dædalus* 148 (3) (Summer 2019): 136.

6 Another complaint: Lamont and Pierson's portrayal, in the introduction to the issue, of quantification as a culprit in rising inequality seems overdrawn. They are surely correct that quantitative measures of performance "can reinforce inequalities. They may devalue criteria that might have favored the disadvantaged." However, the tool of quantification can be deployed for many purposes, including redress of unfairness. After all, the foundation of each essay in this issue is quantification of economic or some other form of inequality, and the authors use numerical data to analyze inequality and propose ways to combat it. Michèle Lamont and Paul Pierson, "Inequality Generation & Persistence as Multidimensional Processes: An Interdisciplinary Agenda," *Dædalus* 148 (3) (Summer 2019): 8.

7 CBS News Poll, "Public Divided on Whether the Country Would Be Better Off with a Democratic Congress," conducted March 8–11, 2018, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/public-splits-on-whether-things-would-be-better-or-worse-with-democratic-congress/.

8 Washington Post–ABC News Poll, January 21–24, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/polling/washington-postabc-news-poll-jan-2124/2019/01/25/411bc1f2-20cf-11e9-a759-2b8541bbbe20_page.html.

9 "Young adults" in this survey includes oversamples of African Americans, Latinxs, and Asian Americans. NBC News and GenForward at the University of Chicago, "November 2017 Toplines Survey," conducted October–November 2017. Opening the Pandora's box of votes and opinion surveys reveals another puzzle. We must ask not only, as these authors do, "What's the matter with Kansas?" such that relatively poor people frequently do not seek redistribution, but also "What's the matter with Connecticut?" such that the well-off frequently do. (See Andrew Gelman, *Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State: Why Americans*

*Political
Inequality,
"Real" Public
Preferences,
Historical
Comparisons
& Axes of
Disadvantage*

Vote the Way They Do [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009]). In the 2016 presidential election, as many voters with incomes over $100,000 voted for Hillary Clinton as voted for Donald Trump. Were they motivated by the view that market values should not drive educational opportunity, that cities should not belong only to the rich, that the poor are in fact deserving, that a just world requires redistribution, that disadvantaged groups warrant policies to promote true equality, or by something else? In other words, I urge these authors to apply their analyses to advantaged entities that do, as well as those that do not, seek to reduce inequality.

[10] Bloemraad et al., "Membership without Social Citizenship?" 75–76.

[11] Son Hing et al., "Failure to Respond to Rising Income Inequality," 105.

[12] Grusky et al., "The Rise of Opportunity Markets," 22, 19.

[13] Le Galès and Pierson, "'Superstar Cities' & the Generation of Durable Inequality," 48, 47.

[14] Jenson et al., "The Difficulties of Combating Inequality in Time," 137, 158.

[15] Ibid., 157, 152.

[16] Ibid., 148–149, 149.

New Angles on Inequality

Katherine S. Newman

Abstract: The trenchant essays in this volume pose two critical questions with respect to inequality: First, what explains the eruption of nationalist, xenophobic, and far-right politics and the ability of extremists to gain a toehold in the political arena that is greater than at any time since World War II? Second, how did the social distance between the haves and have-nots harden into geographic separation that makes it increasingly difficult for those attempting to secure jobs, housing, and mobility-ensuring schools to break through? The answers are insightful and unsettling, particularly when the conversation turns to an action agenda. Every move in the direction of alternatives is fraught because the histories that brought each group of victims to occupy their uncomfortable niche in the stratification order excludes some who should be included or ignores a difference that matters in favor of principles of equal treatment.

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The past twenty years have seen an explosion of interest in the causes, consequences, and remedies for inequality across the entire spectrum of the social sciences. Political scientists, sociologists, social psychologists, decision scientists, education researchers, public health scholars, and a host of others have recognized that throughout the developed and, even more so, the developing world, the specter of inequality is threatening the internal stability of nations, propelling millions to leave their homes in search of refuge from brutal wars and natural disasters that are themselves symptoms of inequality, and upending the post–World War II international order.

Attention to inequality, which was something of a new enterprise as recently as the millennium, is flowering in every corner of academia. Perhaps even more important, it has become a leitmotif, if

not an animating force, in political campaigns. Mayor Bill de Blasio was perhaps the first to sound this theme, and his "tale of two cities" found a receptive audience among New York City voters. Bernie Sanders was not far behind. And Elizabeth Warren has made the ravages of inequality – and the imperative to reign in elites who have profited from it – the cornerstone of her presidential bid.

With this much firepower trained on the problem, one could be forgiven for thinking that we have covered our bases. This collection of essays tells us that nothing could be further from the truth. There are still deeply rooted problems to be explored and the social sciences remain essential to uncovering and explaining what we must understand if we are to speak conclusively to the damage done by unchecked power and resources accumulating in the hands of the few, while displacement, rejection, and economic insecurity increasingly plague the many.

The essays in this issue of *Dædalus* come at the problem from a variety of angles, but two questions underlie them. First, how should we understand the growing vitriol aimed at those on the losing end of the trend toward inequality, especially immigrants and minorities? What explains the eruption of nationalist, xenophobic, and far-right politics and the ability of these extremists to gain a toehold in the political arena that is greater than at any time since World War II? Two essays in this volume, "Membership without Social Citizenship? Deservingness & Redistribution as Grounds for Equality" by Irene Bloemraad, Will Kymlicka, Michèle Lamont, and Leanne Son Hing and "Failure to Respond to Rising Income Inequality: Processes That Legitimize Growing Disparities" by Leanne Son Hing, Anne Wilson, Peter Gourevitch, Jaslyn English, and Parco Sin, can be considered together along these lines.[1]

Second, what is the relationship between the spatial distribution of opportunity and the policies that undergird or ameliorate increasing segregation? How did the social distance between the haves and have-nots harden into geographic separation that makes it increasingly difficult for those attempting to secure jobs, housing, and mobility-ensuring schools to break through? "The Rise of Opportunity Markets: How Did It Happen & What Can We Do?" by David Grusky, Peter Hall, and Hazel Markus and "'Superstar Cities' & the Generation of Durable Inequality" by Patrick Le Galès and Paul Pierson train our attention on the geography of inequality and warn against thinking of these trends as natural or inevitable rather than political. Power increasingly determines how advantage will accrue within particular cities, neighborhoods, and communities.[2]

Finally, "The Difficulties of Combatting Inequality in Time" by Jane Jenson, Francesca Polletta, and Paige Raibmon reminds us how hard it is to reach a consensus – even among like-minded progressives – about whether and how these trends in inequality should be reversed or resisted.[3] Every move in the direction of alternatives excludes some "victims" who should be included or ignores a difference that matters in favor of principles of equal treatment.

The Bloemraad and Son Hing essays agree on one key observation: exclusion is growing everywhere in the Western world. For the former, this is an irony because for decades, the authors argue, most countries have been migrating toward a more inclusive society. For the latter, this is no surprise. We have been entirely too optimistic about the relationship between the perception of inequality and the rejection of it. Instead there is growing evidence of acceptance

and justification, undergirded by exactly the "othering" stance identified by Bloemraad and her colleagues.

"Membership without Social Citizenship" opens with an apparent paradox. Barriers to racial and ethnic intermarriage have been falling in Europe and the United States, and naturalization policies increasingly embrace the foreign born who can now claim citizenship in countries from which they were formerly excluded for life. At the same time, welfare chauvinism – the view that safety nets are legitimate for insiders but not for "others" deemed unworthy – is growing. From one perspective, those others "r us." From another, their undeserving status means they will never truly "be us," regardless of their citizenship or their legal rights. This is characterized as a jarring contradiction.

A case can be made that the trend toward inclusion identified by Bloemraad and her colleagues came to a near complete stop in the last decade, especially in Western Europe. They note this in passing, with a reference to a "halt" in 2008. But from my perspective, not enough is made of this reversal. As the storm over illegal immigration grew – exacerbated by accounts of thousands of Africans drowning in the Mediterranean and "caravans" of migrants camping outside the entrance to the Channel Tunnel – the right-wing turn we have seen in the rise of Victor Orban in Hungary, the rejection of Angela Merkel's pro-immigration policy in Germany, the growth of extremism in Poland, and the success of the "Leave" movement in England has brought us full circle back to sentiments and electoral victories not seen since World War II. Donald Trump's election on the backs of demonized migrants cemented the participation of the United States in this unholy xenophobia. There is likely more to come in Venezuela and elsewhere.

In some respects, "Membership without Citizenship" catches this history in midstream. It points quite legitimately to the progressive sentiments underlying birth-based citizenship and naturalization and rising rates of intermarriage and focuses on the growth of welfare chauvinism as a growing reaction that reinforces boundaries of "us" and "them." Post 2008, though, I believe it is fair to say that reactionary elements have grown so strong and politically successful that the universalist thrust is nearly dead in the water, or at least very compromised. Closing borders, restricting legal immigration, overthrowing decades-long policies designed to incorporate immigrants, ordering rescue boats to leave refugees to drown in the Mediterranean, and similarly harsh measures in the United States (like separating children from families, throwing asylum seekers into detention) strike me as a nearly fatal blow to the progressive and inclusive trends of the past. This is more devastating than "deservingness," for that could always discover exceptions and hence forms of inclusion. Nativism, right-wing populism, and nationalism strike me as incompatible with the relativism implied by a "deserving" paradigm. They are extreme illustrations of political scientist Robert Putnam's distressing observations about the role of diversity in the growth of intolerance, conclusions these authors believe are premature, but strike me as on point in this era.

It would be instructive for Bloemraad and her coauthors to consider what this right-wing surge means in their theoretical universe. Can it be accommodated by their model? Or do we need some additional sociological studies of the far right (and its success) to come to grips with these developments?

Son Hing and her colleagues have an explanation for these developments that is not particularly comforting: the

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greater inequality becomes, the more that forces of segregation (in media consumption and residential location) create the conditions of ignorance or blindness to its extent, and tendencies toward "system justification" sustain acceptance of its pernicious distributional consequences. On this account, we have been entirely too optimistic and there is no paradox. Rising inequality actually triggers psychological responses that justify and applaud outcomes that are wildly disparate because they are seen as part of the natural order and critical to motivation for self-help and success. Redistribution, the remedy espoused by progressives when reckoning with inequality, here generates a response that suggests redistribution will weaken a society, dampen the necessary energy for forward motion, and create dependency where there should be resilience.

"Failure to Respond to Rising Income Inequality" argues that we have completely misunderstood the psychological mechanisms triggered by a recognition of inequality. The more inequality grows, the more it is rationalized and legitimated. What follows then is not the desire to help or support those who are on the receiving end, but instead "prejudice toward the poor and more conflictual intergroup relations."[4] Son Hing's work helps us understand why this would be particularly pronounced among the working class, who are uncomfortably vulnerable but psychologically inclined to distance themselves from those who are truly disadvantaged.

This essay makes it clear that the ability of most survey respondents to assess existing levels of inequality is weak at best. Respondents typically underestimate inequity, particularly by failing to understand how wealthy those at the top of the income distribution actually are. The concentration of media power in the hands of moguls like Rupert Murdock, who have an interest in masking this issue, actively retards social awareness of inequality. This blindness, Son Hing argues, is most pronounced in countries with the highest actual levels of inequality.

Most distressing of all the findings in this essay is that the more inequality, the more strongly subjects endorse the notion that inequality is desirable and, over time, this inclination grows as the pattern of distribution comes to be seen as normative. The power of "belief in a just world" and "system justification" underwrite these perspectives. For people to reject the legitimacy of what they perceive seems to be too destabilizing and the reversion to visions of normalcy is comforting.

Disturbing as it may seem, this argument helps us to understand how people now living under a government like Hungary's, which is demonizing immigrants and harkening back to the darkest days of the Nazi regime, would come to accept extremism as something quite different: the status quo. At the same time, Son Hing's essay does not help us understand how that kind of worldview can flip on its head and become a source of popular criticism. History is full of such reversals, of collective revulsion for what was once seen as the norm. In countries like Germany, entire generations followed World War II with blistering critiques of what their parents and grandparents had contributed to murderous fascism. The Roosevelt era saw a public embrace of redistribution, public employment, social security, and a host of other policy moves that would have been unthinkable only a few years before. How did those reversals come to pass? And how does the framework in Son Hing's essay help us understand that social history? I would argue it is better at accounting for the acceptance of inequality than it is at explaining those periods when the opposite was in vogue.

If the first two essays focus on psychological processes of determining deservingness and justification for inequality, the second two are united by a concern for the spatial organization of inequality and the ways in which segregation translates into social immobility that places those at the bottom ever farther from the possibilities of upward mobility in the form of employment, marriage prospects, and the accumulation of wealth.

They argue that spatial segregation and all that follows in the way of sociological consequences is a creature of politics and policy. These are not "naturally occurring" forms of inequality, however much they may be self-reinforcing. They happen when those with power are able to bend public investment, zoning, lending policies, inheritance taxes, public expenditures in education, transportation, and the like to their advantage. Accordingly, the spatial sorting process either accelerates where elites have been particularly influential or is dampened by progressive policies that mitigate capital accumulation.

Le Galès and Pierson provide a fascinating account of the evolution of "spatial polarization" in the "superstar cities" of London, Paris, New York, and San Francisco. Of course, it has not gone unnoticed that housing prices are astronomical in at least three of these four examples – Paris being somewhat less costly – as the concentration of finance capital, lucrative tech industries, and the cultural amenities that appeal to well-heeled consumers proceeds apace. With this agglomeration of wealth comes social sorting, bringing well-educated women and men of marriageable age into proximity with one another, promoting assortative mating that yields new cycles of class stratification.

That Paris has remained relatively immune to this pattern (even as prices have

increased) is a testimony to French social policies that support social housing and rental sectors. Home ownership is lower in France than in the neoliberal economies where housing is a critical aspect of the safety net, given weaker welfare policies. London under Margaret Thatcher sold off much of its council housing, and in a nod to the working class, enabled a single generation to benefit from these sales, but locked out succeeding generations from the ability to live in England's capital city at all.

New York and San Francisco, both of which have become stratospherically expensive (and hence a haven for international investors looking to park their wealth), are embedded in policy regimes that enable intergenerational transfers of wealth that intensify class stratification. Thus, while adult children of the very rich can often count on their parents enabling the accumulation process in the next generation, those who chose their parents poorly will find themselves locked out of the sweepstakes, facing high prices, lower wages, and costly rents.

These dynamics lead to geographic immobility because the costs of moving to a high opportunity zone are prohibitive, which in turn imposes limits on occupational and earnings opportunities. Even in an era of electronic communication, physical proximity matters, and not just for dating. It opens and closes doors of all kinds.

While I agree with virtually all of these observations, I also reluctantly acknowledge that market dynamics can (and do seem to be) intervening in the concentration of opportunity. The tech giants that were once confined to Silicon Valley are spreading out. Their employees cannot afford and do not want to indenture themselves to pay for exorbitant real estate. As a result, we see states like Texas and Utah jump into the high-tech act.

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Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh becomes a first-class engineering school and it catalyzes the development of a once deindustrialized city and the attraction of a tech class that does not want to pay Bay Area prices. Amazon decides to hold a contest for its second headquarters and it steadfastly avoids some likely (but high-priced) prospects like Boston and suburban Virginia. Those communities fear the "Seattle-ization" of their communities, but for now we have an engine of economic prosperity plunked down in a less likely spot because they were looking to avoid precisely the kind of segregated wealth that Le Galès and Pierson point to.

It is one of the ironies of contemporary inequality that it is intertwined with forms of meritocracy. As "The Rise of Opportunity Markets" argues, it is no longer sufficient for the wealthy simply to pass on material advantages to their children. The gates of Harvard and Stanford do not swing open as easily for the scions of rich families as they once did. Instead, children of privilege must compete for entry. Even though one can point to the legacy admissions process as a "thumb on the scale," on the whole it would be regarded as illegitimate to admit a low scoring, poorly performing freshman from a wealthy family unless there was some compensating talent (an extraordinary athlete, for example). Outside of those examples, Grusky and his colleagues argue, the rich must now pass through a similar sifting process as the rest. Nothing testifies more keenly to the pressures this produces than the college admissions scandal that brought to light the "pay to play" schemes of wealthy parents who bribed university coaches at Yale, Stanford, and, most notoriously, the University of Southern California to admit children who did not participate in the sports in question.

For those who stick by the rules, the scramble to access the proving grounds that will yield necessary accomplishments (from high test scores, to opportunities to demonstrate leadership in clubs or contests, to AP courses or musical training) is coveted. It is also spatially confined to areas that can afford to pay for it, which in turn means that the ability to accumulate this kind of intellectual capital is not randomly distributed. It is part and parcel of a system of opportunity markets, underwritten by an educational system paid for by local real estate taxes.

Recognizing that this becomes an exercise in inequity, universities have built systems of financial aid and affirmative action that are designed to at least partially level the playing field. Grusky and his colleagues argue that this is generally too little, too late. Accumulated advantage is simply too hard to compete against for those who come from less privileged neighborhoods. We do not enable parents to borrow money for high-quality childcare to create a better shot at the next stage of educational competition. We simply correct for inequality at the back end and hope the diamonds in the rough somehow get noticed.

They argue instead that we should adopt variations on the theme of the "Texas 10 percent" policy, admitting students who are at the top of each of the ten deciles (or more) of the American income distribution. Whether this is a workable approach or not, the fact that it seems plausible owes a great deal to the interventionist culture that has grown up alongside massive stratification and inequality. As a society, we are clearly not comfortable with the opportunity markets they point to and hence we intervene to reset the competition. Even if not completely effective, these efforts have made high-prestige universities far more accessible to low-income and minority

students than they ever were in the past. It may be "too late" for some, possibly even for millions. But it is also "just in time" for millions more who have benefited from our inadequate, but not negligible, attempts to correct for hoarding, zoning, educational inequality, and the like.

The final essay in this remarkable volume takes a more philosophical and comparative approach, looking at three case studies in which progressives have struggled to define who should be treated through the lens of equality and who should be treated differently in order to achieve equalities of outcome. In each instance, well-meaning advocates initially argue for treating the disadvantaged just the same as everyone else as a means of avoiding discrimination, and are brought up short thereafter when it becomes obvious that the traces of oppression have created such profound differences that equal treatment is not enough. Instead, some kind of special dispensation is necessary in order to create the conditions of fair competition.

Yet this very recognition runs the risk of "essentializing" the parties in question. If women need time off from work because they are uniquely able to breast-feed their infants, then formal equivalence will never be enough. Instead, difference must be recognized in order to truly level that playing field. If African Americans appear to react differently to a medication than whites, personalized medicine may – all at once – create a better treatment regime and call into question a sacred assumption: that race is not biological but social. As the authors quote one European feminist: "equal treatment of unequals only reproduce[s] the existing inequality."[5]

The authors struggle, as we all do, with figuring out how to justify the ends we know we are seeking. We want equality of outcome and oscillate over whether that end can be pursued without invoking means that point away from similarity and toward difference. The historical examples though do seem to point toward a consensus that the outcome is really what a just society looks to produce. Imperfect means of arriving at that end may be the price we pay for that, and caution is clearly warranted lest those means turn out to have pernicious consequences of their own.

If personalized medicine reifies the meaning of race, turning it into a hardened reality that progressives reject, then we must still find a way to acknowledge the reality that the history of disadvantage leaves a physical trace. Environment matters. Stress accumulates and leaves a mark in physical differences. The production of biological difference is not necessarily testimony to genetic endowments; it may be instead the mark of stress, as public health researcher Arlene Geronimus instructed us long ago in her pioneering work on accelerated aging among young black women.

I began this commentary by noting that inequality has been a hot topic now for more than twenty years. It is hard to imagine an interdisciplinary field of this kind remaining for so long a source of such creative social science. Yet as these essays make clear, there is still a great deal left to understand about the causes, consequences, and remedies of this striking feature of the modern era. Our fields lost two giants in the study of inequality in the last year: sociologists Devah Pager and Eric Olin Wright. Each of them would have agreed that these essays add a great deal to our understanding of inequality and that there nevertheless is a very long way to go before we have exhausted the topic.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Irene Bloemraad, Will Kymlicka, Michèle Lamont, and Leanne S. Son Hing, "Membership without Social Citizenship? Deservingness & Redistribution as Grounds for Equality," *Dædalus* 148 (3) (Summer 2019); and Leanne S. Son Hing, Anne E. Wilson, Peter Gourevitch, Jaslyn English, and Parco Sin, "Failure to Respond to Rising Income Inequality: Processes That Legitimize Growing Disparities," *Dædalus* 148 (3) (Summer 2019).

² David B. Grusky, Peter A. Hall, and Hazel Rose Markus, "The Rise of Opportunity Markets: How Did It Happen & What Can We Do?" *Dædalus* 148 (3) (Summer 2019); and Patrick Le Galès and Paul Pierson, "'Superstar Cities' & the Generation of Durable Inequality," *Dædalus* 148 (3) (Summer 2019).

³ Jane Jenson, Francesca Polletta, and Paige Raibmon, "The Difficulties of Combatting Inequality in Time," *Dædalus* 148 (3) (Summer 2019).

⁴ Son Hing et al., "Failure to Respond to Rising Income Inequality," 110.

⁵ Jenson et al., "The Difficulties of Combatting Inequality in Time," 146.

Process-Policy & Outcome-Policy: Rethinking How to Address Poverty & Inequality

Vijayendra Rao

Abstract: Process matters not just for diagnosing the causes of inequality, but also for how policy is shaped. The dominant paradigms for policy-making – neoliberalism, neo-Keynesianism, and neo-paternalism – largely address inequality via "outcome-policies" that manipulate the levers of government and, more recently, draw on randomized trials and "nudges" to change behavior, in a manner that is not only easy to measure, but also easy to reverse. This commentary draws on the essays in this special issue of Dædalus *to make the case for "reflectivism," which shifts structural inequalities in agency, power, social structure, empathy, and aspiration in an incremental manner that is more uncertain and difficult to measure, but that can result in more lasting change.*

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The essays in this special issue of *Dædalus* represent a major attempt to move the diagnosis of inequality from a static to a process view. Several important themes emerge from this lens: 1) the interaction between economic, social, and cultural processes in generating inequality and the centrality of the need for interdisciplinary analysis; 2) four approaches through which inequality-generating processes might work – evaluation, quantification, commodification, and policy drift; 3) the linkages between micro-, meso-, and macrolevels of analysis; and 4) the importance, in thinking of inequality-generating processes, of taking a *longue durée* view. For the most part, however, the emphasis of the essays in this collection is on diagnosing

the causes of inequality, rather than finding solutions.[1] Moreover, they are based on an analysis of conditions in North America and Western Europe, where the concern is much more on the shift, over the last few decades, from equality-generating to inequality-generating processes. This is different from the conditions in countries that are home to most of the world's poor, whose rise in inequality has been coupled with large reductions in poverty and relative expansions of social safety nets over the last two decades. But what is common to both the global North and South is the threat to democratic institutions and processes. In this commentary, I address some of these gaps and reflect on how interdisciplinary process-thinking may result in a paradigm shift in how we think about policy. While I will draw on experiences and evidence from the developing world, these points may be of broader relevance.

The manner in which we translate the desire to create a more equal world with less poverty into action is shaped by how we organize and think about the world, how we approach causality, and how we make abstract ideas legible by methods of measurement and categorization. Over the last century, the policy options available have tended to focus on what I call *outcome-policies*, as opposed to *process-policies*.

An outcome-policy focuses on manipulating the levers of government – taxes, expenditures, regulations, systems of implementation – to achieve certain outcomes. The success of the policy is judged by those outcomes. Most policies to combat inequality and poverty fall under this rubric. Think, for example, of conditional cash transfers (whose success is measured by the extent to which the transfers encourage people to satisfy the "condition," such as keeping children in school), increasing estate taxes

(measured by the extent to which they increase intergenerational social mobility), or providing health insurance (measured by effects on public health and economic hardship). Outcome-policies are thus closely tied to metrics, which also inform debates over their efficacy. If the political environment is favorable, outcome-based policies are relatively easy to institute by legislative or executive action. They are also easy to reverse.

A process-policy attempts to shift the trajectory of change. Its effects can be more difficult to measure because its proximate impact is often subtle. It focuses on equalizing power relationships by shifting the process of decision-making in favor of the less privileged, and on the incremental change of one step building on the last. The full impact of a process-policy generally takes a much longer time to reveal itself but can be longer-lasting because it reduces the inequalities and imperfections in how decisions are made. Examples include systems of deliberative decision-making that have constitutional sanction, political reservations for discriminated minorities and women, and adaptive systems of project implementation.

Policies for human welfare, growth, inequality, and poverty are broadly conditioned by three paradigms that largely derive from economics. Like all ideal types, these categories are not mutually exclusive but intersect in a variety of ways and share many elements. They are for the most part outcome-policy oriented, though they also include some process-policies. To these, I propose adding a fourth paradigm that is more shaped by political and social theory, intersecting with and also complementing the three dominant approaches. My goal is not to advocate for the "best" way of approaching the problem – I do not believe there is

any such thing – but to give more weight to an approach that has been relatively neglected.

First, the *neoliberal* paradigm that grows from deep skepticism about the capacity of social science to understand complex human interactions, and thus the ability of policy to engineer a better world. This approach emphasizes the key principles of laissez-faire markets, free trade, human rights, and electoral democracy. The idea is that free markets result in high rates of economic growth, while electoral democracy ensures that governments are held accountable and create the conditions for growth.[2] This approach underlies the "Washington consensus" that prevailed in the development policy world through the 1980s and 1990s and that over the long term, recent evidence has shown, has led to higher rates of growth.[3]

The neoliberal approach to poverty reduction argues that maximizing economic growth and improving and equalizing access to human capital allows every individual to benefit from the growth and be liberated from poverty. There is some evidence in favor of this,[4] but also evidence showing that "the growth incidence of poverty" – the effect that a 1 percent increase in economic growth has on relative reductions in poverty – is conditioned by inequality.[5] There is also strong reason to believe that neoliberal policies increase inequality and reduce social support, for instance, by creating "opportunity markets" that commodify and sharply restrict access to basic needs such as education and housing.[6]

The driving discipline behind neoliberalism is rational-choice economics, which provides a consistent framework to think about growth, welfare, poverty, and equality of opportunity. It derives from a worldview that is methodologically individualistic with the central goal of ensuring that markets function as efficiently as possible. Individual freedoms are central to the approach, and democratic accountability through elections is a crucial counterpoint to market efficiency. Rational-choice methodological individualism is not easily reconciled with notions of social exclusion or cultural and political inequality. Thus, any argument for socially driven policy-making – to promote gender equality or social cohesion, for instance – within a neoliberal paradigm has to be filtered through a growth prism. Hence the slew of papers from the 1990s on the positive effects of women's education and social capital on growth.[7]

Welfare is measured through either an income metric or consumption metric. This has spawned a large industry measuring individual- and household-level income and consumption through household surveys, which are then used to calculate poverty rates via a poverty line defined in terms of dollars and cents. Note that the neoliberal paradigm, by focusing on core principles rather than policy proposals, is primarily process-driven, rather than driven by outcomes. However, the processes are largely devoted to creating an environment for prosperity rather than economic equality.

The second approach, which I will broadly term *neo-Keynesian*, is a counter to the perceived limitations of neoliberalism. It is much more cognizant of market failure and convinced of the ability of the social sciences to inform policy solutions that deal with market failure. With policies informed by growth models that emphasize investments in physical and human capital, growth is still a priority, but with an awareness of the central role played by ideas and information. There is acute awareness of the inability of markets to deliver basic services to the poor and of systemic discrimination. Poverty

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is still a welfarist metric, but along with data on income and consumption, household surveys now collect data on gender, religion, race, and caste to enable analyses of discrimination. There is broad recognition of the need for equality of opportunity and for the necessity of legal interventions to ensure it. Strong support for affirmative action in employment and government is a key element.

All this provides the justification for more interventionist governments, as shown in the important slate of recommendations to tackle inequality made by the economist Tony Atkinson.[8] Atkinson's recommendations include directing technological change to favor more employment, increased minimum wages, a capital endowment fund that ensures that everyone has a minimum inheritance, and progressive property taxes. Governments are expected to invest in infrastructure, education, and public access to better health, nutrition, and sanitation. Governments are expected to ensure effective safety nets so the vulnerable are not subject to acute distress. The enhanced role for the government also results in an emphasis on "good governance" and thus greater awareness of the importance of equalizing access to information and improving public service delivery. This leads to a greater appreciation of government failure and, in particular, of clientelism and difficulties in ensuring the interests of women and minorities. Neo-Keynesianism is thus the archetype of outcome-policy-making.

The third approach, though it is arguably a more stringent extension of the second, is called *neopaternalism*.[9] Neopaternalism, which has exploded in influence over the last decade, starts from exactly the other end of neoliberalism in its abiding belief in the power of social science and data, particularly behavioral experiments and randomized trials, to give direction to policy, and the use of "big data" for diagnosis and surveillance. It takes its cues from public health with a firm commitment to "evidence-based" policy-making. It draws on research from behavioral science on "scarcity" to argue that the poor face large constraints on their time and attention that direct them to make suboptimal choices.[10] Thus, the freedom to choose is not a meaningful option when the *ability* to choose is itself severely constrained. This provides the justification for a top-down push to shift people away from perceived harmful actions, norms, and practices.[11]

This then requires policy-makers – governments and NGOs – to find ways of doing things that the poor cannot do for themselves. What those things are, however, depends on whether the policy option has been vetted by "rigorous" evidence. What follows is a synergistic relationship between research and policy-making: an industry of social scientists testing the efficacy of various interventions around the world with surveys and experiments. One advantage of this is that it generates vast amounts of data that shed light on a wide variety of outcomes that affect the poor. While income and consumption definitions of poverty are still prevalent, there is now a broader understanding of the conditions faced by the poor. Another advantage is that it creates a culture in which policy has to be justified with evidence rather than hope or idealism. And a third advantage is that it focuses attention on the efficacy of intervention design, weeding out good designs from bad ones.

The disadvantages, however, have been well cataloged by scholars.[12] Here, I want to focus on two that are central to the case for a fourth paradigm. Neopaternalism has, within it, the danger of overreach. Policy can be driven by the narrow demands of scientific technique, rather than scientific technique being driven by the needs

of policy: a case of the tail wagging the dog. If all evidence is to be passed through the test of a behavioral experiment or a randomized trial, then policy interventions that are not amenable to experimentation and randomization will be gradually eliminated from consideration. Moreover, a good randomized trial requires good implementation because imperfect implementation would contaminate the design of the experiment; it would be difficult to untangle the effect of the design from the effect of the implementation. This means that trials, in essence, assume away the challenge of implementation: the complicated process by which policy ideas are converted into action on the ground. This deemphasizes what scholars since Albert Hirschman have argued is the critical problem of policy-making, particularly in poor countries.[13]

Behavioral experiments and randomized trials, moreover, have trouble dealing with high degrees of contextual variation. An experiment or intervention that works in one region will not necessarily work in another: the well-known problem of external validity. Advocates for randomization have dealt with this by conducting trials across a variety of countries to test the efficacy of a design, or by conducting randomized trials at a very large scale.[14] But this solution gets much more difficult with "complex" interventions, such as those tailored for and, in particular, tailored by communities at the microlevel. Such designs are very difficult to evaluate with standard techniques because wide variations in design make sample sizes with adequate statistical power untenable for reasons of cost and manageability. Neopaternalism, therefore, intrinsically favors interventions that are simple, do not require much adaptation on the ground, and have predictable outcomes.

Neopaternalism, while cognizant of social norms and the contribution of structural constraints to mobility and the reproduction of inequality, is far more comfortable with certainty than it is with reflexivity. Nonrational action is adduced via behavioral experiments, with cultural "traits" and social norms seen as good or bad. There is, implicitly, little patience for contextual complexity, participant observation, or participant engagement to discover the complex interactions between cultural and social process, economic conditions, and politics that determine persistent inequality. The goal is to discover broad "truths" to inform policies to design "nudges" to move people out of what are seen as harmful or dysfunctional behaviors. The analysis of culture and social interactions is, therefore, part of the scientific apparatus of the expert, to nudge people toward improvements in welfare, as the experts define it.

It is important to note that all three paradigms rely on the checks, balances, and accountability mechanisms of electoral democracy. Neoliberalism and neo-Keynesianism are both closely intertwined with the notion that universal franchise will be enough to keep government actions aligned with the needs and interests of citizens. Neopaternalism takes this reliance one step further. What legal scholar Cass Sunstein calls "liberal paternalism" requires that governments do not use the power of behavioral nudges to impinge on the fundamental freedoms of citizens.[15]

But the limitations of the electoral mechanism as a way of governing large, complex societies have increasingly become apparent, with challenges like elite capture and clientelism taking influence throughout the world.[16] This weakening of electoral democracy as a mechanism to check elite dominance is partly responsible for unleashing processes of commensuration, commodification, and policy drift that have reinforced inequality-generating processes.[17] Moreover, we live in

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an age when big data is increasingly being used toward a new form of "surveillance capitalism," causing widespread concern that without urgent regulatory measures, the ability to track and monitor people with extremely precise data will increasingly lead to the delegitimization of democratic processes.[18]

Moreover, democracy "has come to mean much more than free and fair elections, though nothing less."[19] Throughout the world, at every level – micro, meso, and macro – people have organized themselves into bodies to monitor those in power, in what political theorist John Keane has called "monitory democracy." To mention just a few, such institutions include citizen committees, self-help groups, minipublics, environmental groups, think tanks, and organizations such as the Bretton-Woods Project, which monitors the IMF and World Bank. Moreover, such institutions can exist even in more authoritarian settings like China, where citizens groups, often with the active concordance of civil servants, have created "accountability without democracy" working within systems of "authoritarian deliberation."[20] Such forums for citizen engagement and participation do not always emerge organically but are induced by policy interventions, with development organizations spending hundreds of billions of dollars on such projects with the hope that they will alleviate poverty and empower the excluded.[21]

It is clear that a new paradigm of action has emerged that relies much more on process-policy than on outcome-policy, particularly in comparison with the three dominant paradigms. It may be time to give this paradigm a label and sketch its basic characteristics.

Economists think about inequality largely through the lens of equality of opportunity. A process perspective suggests that this is not sufficient to deal with the relational aspects of deprivation. As Michèle Lamont and Paul Pierson argue in their contribution to this issue of *Dædalus*, the processes that reproduce, intensify, or deepen inequality are often distinct from those that generated it, and are fundamentally influenced by social relationships.[22] Furthermore, in arguing that human beings are primarily held back by exogenous obstacles and not endogenous processes, equality of opportunity implicitly assumes a distinction between preferences and constraints. Equality of opportunity, consequently, needs to be supplemented by an "equality of agency" that takes into account the impact of the relationality of individuals; the political, social, and cultural contexts within which they operate; and the impact of these processes on power differences, inequality, and poverty.[23]

The *reflective* paradigm for policy-making follows from this. It recognizes that even if someone is lifted above an externally defined poverty line, they may still be subject to vulnerability, discrimination, and exclusion because they lack voice, agency, and what anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has called the "capacity to aspire," the ability to envision a future different from what they see around them.[24] It is fundamentally about redrawing boundaries and shifting "norms of interaction."[25] It allows for the fact that discrimination is not just material, it is also "epistemic" in the sense that the capacity to speak, and be listened to, is also unequally distributed.[26]

The term *reflective* builds on political theorist Robert Goodin's notion of "reflective democracy," the idea that an effective democracy needs to inculcate the capacity for individuals to "deliberate within."[27] Deliberating within creates the space for what sociologist Mario Luis Small has called "cognitive empathy":

"the ability to understand another person's predicament as they understand it."[28] But it is a fundamental challenge to do this at the scale of entire communities and countries, to change processes of decision-making so that the powerful and the less powerful – politicians, government officials, and citizens alike – all develop horizontal and vertical cognitive empathy.

Many social movements, governance innovations, and policy interventions around the world are attempting to turn this paradigm into practice. While there are large variations in the specifics of their actions and objectives, some important processes are worth noting:

- Filling in the blank space between elections by fostering continuous dialogue between citizens and governments. This requires the creation of systems of deliberative decision-making.[29] The "system" usually has some kind of officially sanctioned civic space – a forum or a regularly scheduled public meeting – where the average citizen is given a chance to influence directly public decisions that have a bearing on their lives. But forums alone are not enough; they need to be embedded within a culture of dialogue, debate, and discussion in which the goal is to make the act of speaking and listening an everyday practice.

- Equalizing power in decision-making by giving voice to disadvantaged groups and, more radically, by reserving a percentage of seats in legislatures for representatives from such groups.

- Creating feedback loops within governments, and between governments and citizens, in which decision-making becomes adaptive and incremental.[30] This helps governments deliver better public services and respond to the needs of citizens.

- Using technology in a way that gives people control over their own data to strengthen democratic processes, facilitate collective action, and equalize access to public services.[31]

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Implementing policies that do this at scale is neither easy nor predictable; indeed, it is not always measurable. As Jane Jenson, Francesca Polletta, and Paige Raibmon show in their essay in this volume, to get this right requires an understanding of policy not as a one-shot deal, but as a process of constant adaptation, through which successes and failures provide lessons for incremental change.[32] Processes take a long time to show "hard" results because they shift trajectories of change in unpredictable ways. Thus, it is important to analyze shifts in processes like how decisions are made, in power relations and in narratives and discourse. These are difficult to measure in conventional ways and require us to draw on qualitative methods and narrative analysis, including natural language processing methods.[33] It also requires coordination across quantitative and qualitative methods, for instance by conducting mixed-methods evaluations.[34] The process of adaptive, citizen-engaged policy-making also helps avoid the problem of "policy drift," when policies are fixed in the past rather than adapted to changing times.

What are the disadvantages? The reflective paradigm requires that policymakers take a very long time horizon. It requires a tolerance of mess because it attempts to reverse inequalities in power and agency, which is, at best, a contentious and uncertain process. Perhaps the most significant challenge is that governments (and other quasigovernment actors like the World Bank and donor agencies) are not set up to work with process-policies.[35] The logic of bureaucracies and the political environments

in which they function make them much more focused on interventions that can induce a quick, measurable impact that does not threaten the political status quo.

The essays in this collection make an important contribution toward rethinking the diagnosis of inequality to help reverse inequality-generating processes. I have tried in this commentary to draw on some of the ideas in these essays, along with other literatures, to make the case for a new reflective paradigm for policy-making that focuses on process-policies, rather than outcome-policies, that can supplement neoliberal, neo-Keynesian, and neopaternalistic paradigms that have dominated how we think about policy. In practice, policies at any given time in any given country will draw on all four paradigms; and it is not clear that any one paradigm is clearly superior to any other. They have different goals with different methods of execution. However, the reflective paradigm tends to be neglected in policy circles precisely because it is not easy to measure.

Process-policies usually come about as the result of years of efforts by activists working organically, usually at a small scale, within social movements or nongovernmental organizations. Given contemporary concerns about unstable democratic institutions and inequality, it may be time to think about how to bring them to the mainstream.

ENDNOTES

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[5] Martin Ravallion, "Growth, Inequality and Poverty: Looking Beyond Averages," *World Development* 29 (11) (2001): 1803–1815.

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