

Difference and Inequality¹

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What is the relation between difference and inequality? I want to approach this deceptively simple yet formidably abstract question by way of a thought experiment. Consider a world characterized—like our own—by both horizontal and vertical social divisions (Blau 1977: 8–9). On a horizontal plane, people categorize themselves and others according to a *logic of significant similarity and difference*. They identify with others whom they see as similar in some meaningful way, and they distinguish themselves from others whom they see as significantly different—in ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, language, religion, gender, sexuality, taste, temperament, or the like. On a vertical plane, people can be ranked according to whether they have *more or less* of some generally desired good: more or less wealth, income, education, respect, health, occupational prestige, legal rights, basic existential security, or the like.

Now imagine—and here's where the thought experiment comes in—that horizontal categories and vertical rankings were entirely independent of one another. The horizontal categories into which people sort themselves and others—groupings based on ethnicity, religion, or musical taste, for example—would not differ systematically by income, wealth, education, and so on. Differences of income, wealth, and education would be differences *within* social categories, not *between* them. Members of different categories would have the same chances of being ranked high or low on any vertical dimension.

In this hypothetical world, difference would have no bearing on inequality. People would be different, and they would be unequal; but the mechanisms that generate inequalities would be

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unconnected with the processes through which people sort themselves and others into categories based on similarity and difference. The mechanisms that generate inequalities would be difference-blind: who *is* what would be independent of who *gets* what.

This is evidently not the world we inhabit. In our world, differences of race, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, sexuality, citizenship, and so on *do* have a systematic bearing on inequality. But how? This is the question I address in this chapter, focusing on the ways *categorical* differences—differences that are organized, experienced, and represented in terms of discrete, bounded, and relatively stable categories (such as black and white, Sunni and Shiite, male and female, citizen and foreigner)—are implicated in the production and reproduction of inequality.

These and other ascribed categorical differences are not *intrinsically* linked to inequality; *different* does not necessarily imply *unequal*. The relation between difference and inequality is contingent, not necessary; it is empirical, not conceptual. And the degree to which and manner in which inequality is structured along categorical lines vary widely over time and context. Certain categorical differences that were once pervasively implicated in regimes of inequality—such as distinctions among Protestants, Catholics, and Jews and among certain ethnic categories in the United States—are no longer so implicated today. And a wide range of legally mandated forms of categorically unequal treatment have been delegitimized throughout the developed world in a remarkably short span of time. To study the relation between difference and inequality is to study historically situated social processes; it is not to identify timeless truths.

I begin by critically engaging Charles Tilly's influential account of how categories of difference are implicated in the generation and maintenance of inequality. Taking issue with Tilly's claim that major categories of difference work in fundamentally similar ways, I consider in subsequent sections how citizenship, gender, and ethnicity—broadly understood as including race as well as ethnicity-like forms of religion—contribute to the production and reproduction of inequality in quite differing ways. I return in the penultimate section to a more general level of analysis and outline three general processes through which categories of difference work to produce and sustain position-mediated inequalities: the allocation of persons to reward-bearing positions; the social production of unequally equipped categories of persons; and the social definition of positions and their rewards. In the final section, I discuss ways in which inequalities not only are mediated by reward-bearing positions but also—notably in the case of the social distribution of honor—attach directly to categories of persons, independently of the positions

they occupy. I suggest in closing that even as inequality has increased dramatically in certain respects in recent decades, it has assumed forms that are less strictly categorical.

Tilly on Categorical Inequality

The theory of categorical inequality Tilly developed in *Durable Inequality* (1998) focuses on organizations—firms, hospitals, universities, and states, for example—as key sites of inequality. Organizations are key because inequalities of wealth, income, prestige, and even health and basic physical security are increasingly mediated by positions in formal organizations. Jobs are the obvious example of such positions. Income inequality in the United States depends primarily on unequal rewards from jobs rather than unequal holdings of capital assets. Today’s rich are not rentiers; they are the “working rich” (Saez 2013; Godechot 2007): highly paid employees and entrepreneurs.² Tilly’s account focuses primarily on how inequality is generated through linked and bounded clusters of jobs to which sharply differing rewards are attached. But positions in organizations structure inequality in other ways as well. Citizenship, for example, is a position in an organization (the modern state); as I show below, it profoundly shapes life chances on a global scale, structuring access to vastly different rewards and opportunities.

Durable inequality, on this account, turns on the matching or pairing of *internal* organizational categories with pervasively available *external* categories. Internal categories designate unequal positions (or clusters of positions) within an organization, differentiated by some combination of remuneration, authority, working conditions, and mobility opportunities. Examples include enlisted soldier and officer, doctor and nurse, executive and secretary, and the like. External categories are those that serve as major axes of distinction and inequality in the

² This represents a substantial shift from the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, when the very rich derived most of their income from capital. “The share of wage and salary income [in the top income percentile] has increased sharply from the 1920s to the present, and especially since the 1970s . . . a significant fraction of the surge in top incomes since 1970 is due to an explosion of top wages and salaries” (Saez 2013). As Saez notes, however, “such a pattern might not last for very long”: drastic cuts in the federal estate tax “could certainly accelerate the path toward the reconstitution of the great wealth concentration that existed in the U.S. economy before the Great Depression.” Saez’s longtime collaborator, Thomas Piketty (2014), has analyzed the “return of the rentier” (Milanovic 2014) in advanced capitalist economies.

wider social environment, around which cluster scripts and stories that explain and justify the inequalities. Examples include gender, race, ethnicity, citizenship, religion, and education.³

Tilly shows how external categories are “imported” into organizations along with scripts and local knowledge—shared understandings (or stereotypes) about the incumbents of those categories. He gives particular attention to the “matching” of internal and external categories: the processes through which positions in organizations are allocated such that major internal categorical divisions (between executive and secretary, for example) coincide with major external categorical divisions (between men and women, for example).

This is an original and fertile way of thinking about the organizational dimension of durable inequality. But while Tilly’s account of the mechanisms that sustain durable inequality is richly suggestive, it is also elusive. Probing the ambiguities in Tilly’s account can bring into sharper focus the social processes through which categorical differences are implicated in the production and reproduction of inequality.

Categorical inequality, for Tilly, is generated in the first instance by two mechanisms: exploitation and opportunity hoarding.⁴ Exploitation “operates when powerful, connected people command resources from which they draw significantly increased returns by coordinating the effort of outsiders whom they exclude from the full value added by that effort” (1998: 10). As the last clause of the definition suggests, this notion of exploitation—like the Marxist notion—would seem to depend on a theory of value. But Tilly neither endorses the notoriously problematic Marxian labor theory of value nor proposes an alternative. His notion of exploitation remains informal, resting on a commonsense understanding of powerful people coordinating the labor of outsiders and reaping the benefits of that labor.

The reference to “outsiders” suggests that categories of difference are implicated in processes of exploitation. Tilly illustrates this by analyzing the exploitation of Africans in South

³ The distinction between internal and external categories is relative (Tilly 1998: 77).

Citizenship, for example, is an internal category with respect to the state as a whole insofar as it is an internal position or status defined by the state as an organization. But it is at the same time an external category with respect to particular organizations or programs that are nested within or financed by the state, in the sense that it is taken by those organizations and programs as given and predefined. Citizenship is of course also an external category outside the sphere of the state.

⁴ Exploitation and opportunity hoarding, Tilly writes, “establish” categorical inequality; two further mechanisms, emulation and adaptation, which I do not consider here, work to “cement” such arrangements (1998: 10).

Africa under apartheid and of women in capitalist labor markets. While duly noting the evidently sharp differences, he argues that exploitation works through analogous causal processes in the two cases (1998: 136). The key in both cases is matching between major organizational divisions and external categorical pairs (White/African and male/female).⁵ Such matching is said to facilitate exploitation. The reasons for this are not fully spelled out, but the argument seems to be that matching stabilizes regimes of inequality and lowers the cost of maintaining them.

The matching processes that implicate race in South Africa under apartheid and gender in capitalist labor markets may be analogous at a certain level of abstraction. But they differ sharply in both degree and kind. Racial categories in South Africa under apartheid were constructed from above, legally defined, formally administered, and coercively enforced. They are not easily subsumed under Tilly's notion of "external categories"—categories that are pervasively available in the wider environment and "imported" into organizations along with scripts and stories. Racial categories were of course pervasively available in South Africa prior to the construction of the system of apartheid. But the available categories were radically reconstructed, codified, and formalized by the state in a gigantic top-down exercise in authoritative categorization. The processes through which racial categories were matched with economic position were directly political, legal, administrative, coercive, and formalized. The processes through which gender is matched with positions in capitalist firms, by contrast, are loose, informal, probabilistic, decentralized, and mediated through individual-level self-understandings, occupational aspirations, and human capital endowments; and the *degree* of matching is also much lower.

Tilly identifies "categorical exclusion" as a key element of his general analytical model of exploitation (1998: 128–132). This might seem to imply exclusion on the basis of categories of difference like race, gender, or citizenship, as in the examples he discusses at length. But there is an equivocation here. Categorical exclusion involves "boundaries between unequal and paired categories in which members of one category benefit from control of sequestered resources and receive returns from the other's output" (1998: 131). But what are the "unequal and paired categories"? They may simply be *internal* categories, defining unequally rewarded clusters of positions within an organization (manager and worker, doctor and nurse, or officer and enlisted soldier). Or they may be *external* categories (such as race, gender, or citizenship) that are matched (to differing degrees and through differing processes) to the internal categories. Tilly

⁵ Tilly is of course aware of the complexities of the system of racial classification under apartheid. But he argues that the workings of multicategorical systems of classification can be resolved analytically into the workings of categorical pairs (1998: 7).

highlights the latter configuration in his theoretical argument, but exploitation requires only the former. And his most powerful and compelling empirical analyses of “unequal and paired categories” that generate clearly categorical forms of exclusion in contemporary liberal democratic capitalist contexts concern internal organizational categories, not external categories.

In Marx’s account, from which Tilly claims to draw inspiration, exploitation requires only what Tilly would call internal categories: owners of the means of production, on the one hand, and workers who have been separated from the means of production, on the other. It does not require the matching of internal and external categories. And in Tilly’s own account, exploitation requires only that some—those who control valuable yet labor-demanding resources—enlist and coordinate the labor of others, while reaping for themselves (at least part of) the value added by that labor. These others need not differ by race, gender, citizenship, or the like; they may simply occupy subordinate organizationally defined positions (casual in relation to career employees; adjuncts in relation to tenured professors; or nurses in relation to physicians). These organizational distinctions may—and of course often do—map onto external categories (such that nurses are overwhelmingly women, and physicians, as was the case not so very long ago, overwhelmingly men); and Tilly calls attention to such cases. But the phenomenon of exploitation—and, more generally, the dynamics of capitalism—does not *pivot* or *depend* on this mapping.⁶ And while the matching of internal and external categories may stabilize regimes of categorical inequality (1998: 76, 78, 81), it may also have the opposite effect: in a world in which formal categorical inequality has been powerfully delegitimized, the tight matching of internal and external categories may *destabilize* regimes of inequality, while the *loosening* of connections between internal and external categories may help legitimize and stabilize massive inequalities in control over organizational resources.

By identifying the processes and mechanisms through which external categories of difference can be linked to internal organizational categories, Tilly shows *how inequality can be categorical*, but he does not show *how categorical* the generation of inequality really is: how centrally implicated are categories of difference like race, ethnicity, gender, and citizenship in the processes that generate inequality. I shall argue in the conclusion to the chapter that even as

⁶ It is therefore puzzling, as Mann (1999: 29) has observed about the book, that while “we clearly see ethnicity, race, and gender—and many occupational categories—. . . we only dimly glimpse capitalism.” This is indeed, as Mann suggested, “quite an omission,” particularly since Tilly (1998: 38) was moved to write the book by his belief that “the intensity of capitalist inequality causes unnecessary suffering.”

“the intensity of capitalist inequality” (Tilly 1998: 38) has increased substantially in recent decades, categories of difference—with some exceptions—figure in the production and reproduction of inequality in an increasingly gradational and distributional manner rather than in the more strictly categorical manner suggested by Tilly’s notion of the matching of internal and external categories.

The second mechanism generating categorical inequality is what Tilly, building on Weber’s discussion of social closure, calls opportunity hoarding. This occurs when members of a “categorically bounded network” (1998: 91) reserve for themselves access to some valuable resource, such as job opportunities, clients, information, marriage partners, credit, patronage, or the right to practice a profession or trade. Like exploitation, opportunity hoarding depends on a boundary between insiders who control a valuable resource and outsiders who do not. But while exploitation requires insiders to mobilize the labor of outsiders, and then to exclude them from the full value added by that labor, opportunity hoarding is conceptually simpler: it does not require the coordination of the labor of outsiders, just their exclusion from access to the resource (1998: 91).⁷ Tilly gives many examples in passing but focuses on immigrant ethnic niches and, more briefly, licensed trades and professions.

“Categorically bounded networks” is a suggestive phrase, though an elusive one that Tilly does not seek to clarify. It usefully evokes three ways in which categories may enter into the workings of networks. First, networks may take root in categorically organized institutions (such as ethnic churches or associations). Second, network members may account for their connectedness in categorical terms (for example, through stories about common origins or common attributes). This self-understanding may lead them to exclude entire categories of outsiders from their networks and to limit new ties to categorical insiders. Recognized category membership may thus offer a point of entry into a network, even if it does not guarantee acceptance in the network; categorical outsiders, on the other hand, may have no chance of acceptance. A common language or religion, finally, may lower transaction costs, foster trust and accountability, promote the formation of social capital, and facilitate the development of networks of cooperative action (Landa 1981).

⁷ This reflects differences in the resources involved. The resource controlled by insiders in the case of exploitation is a “labor-demanding resource, from which they can extract returns only by harnessing the effort of others” (Tilly 1998: 86–87); the resource controlled by insiders in the case of opportunity hoarding can be enjoyed without mobilizing the labor of others.

Its suggestiveness notwithstanding, the notion of “categorically bounded networks” conceals a tension, joining elements with quite different logics that may work separately in practice. Categories are defined by commonality, networks by connectedness. Categories are classes of equivalent elements; networks are sets of relationships. Category members are not necessarily connected to one another, and relationally connected people need not belong to the same category. Definitionally positing “categorically bounded networks” as the agents of opportunity hoarding elides the difference between *network-based* and *category-based* modes of social closure and forecloses the question of whether, when, and how categories of difference are involved in insiders’ efforts to monopolize goods and opportunities.⁸

Keeping in mind the distinct logics of networks and categories makes it clear that networks—of friends, kin, or collaborators, for example—can hoard opportunities, regardless of whether their members belong to the same category. Even when their members do belong to the same category, the boundary between insiders (who can benefit from the monopolized opportunities) and outsiders is often determined by relational connectedness, not mere categorical commonality: what matters is *whom you know*, not just *who you are*. All network members may belong to the same ethnic category, for example, but not all members of the ethnic category belong to the network. To outsiders who belong to other ethnic categories, such opportunity hoarding may *appear* categorical; but those who belong to the same ethnic category, yet not to the relevant network, will be just as effectively excluded. The boundaries of networks,

⁸ On the “anticategorical imperative” that informs network analysis, see Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994: 1414. Networks are almost always homophilous in one respect or another (McPherson et al. 2001), and networks that are homophilous with respect to individual-level characteristics associated with the adoption of welfare-enhancing practices can exacerbate original levels of inequality when (via externalities, social learning, or normative influence) the networks affect the likelihood of adopting the practice (DiMaggio and Garip 2012). The network-mediated, inequality-amplifying processes reviewed by DiMaggio and Garip do not require categorically bounded networks, exclusion, or opportunity hoarding; they do not depend on a boundary between insiders who control a valuable resource and outsiders who do not. However, *high degrees* of homophily—insofar as they go well beyond baseline levels of homophily attributable to opportunity structures such as differential group size (McPherson et al. 2001)—can be understood as shading over into categorical closure. This suggests a way of connecting Tilly’s methodologically structuralist line of argument with the generally methodologically individualist research reviewed by DiMaggio and Garip (2012).

then—even ethnically organized networks—seldom correspond to the boundaries of categories; the line between insiders and outsiders depends on connectedness, not mere categorical commonality. Still, it's clear that network-based opportunity hoarding can and does contribute to categorical inequality, as African Americans, for example, get shut out of jobs in immigrant-dominated niches (Waldinger 1997).

While some forms of opportunity hoarding turn on informal relational connectedness, others turn on formal category membership. This is notably the case for licensed trades and professions. Here the boundary between insiders and outsiders—between those permitted to practice the profession or trade and others—is rigorously categorical. At the categorical boundary, networks are irrelevant: what matters is not whom you know but simply whether or not you are a member of the licensed category. (Inside the categorical boundary, to be sure, networks are once again relevant: particular networks of practitioners may hoard clients, for example.) Other examples of formal category-based opportunity hoarding—not mentioned by Tilly—include contracts that restrict jobs to union members; clubs that restrict the use of facilities to members; systems of quotas that reserve positions for members of particular social categories; and, with some stretching, legislation that reserves certain benefits for members of certain categories.

Does this kind of category-based opportunity hoarding contribute to categorical inequality? In one sense, of course, it does: by definition, it reserves certain goods and opportunities for category members and excludes nonmembers. But occupational licensing—Tilly's main example of category-based occupational hoarding—does not necessarily contribute to categorical inequality in the larger sense that is the main focus of *Durable Inequality*. It does not necessarily contribute, that is, to inequality based on race, gender, or other major categories of difference. The operative categorical boundary is drawn between the licensed and the unlicensed, not, for example, between blacks and whites, or between men and women.

When opportunities are reserved for members of some internal, organizationally defined category (holders of an occupational license, for example, or members of a union, church, or club), this in itself does not contribute to categorical inequality in the broader sense. Category-based opportunity hoarding does, however, contribute to broader categorical inequality when admission to the *organizational* category depends on one's *social* category membership. Clubs that reserve facilities for members contribute to categorical inequality, for example, when they exclude women or blacks from membership. The same holds for churches or associations that exclude homosexuals, for legislation that bars same-sex marriage, and for labor unions that have historically excluded African Americans.

Yet contemporary occupational licensing regimes do not ordinarily involve this kind of two-stage category-based closure. Access to professional and occupational licenses—though it may in some cases require prolonged and expensive training—is in principle open to all, regardless of their social category membership. Licensing regimes constitute opportunity hoarding or social closure because they restrict competition by limiting the supply of practitioners, not because they exclude certain social categories from practicing. Where licensed occupations and social categories coincide—as in the case of nursing, for example, which remains overwhelmingly female, or manicurists, which is a Vietnamese ethnic niche—this is *not* because the licensing regime itself excludes persons belonging to other categories. The concentrations of women in nursing and Vietnamese among manicurists reflect other social processes, notably the sex-typing of jobs and workplaces in the former case, and ethnic niche formation in the latter (Snyder and Greene 2008; Eckstein and Nguyen 2011).

Tilly's pursuit of parsimony and penchant for abstraction lead him to argue that "gender, class, ethnicity, race, citizenship, and other pervasive categorical systems do not each operate *sui generis* but instead share many causal properties" (1998: 82). These shared causal properties make it possible to specify "how categories work" across domains of categorization and how categorical inequality is generated through cross-domain mechanisms of exploitation and opportunity hoarding. So much is subsumed under these headings, however, that the outlines begin to blur. Exploitation and opportunity hoarding are not clearly delineated analytical categories; they are loose collections of processes with different proximate causal logics. Tilly's notion of exploitation bundles together the legally formalized and directly coercive bureaucratic processes through which racial categories were matched with economic position in South Africa under apartheid and the informal, decentralized allocative and self-sorting processes through which gender is matched—much more loosely—with economic position in the ordinary workings of contemporary capitalism. Similarly, the notion of opportunity hoarding by categorically bounded networks conflates network-based and category-based processes.

In subsequent sections, I adopt a more differentiated and disaggregated strategy. Rather than assuming for the sake of theory-building that the major categories of difference are implicated in the production and reproduction of inequality in fundamentally *similar* ways, I begin with the assumption that citizenship, gender, and ethnicity contribute to regimes of durable inequality in interestingly *different* ways. These differences can help bring into focus—at a somewhat lower level of abstraction and in less parsimonious but more clearly delineated and analytically tractable manner—the specific ways in which categories of difference help to generate and

maintain inequality. To understand the relation between difference and inequality, in other words, it is helpful to begin with *different kinds of difference*.⁹

Different Differences: Citizenship, Gender, Ethnicity

Citizenship

I begin with citizenship because it contributes to the production and reproduction of inequality in particularly clear, straightforward, analytically tractable, profound, pervasive, and yet inadequately theorized ways.

Students of inequality have paid little attention to citizenship, while students of citizenship long paid little attention to inequality. The influential line of work inaugurated by T. H. Marshall (1950), long dominant in the sociology of citizenship, highlighted the egalitarian dynamics of citizenship, seen as counteracting the inequality-generating logic of capitalism. In recent decades, to be sure, the duality of citizenship—internally inclusive but externally exclusive—has been widely recognized, and citizenship has been analyzed as an “instrument and object of social closure” (Brubaker 1992: chapter 1). Yet the exclusionary workings of citizenship have been studied in severely truncated perspective. The *visible* workings of citizenship (and related categories) within the territory of the state are well studied, but the more profound and consequential *invisible* workings of citizenship outside the territory of the state have been neglected.

In all modern states, conceived as the states of and for their citizens, citizenship and related categories of membership (like permanent resident status) function transparently as instruments of social closure. In the United States today, this is most salient at the boundary between citizens and permanent residents on the one hand and the roughly 11 million undocumented immigrants on the other, who are excluded from a vast range of rights, benefits, and opportunities, above all, the right to work and the right to secure residence in the territory.¹⁰

⁹ I borrow here a phrase used by Epstein (2007: 255) in a different context.

¹⁰ Even permanent residents, it should be noted, remain probationary residents, without the fully secure rights of residence and re-entry enjoyed by citizens; they can be deported or barred from re-entry into the territory for a range of reasons, including relatively minor criminal convictions.

On a global scale, however, the visible exclusion of tens of millions of undocumented residents from a range of benefits *within* the territories of prosperous and peaceful states is dwarfed by the invisible exclusion of *billions* of noncitizens *from* the territories of such states. The categorical distinction between citizens and foreigners is not only built into the basic structure of the modern state; it is built into the basic structure of the modern state *system*—a system of bounded and exclusive citizenries, matched with bounded and exclusive territorial polities. By assigning every person at birth, in principle, to one and only one territorial state, the institution of citizenship is central to the fundamentally segmentary organization of the state system (Joppke 2003: 441).¹¹ The segmentary logic of citizenship binds the vast majority of the world's population to the state to which they have been assigned by the accident of birth. Given the immense economic, political, demographic, health, and environmental disparities among states, this segmentary system of forced immobility contributes decisively to perpetuating vast global inequalities in life chances.

“Forced immobility” might seem an odd or even perverse expression given the magnitude of international migration flows. Yet only about 3 percent of the world's people live outside the country of their birth, and fewer than half of these represent south-north migrants (International Organization for Migration 2013: 55). This amounts to a very large number in absolute terms, estimated at between 75 and 95 million in 2010, but it remains a small number in relation to the many hundreds of millions of people who would seek work, welfare, or security in prosperous and peaceful countries if they were free to do so, yet who can be routinely, legitimately, and invisibly excluded, simply by virtue of their citizenship (Brubaker 1992: ix).¹²

There is a circular quality to citizenship-based territorial closure. Only citizens enjoy free access to the territory, yet only (legal) residents have access to citizenship. This circularity permits nation-states to remain relatively closed and self-perpetuating communities, open only at the margins to the exogenous recruitment of new members (Brubaker 1992: 34).

¹¹ In practice, to be sure, dual citizenship is increasingly common. But the basic structure of the interstate system, a system comprising formally coordinate and independent units, remains profoundly segmentary. On segmentation, stratification, and functional differentiation as three basic modes of differentiation, see Luhmann 1977.

¹² For various ways of estimating the “excess demand” for migration to rich countries, see Pritchett 2006: 65ff. According to Gallup global survey data collected between 2009 and 2011, 13 percent of the world's adults—some 650 million people—would like to permanently leave their country (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/153992/150-million-adults-worldwide-migrate.aspx>).

The routine territorial excludability of noncitizens permits citizens of prosperous and peaceful countries to reserve (largely) for themselves a wide range of economic, political, social, and cultural goods, opportunities, and freedoms, not to mention such basic goods as relatively clean air and water, a functioning public health infrastructure, and public order and security. In Tilly's terminology, this amounts to opportunity hoarding on a colossal scale. Yet the contribution of citizenship to global inequality has been largely untheorized until recently—including by Tilly himself, who (like others) considers only the within-state workings of citizenship.¹³ And apart from a few academic discussions, it remains legally, politically, and morally largely unchallenged. Those excluded *from* the territory—unlike those excluded *within* the territory of a liberal democratic state—have neither the legal standing nor the political and organizational resources to challenge their exclusion.¹⁴ And unlike legally codified and

¹³ Three recent books highlight this globally exclusive logic of citizenship: Pritchett (2006), writing from the perspective of development economics; Shachar (2009), writing from the perspective of law and normative political theory; and Korzeniewicz and Moran (2009), writing from the perspective of historical sociology. The normative case for open borders was first developed by Carens (1987).

¹⁴ This is why states have increasingly adopted strategies of territorial insulation or buffering to prevent unwanted migrants from gaining any kind of territorial foothold. This prevents such migrants from filing asylum claims or otherwise gaining access to procedural protections available to those present in the territory. Undocumented immigrants in liberal democracies are in a much more favorable position than those excluded from the territory. Though they are often treated as utterly lacking in rights and resources, Chauvin and Garcés-Mascreñas (2012) show that the reality is much more differentiated and complex and that one can speak of a limited but nontrivial form of civic incorporation, both formal and informal, of undocumented immigrants. The territorial excludability of noncitizens prevents many (though obviously not all) potential migrants even from gaining access to the “status” of undocumented immigrant, lowly though that status is. Borders do not have to be fully sealed for such citizenship-based regimes of territorial exclusion to be powerfully effective. The excluded are specifically those with a “bad” or stigmatized citizenship, who need visas just to get a foot in the door. Those with a “good” citizenship can enter the territory without a visa and thus can become undocumented simply by overstaying their visa. Although the paradigmatic undocumented immigrant is the clandestine border-crosser, nearly half of the undocumented population are visa overstayers, who need not attempt costly and dangerous clandestine entry (Pew Hispanic Center 2006). Given the

administratively enforced exclusion on the basis of gender, race, or religion, exclusion on the basis of citizenship—an ascribed status like the others—continues to be taken for granted as natural and understood as morally and politically legitimate (Pritchett 2006: 77–92).

Citizenship-based territorial closure did not *produce* the vast between-country inequalities, but it does serve to *perpetuate* them. It does so by locking (most) people into the countries to which they were assigned at birth. These assigned positions carry over to subsequent generations. Citizenship is not just a privilege (or for those with a “bad” citizenship, a disability); it is an *inherited* privilege (or disability), and one that is transmitted, in turn, to one’s descendants. As legal theorist Ayelet Shachar has argued in her aptly titled book *The Birthright Lottery* (2009), this makes citizenship (for people with the right kind of citizenship) a form of inherited property.¹⁵ As for those with the wrong kind of citizenship, they and their descendants are bound to a subordinate position in a powerful and consequential global structure of unequal positions, constituted by nation-states with vastly unequal public and private goods and opportunities.

Citizenship is a unique category by virtue of its pivotal place in the overall segmentary architecture of the nation-state system. But in other respects it works just like other state-created or state-sanctioned categories whose workings are governed by administrative practice and dictated by law. Citizenship thus provides an occasion to note the distinctive dynamics of law—and, more broadly, formal rules—as a medium of categorical inequality. Law can be understood as a *disembedding* technology. It makes certain facts legally relevant, regardless of their social context, and defines all other considerations as irrelevant. When certain benefits are reserved by law for citizens—or for men, for whites, or for any other social category—all that matters, in principle, is one’s category membership; other considerations are irrelevant. Legalization—or, more broadly, formalization—makes categorical exclusion more systematic, consistent, and

association between citizenship and other resources, people with a “good” citizenship are also often able to blend in more effectively and thus are at a lower risk of detection and deportation.

¹⁵ Shachar’s (2009) argument that citizenship is a form of inherited property casts in a new light the fact that contemporary states are understood as the states *of* and *for* their citizens. It suggests that membership in the state—and thus, more broadly, one’s position in the interstate system—is “owned” by citizens and their descendants. This marks a striking contrast to positions in the division of labor, which, in modern settings, are not owned by their incumbents—and still less by their descendants. This throws into sharp relief the contrast between the segmentary rigidity of the political organization of the world and the fluidity of the division of labor.

rigorous: formally defined and administered categories like citizenship leave relatively little room for ambiguity and reduce the scope for negotiation. The administration of such formally mandated categorical inequality is thus relatively uniform across time and space. And formal exclusion tends to work in a more *categorical* way than informal exclusion; it creates and enforces sharper and more consistent boundaries between insiders and outsiders.

Of course the law on the books should not be conflated with the law in practice. Law is never fully disembodied, and laws—when enforced at all—are often not enforced uniformly.¹⁶ The analytical point I want to underscore here is a comparative one. Formal categorization, coupled with formally mandated differential treatment, contributes to categorical inequality in a very different way from informal social categorization and informally practiced differential treatment. The antiformalism that has been central to sociology—the commitment to going behind formal, official structures and institutions in order to discover the real workings of things—should not blind us to the fact that formalization, codification, and legalization are themselves interesting and socially consequential social phenomena (Bourdieu 1987).

Gender

Like citizenship-based categorical inequality, gender-based categorical inequality can work through the medium of law (or, more broadly, formal rules). The multiple legal disabilities long suffered by women are well known. In the United States, for example, married women could not own property or exercise independent legal agency until the second half of the nineteenth century. Women were formally barred from a range of occupations, and they were not permitted to vote, hold elective office, or serve on juries. Over the course of the past century and a half, however, the legal disabilities have been abolished, and the law now serves to protect and promote women's rights in a variety of domains. In contemporary liberal democratic contexts, gender has ceased to work as a legally or otherwise formally codified basis of exclusion.¹⁷

¹⁶ On the indeterminacy of the law and the broad scope of administrative discretion in the context of the Chinese Exclusion Acts, see Calavita 2000.

¹⁷ State prohibitions against discrimination govern not only state officials; they extend to private actors such as employers, universities, and clubs. Strong constitutional protections of the free exercise of religion, however, mean that religious organizations retain the right to discriminate on the basis of sex—for example, by excluding women from the Catholic priesthood—and on certain other grounds (Greenawalt 2006: chapter 20).

The elimination of *formal* gender-based inequalities, of course, has left wide-ranging *substantive* inequalities in place, and these (unlike citizenship-based inequalities) have been the subject of a very large literature. I limit myself here—as in the subsequent discussion of ethnicity—to some highly selective observations, with empirical evidence drawn from the United States, in an effort to highlight the different ways in which major categories of difference are implicated in the production and reproduction of inequality.

In my discussion of citizenship, I highlighted the segmentary organization of the nation-state system. Ethnicity too is sometimes organized in segmentary fashion, as a set of relatively self-enclosed and endogenously self-reproducing communities. (This is characteristic of “thick” forms of ethnicity, marked by high degrees of “institutional completeness.”) The social organization of gender is radically different. Men and women do not constitute self-enclosed, self-sufficient, self-reproducing communities.¹⁸ They are profoundly interdependent and closely connected with one another as parents, partners, friends, lovers, neighbors, colleagues, and kin (Tilly 1998: 240–241; Ridgeway 2011: 46). This complicates the analysis of gender inequality, since men and women form supra-individual units of procreation, socialization, labor, consumption, and identification.¹⁹

The interdependence of men and women and the accompanying ideologies of essential difference and complementarity are powerfully concretized in the profoundly gendered division of labor in heterosexual households. The division of household labor and child care has changed substantially in recent decades in the United States, but women still spend about twice as many hours on both housework and child care as men do (Bianchi et al. 2006: 62–67, 116–117). This is both a crucial form of inequality in its own right and a key contribution to inequality in the workplace (Ridgeway 2011: chapter 5).

Earnings differences between men and women in the United States have narrowed substantially in recent decades: women’s median weekly earnings have increased from 62 percent of men’s in 1979 to 82 percent in 2011 (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2012), though convergence has slowed since the early 1990s (Blau and Kahn 2007). The earnings gap could

¹⁸ In some contexts, to be sure, everyday social relations are much more segregated by sex than they are in contemporary liberal democratic societies.

¹⁹ To explore this complexity is beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to note that while taking households as units of analysis (as in much stratification research) can mask gender inequalities within households, taking individuals as units of analysis (as in the research I review here) can mask the centrality of the household as a social, economic, and affective unit.

result from one or more of three processes: (1) the differential allocation of men and women to different sorts of jobs; (2) the differential assignment of rewards to male- and female-dominated jobs; or (3) differential pay for the same jobs (Petersen and Morgan 1995). The detailed workplace-level data examined by Petersen and Morgan suggest that the last factor—within-job wage discrimination—accounts for very little. The importance of the second factor—what Petersen and Morgan call “valuational discrimination,” by which female-dominated jobs pay less than male-dominated jobs, after controlling for skills and working conditions—is the subject of considerable controversy (Tam 1997; England et al. 2000), as well as the focus of political and legal struggles over “comparable worth” (England 1992). But it is widely agreed that the first factor—occupational sex segregation—is the main source of earnings disparities.

In line with these findings—and to keep the discussion manageable—I focus here on inequalities that are mediated by occupational sex segregation. Despite the entry of large numbers of women into previously male-dominated professional and managerial fields, overall levels of occupational sex segregation remain strikingly high; after declining substantially in the 1970s and 1980s, they have held stable in the United States since the mid-1990s. In 2009, 40 percent of women in the United States (but only 5 percent of men) worked in occupations that were at least 75 percent female, while 44 percent of men (and only 5 percent of women) worked in occupations that were at least 75 percent male (Hegewisch et al. 2010). Many of these occupations are characterized by extreme levels of segregation. In 1999, more than 90 percent of preschool and kindergarten teachers, dental assistants and hygienists, secretaries and administrative assistants, child care workers, receptionists, tellers, and registered as well as licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses were women, while more than 97 percent of automotive and other vehicle mechanics, masons, carpenters, plumbers, construction equipment operators, roofers, electricians, and construction workers were men.²⁰

What generates such high levels of occupational sex segregation? In the most systematic recent treatment of the subject, Charles and Grusky (2004: chapter 1) distinguish between mechanisms that further “horizontal” segregation by channeling men and women disproportionately into manual and nonmanual sectors, respectively, and those that further “vertical” segregation by channeling men disproportionately into positions of greater authority

²⁰ Daniel H. Weinberg, “Evidence from Census 2000 about Earnings by Detailed Occupation for Men and Women,” May 2004, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/censr-15.pdf>.

and rewards within both manual and nonmanual sectors.²¹ Both horizontal and vertical segregation are sustained by deeply rooted and widely shared understandings of differences between men and women. Horizontal segregation is sustained by “gender essentialism”—by understandings of women as more skilled in service, nurturing, and interaction, and of men as more competent in the manipulation of things and more capable of strenuous physical labor. Vertical segregation is sustained by “male primacy”—by understandings of men as generally more status-worthy and as better suited for positions of authority and power.

Gender essentialism and male primacy work to sustain occupational sex segregation through a series of intermediary processes. These operate on both the “demand side” (by shaping employers’ preferences, perceptions, and practices) and the “supply side” (by shaping prospective employees’ preferences, informing—and possibly biasing—their self-evaluations, and channeling their educational investments). The supply-side processes are especially complex—and especially robust—because of the feedback loops involved. Occupational aspirations and educational investments, for example, are shaped not only (and not always) by the internalization of beliefs about the distinctive natures of men and women, but also—even for those who do *not* internalize and indeed expressly reject such beliefs—by an awareness of the prevalence of gender-essentialist beliefs in the wider society and consequently of the costs and sanctions likely to be incurred by pursuing a gender-atypical line of work. Occupational aspirations and educational investments are also shaped by awareness of the prevailing gender-differentiated division of domestic labor and of prevailing normative expectations about women’s primary and overriding commitment to family (Ridgeway 2011: 128ff; Blair-Loy 2003). Awareness of these expectations and anticipation of the likely unequal burdens of household labor and child care may shape occupational choices and educational investments even on the part of those who reject prevailing cultural constructions of motherhood and who would prefer an equal division of domestic labor. Such considerations may lead career-minded women, for example, to pursue occupations (or specializations within broader occupations) that are more hospitable to combining family and work obligations.

Home and work are thus complexly intertwined as sites of gender inequality. The domestic division of labor affects workplace gender inequality through a linked series of temporal

²¹ This and the next paragraph follow closely the account given in Charles and Grusky (2004: chapter 1). The distinction between vertical and horizontal aspects of occupational sex segregation is an old one, but Charles and Grusky offer a new conceptualization and operationalization of this distinction.

modalities. The anticipated *future* gendered division of household labor shapes women's occupational aspirations and educational investments; the *current* gendered division of household labor limits the time and energy they have for paid work;²² while the *past* gendered division of household labor affects earnings by virtue of having limited the continuity and duration of women's work experience.

The persistence of high levels of occupational sex segregation in the United States and other wealthy liberal democratic countries—notwithstanding the diffusion of egalitarian gender attitudes, the closing and indeed reversing of the gender gap in higher education, and steadily increasing female labor force participation rates—reflects the deeply rooted nature of gender essentialism (Charles and Grusky 2004: 3, 23–28, 306–310). The diffusion of egalitarian attitudes and changes in women's educational and occupational profiles appear to be undermining, at least in part, understandings of male primacy, and specifically assumptions of generally superior male cognitive competence (Ridgeway 2011: 169). But prevailing understandings of essentially different male and female natures seem robustly entrenched. Their staying power may reflect their compatibility with prevailing liberal forms of gender egalitarianism, focused on notions of equal opportunity and free choice, and with the prevailing cultural emphasis on self-expression, which can legitimate the pursuit of gender-differentiated courses of study or lines of work, understood as expressions of one's identity (Charles and Bradley 2009: 925–930, 960–961). Deprived of its cultural and ideological support, vertical sex segregation is becoming more attenuated, especially in the nonmanual sector, where hiring procedures are more universalistic and bureaucratic. But horizontal sex segregation shows no sign of weakening (Charles and Grusky 2004: 23–28).

I want to conclude this section by returning to broader questions about the distinctive ways in which gender as a category of difference is implicated in the production and reproduction of inequality. As a primary frame of sense-making, sex categorization and the rich understandings of gender that it primes are chronically and pervasively available in interaction (Ridgeway 2011: chapter 2). Unlike citizenship, sex categorization and gender understandings are implicated not only in gatekeeping encounters and organizational routines—not only at points of decision about access to resources—but in the entire range of processes through which selves and subjectivities are formed, re-formed, and performed. They are implicated not only in the allocation of goods to different categories of persons but in the production and reproduction of deeply gendered selves.

²² See Budig and England (2001) on the motherhood penalty, part of which, they hypothesize, derives from women with children being less productive at work.

Sex categorization and gender understandings are also chronically implicated—in diffuse, decentralized, distributed, and interactionally embedded ways—in the myriad interpersonal encounters (and sometimes struggles) in families, workplaces, and other private and public arenas. It is in and through these everyday encounters that respect, recognition, and status are distributed in iterative and cumulatively consequential ways, and understandings of gender inequality (or equality) and gender difference (or sameness) are negotiated, reproduced, and transformed.

Two moments of categorization are intertwined in all processes of social categorization: self-identification and categorization by others (Jenkins 1996). But the relative weight of the internal and external moments varies widely. Citizenship and citizenship-like immigration statuses stand at one extreme: the external moment is overwhelmingly dominant. In determining access to the territory, the right to vote, and eligibility for certain social benefits, what matters is the categorical identity imposed or bestowed by the state and certified by official documents. How people identify themselves is irrelevant. The dominance of external categorization is characteristic of all forms of exclusion that work through legal or otherwise formal categories. External categorization is also dominant in certain informal regimes of exclusion. It is central by definition to discrimination on the basis of sex, race, religion, or any other category.

Yet while categorization by others is crucial to the dynamics of gender inequality, so too is self-identification. (Of course one can distinguish the two only analytically; self-identification and categorization by others are intricately, and dialectically, related in practice.) Unlike citizenship (for most people, most of the time), gender is not just an externally defined but a *deeply inhabited* category of difference, at the core of most people's understanding of who they are. The internal moment—the moment of self-identification and self-understanding—is therefore vital to the workings of gender.²³

The distinction between self-identification and categorization by others points to two very different sorts of social psychology, both relevant to understanding how gender is implicated in the production and reproduction of inequality. One focuses on social cognition, specifically on the ways social categories are implicated in stereotypes, schemas, and cognitive biases (Fiske 1998; Reskin 2000). The other addresses the full range of processes involved in the social production of persons with pervasively gendered aspirations and self-understandings. The former might seem to be most relevant to gatekeeping processes, though it also specifies the

²³ Citizenship can be central to self-understandings in certain contexts, but it is not routinely, chronically, and pervasively implicated in everyday life the way gender is.

mechanisms by which persons may develop biased self-assessments. The latter adds a richer and more thoroughly social dimension to our understanding of the full range of continuous, lifelong processes through which persons develop gendered self-understandings that lead them to form gendered occupational aspirations at a young age, pursue gendered courses of study and human capital investments, participate in the gendered division of household labor, and seek out gender-differentiated forms of employment.

There are limits to both social psychologies. Cognitive research on gender stereotypes can't necessarily be directly applied to organizational decision-making contexts. Research on gender (and racial) stereotypes focuses on unconscious and automatic modes of cognition.²⁴ But decisions on hiring, promotion, and firing, especially in large organizations, are generally made in a deliberative manner, with attention to the potential costs of discriminating (or even of appearing to discriminate [Petersen 2006]).²⁵ The cognitive biases that inform automatic categorization may therefore be more relevant to informal gatekeeping processes and everyday interaction than to bureaucratic decision making.

The notion of deeply gendered selves also has its limitations. It risks contributing to an oversocialized understanding of gender—or perhaps to an overgendered understanding of socialization (Lovell 2000). Processes of gender socialization may be ubiquitous and lifelong, but they are uneven and contradictory, not uniform and consistent. And the contradictions are found within as well as between persons. Selves are not so deeply or tightly constituted by gender (or any other social identity) as to preclude distance, self-reflection, change, or struggle. Gender is *both* a set of deeply taken-for-granted and widely shared background expectancies *and* a terrain of improvisatory interaction and performance and chronic micro- and macropolitical struggle.

²⁴ On the distinction between automatic and deliberative cognition, see D'Andrade 1995; DiMaggio 1997.

²⁵ Variation in the opportunity to discriminate, and in the likely costs of discrimination, suggests that large organizations are more likely to discriminate at the point of hiring than in the promotion, compensation, or dismissal of existing employees, since the latter have better information about discriminatory practices and more ability and incentive to file complaints. Consistent with these expectations, firm-level data on professional, managerial, and administrative employees in one large firm showed male-female differentials in job level and salary at point of hiring, consistent either with discrimination or with differential experience, but no indication of post-hiring discrimination (Petersen and Saporta 2004).

The implication of citizenship and gender—as categories of difference—in the production and reproduction of inequality can be summarized schematically as follows. Citizenship is externally defined, formally codified, socially disembodied, intermittently relevant, and bureaucratically enforced; its workings are concentrated at a few key thresholds. Gender—in contemporary liberal contexts—is internally as well as externally defined, deeply internalized and embodied, primarily informal and uncoded, socially embedded, and interactionally ubiquitous; its workings are diffuse and distributed rather than concentrated. Citizenship contributes to inequality by directly and categorically excluding noncitizens at certain key points of access. Gender contributes to inequality through more complex, subtle, and intertwined pathways, operative not only, or even especially, in gatekeeping encounters but also in the shaping of selves, subjectivities, and ways of making sense of the world.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity—which I interpret broadly to include race as well as ethnicity-like forms of religion²⁶—is implicated in the production and reproduction of inequality in some ways that are analogous to the workings of gender. But in other respects the inequality-generating processes and mechanisms are quite different. To bring these differences into focus, I begin with a stylized and deliberately oversimplified comparison of the processes underlying structures of gender and racial (specifically black-white) inequality in the United States. I then broaden the discussion to highlight other ways in which ethnicity, race, and ethnicity-like forms of religion are drawn into processes and structures of categorical inequality.

Like gender inequality, racial inequality was long legally mandated and enforced. Quite apart from legal support for slavery, free blacks in northern as well as southern states suffered a variety of legal disabilities before the Civil War (Hiers 2013: chapter 2). They were barred in most northern states from voting and in some from testifying against whites, holding real estate or even settling in the territory. These state-level provisions were supplemented by exclusionary municipal ordinances. And while legal exclusions were dismantled in the postbellum North, a comprehensive system of legally mandated segregation was instituted in the post-Reconstruction South, where it endured for three quarters of a century.

²⁶ By ethnicity-like forms of religion, I mean forms of religious belonging that are understood to be inherited largely in families and to constitute parallel and largely self-reproducing communities. On the advantages of a broadly inclusive understanding of ethnicity, see Rothschild 1981: 86–96; Brubaker 2009: 25–28; Wimmer 2013: 7–9.

These formal legal exclusions, like those based on gender, have been fully abolished. But as in the case of gender—only to a greater extent—the elimination of formal inequalities has left massive substantive inequalities in place. Some of these, and the processes that generate them, are analogous to those in the domain of gender. Racial earnings differentials, for example, have been studied in the same way as gender earnings differentials: through individualist approaches that focus on human capital differences or employer discrimination and through structural approaches that focus on labor market characteristics such as occupational segregation and the devaluation of jobs dominated by women and minorities. Racial and gender discrimination have also been studied in similar ways: through cognitively oriented research aimed at uncovering the properties stereotypically associated, consciously or unconsciously, with social categories; through attempts to estimate discrimination indirectly as the unexplained residual that remains after controlling for other explanatory factors; and, increasingly, through efforts to measure discriminatory behavior directly through experimental audit studies.

The analogies might seem to go deeper. Four massive and deeply institutionalized facts profoundly shape gender inequality: sex categorization as a primary and ubiquitous means of sense-making, deeply rooted and widely shared essentialist understandings of male-female differences, high levels of occupational sex segregation, and the unequal division of domestic labor.²⁷ With the exception of the last, all of these have analogues in the domain of race. But they work in very different ways. Occupational sex segregation emerges in large part from sex-typed occupational aspirations and educational choices, which are themselves legitimated as the expressions of authentic and deeply gendered selves. It is also driven by the unequal household division of labor, which draws women disproportionately into relatively family-friendly service sector occupations. Occupational segregation by race reflects neither self-expressive supply-side sorting nor the constraints of an unequal domestic division of labor; it is driven more by employer discrimination and human capital differences. There are of course entrenched forms of racial as well as gender essentialism, but the former do not afford the robust and widely shared understandings of *complementary* difference that enable the latter to generate and legitimize

²⁷ These deeply institutionalized facts are not forever frozen. Although there is no evidence of change in the ubiquity of sex categorization and little evidence of significant change in essentialist understandings of difference, patterns of occupational sex segregation and the division of household labor have changed in nontrivial ways in recent decades. But they have changed very slowly, far more slowly than labor force participation rates, attitudes about gender equality, or levels of educational attainment.

gender-differentiated educational paths and occupational choices. And while occupational sex segregation is offset by interdependence and dense relational connectedness between men and women in other domains, occupational segregation by race is just one aspect of a much larger pattern of segregation. So while certain proximate mechanisms work in similar ways to sustain racial and gender inequality, the underlying structures and processes differ sharply.

Racial inequality in the post-Jim Crow era has been profoundly shaped by two massive institutional complexes with no analogue in the domain of gender. The first is segregation; the second (which in a sense is just an extreme form of the first [Wacquant 2010: 81]) is incarceration. Residential segregation has been the “structural linchpin” of racial inequality.²⁸ Segregated neighborhoods have entailed not just segregated schools, churches, associations, and networks but also segregated experiences. And since this segregation has been imposed rather than chosen, and produced in tandem with a process of “socio-spatial relegation” (Wacquant 2008: 2) to systematically disfavored spaces, it has generated and perpetuated massive, cumulative, and mutually reinforcing inequalities in housing, education, amenities, public safety, municipal services, trust, social capital, job opportunities, and exposure to environmental hazards, crime, delinquency, and stress.

Residential clustering and associated forms of institutional duplication are of course characteristic of many ethnic groups. In the United States, however, black-white segregation has been unique in both degree and kind. At its peak in the 1960s, it had reached levels far higher than those experienced by any other ethnic group, prompting Massey and Denton (1993: 74–78) to speak of “hypersegregation.” And it has been generated and sustained by different mechanisms: initially by residential segregation ordinances and—when these were invalidated by the Supreme Court—by violence against blacks seeking to move into white neighborhoods, subsequently by massive white flight from integrating neighborhoods and a variety of institutional mechanisms, including restrictive covenants barring the sale of properties to blacks; government-sanctioned redlining that made entire neighborhoods ineligible for government-insured mortgages; subtle and not so subtle steering practices by the real estate industry; and racially targeted urban renewal programs (Massey 2007: 58–65; Wacquant 2008: 75–80). Although restrictive covenants, redlining, and housing discrimination on the basis of race have been illegal for nearly half a century, audit studies have documented substantial continuing

²⁸ The phrase is from Pettigrew (1979: 122). The most sustained analysis of residential segregation is Massey and Denton (1993). My account builds on that book and on Wacquant (2008).

discrimination against blacks in the rental, sale, and financing of housing (Massey 2007: 76–84).²⁹

Since 1970, aggregate measures of black-white residential segregation have slowly but steadily declined (Logan and Stults 2011).³⁰ During the same period, however, the social, economic, cultural, and political isolation of poor inner-city blacks has intensified, accentuating the nexus of cumulative, concentrated, and heritable forms of disadvantage (Wilson 1987; Sampson et al. 2008; Wacquant 2008; Sharkey 2013). Incarceration has been increasingly central to the production and reproduction of this landscape of concentrated disadvantage. The hypertrophy of the carceral complex is often described as involving the “mass incarceration” of African Americans. But as Wacquant argues, “mass” suggests a broad and indiscriminate process, while the spectacular growth in incarceration has in fact been narrowly targeted not only by race but also by class and space, amounting to the “*hyperincarceration* of (sub)proletarian African-American men from the imploding ghetto” (2010: 74). Public attention has focused on the shockingly large racial discrepancies in incarceration rates, and for good reason, but class differentials *within* racial categories are even larger than differentials *between* racial categories.³¹

²⁹ For a broader review of studies of racial discrimination in employment, credit, and consumer as well as housing markets, see Pager and Shepherd 2008.

³⁰ Black-white school segregation, on the other hand, has increased since the early 1990s, thanks to Supreme Court decisions effectively allowing a return to segregated neighborhood schools (Orfield and Lee 2006).

³¹ In 1999 the cumulative risk of incarceration by age thirty to thirty-four for African American men born in the late 1960s was about seven times the risk for white men of the same cohort. But the cumulative risk of incarceration for African American men without a high school degree was *twelve* times the risk for African American men with some college education; among white men, the risk was *sixteen* times higher for those without a high school degree than for those with some college. Strikingly, moreover, while the cumulative risk of incarceration more than doubled (from 12 to 30 percent) between 1979 and 1999 for young black men with a high school education or less, the cumulative risk of incarceration actually *declined* (from 6 to 5 percent) for young black men with some college (Pettit and Western 2004: 162; Wacquant 2010: 79–80). Racial disparities in prison experience have remained approximately stable, but class disparities within racial categories have increased dramatically. Virtually all of the huge increase in the risk of incarceration between 1979 and 1999 (during which time cumulative risk doubled for both

The melding of class and race follows from the spatial focus of the carceral revolution, concentrated on the infrastructurally crumbling, economically subproletarianized, and territorially stigmatized space of the ghetto. The triple targeting by race, class, and space highlights the connection between prison and ghetto as “institutions of forced confinement”: “As the ghetto lost its economic function of labor extraction and proved unable to ensure ethnoracial closure, the prison was called on to help contain a dishonored population widely viewed as deviant, destitute, and dangerous” (Wacquant 2010: 81).

For young, poorly educated African American men, incarceration has become a modal experience, a “normal” part of the life course. By 1999 black high school dropouts had a 60 percent chance of going to prison by their mid-thirties, while the larger category of black men without any college had a 30 percent chance (Pettit and Western 2004).³² Incarceration is not only a key dimension of inequality in its own right; it is a cause of further inequalities, with widely ramifying and long-lasting consequences for employment prospects, the kinds of jobs held, earnings, the likelihood of marriage and divorce, and the chances for the formation of stable families (Western 2006; Pager 2008). Moreover, the regime of hyperincarceration masks the full extent of racial inequality since the incarcerated population is not included in the surveys from which data on unemployment, poverty, wage levels, and a variety of other social conditions are derived (Western 2006: chapter 4; Pettit 2012). Including the incarcerated population (and other institutionalized populations, notably military personnel) dramatically increases rates of black joblessness and substantially increases black-white differences in such rates. It reveals that the narrowing black-white wage gap observed for young men in the late 1980s and 1990s was largely a statistical illusion, the result of massively increased joblessness (much of it due to soaring incarceration rates) among young black men with low education and little earning power

whites and blacks) was borne by those with a high school education or less (Pettit and Western 2004: 162, 164).

³² What this means in everyday life is shown in Goffman’s (2009, 2014) account of the strategies and practices of those who are not incarcerated yet are entangled in the criminal justice system in one way or the other and face warrants for their arrest. In the five-block inner-city black Philadelphia neighborhood studied intensively by Goffman—a poor but not hyperpoor neighborhood—a household survey revealed that nearly half of the young male residents “had a warrant issued for their arrest because of either delinquencies with court fines and fees or for failure to appear for a court date within the past three years” (2009: 343).

(Western 2006: chapter 4). And it leads to much higher estimates of black high school dropout rates (and a much higher black-white gap in such rates [Pettit 2012: 57–61]).

Having considered—in schematic and grossly oversimplified fashion—some of the major structures underlying racial (specifically black-white) inequality and how these differ from the main structures underlying gender inequality, I turn now to a broader (and no longer exclusively U.S.-focused) consideration of the ways ethnicity (including ethnicity-like forms of religion) is implicated in the production and reproduction of inequality. Here again I must be ruthlessly selective.

Like gender and other categories of difference, ethnicity is constituted by the interplay of internal and external moments of identification and categorization (Jenkins 1997: 53ff). External categorization has been decisive in shaping racial inequality, from slavery and Jim Crow through contemporary residential segregation, hyperincarceration, marital segregation, and discrimination in its manifold forms. It is sometimes argued that external categorization is constitutive of race, and internal self-identification of ethnicity. But this view does not stand up to scrutiny: self-identification is central to many forms of “racial” identity, while external categorization is equally central to innumerable “ethnic” configurations.³³

External categorization shapes ethnic inequality in many ways.³⁴ It works—just to note a few recurring patterns—through the authoritative allocation of persons to positions (as, for example, in many colonial and postcolonial settings); through the matching of ethnic categories with specific territories (as, for example, in Soviet and Chinese nationality policy and in the construction of tribal ethnic homelands in Africa); through the exclusion, restriction, expropriation, or expulsion of ethnic outsiders or the privileging of ethnic insiders in such matters as employment, university admission, and business opportunities; through the allocation of public resources via systems of ethnic patronage; through public policies that lead (as with race in the United States) to residential concentrations in disfavored neighborhoods, disproportionate incarceration, and the de facto if not de jure segregation of schools; and through informal practices of exclusion, discrimination, and stigmatization. Besides shaping *socioeconomic* inequality in these and other ways, external categorization may profoundly shape

³³ On the difficulty of drawing a sharp distinction between race and ethnicity, see Brubaker 2009: 25–27.

³⁴ From the very large literature, see illustratively Jenkins 1997: chapter 5; Cornell and Hartmann 1998: chapter 6; Burbank and Cooper 2010; and the works cited in Brubaker 2009: 32–33.

specifically *political* inequalities. In a world of nation-states, often understood as the states *of* and *for* particular ethnoculturally defined nations, those identified as ethnocultural outsiders may be excluded from equal citizenship, and they may be targeted for forced assimilation, forced emigration, or even genocide. Even where ethnic fragmentation prevents the identification of the state with a single ethnocultural nation, as in many postcolonial states, certain groups may be defined as outsiders.

The literature on ethnic inequality has focused on the external moment in categorization and on the power to make such external categorization matter. There are good reasons for this emphasis on authoritative external categorization. But the internal moment matters as well. The internal moment in gender refers to the workings of gender as a deeply embodied and inhabited identity that shapes and channels action from within by way of deeply gendered desires, aspirations, and self-understandings. I take the internal moment in ethnicity and religion in a broader sense, referring not only to internalized identifications but also to forms of cultural practice and social organization that are understood and experienced as self-generated and self-organized expressions of a collective way of life, emerging from within, not simply constrained from without (Cornell and Hartmann 1998: 77–81).

In modern economic and political contexts, where education requires mastery of standard idioms and work is increasingly semantic rather than physical (Gellner 1997: 85), language repertoires and linguistically embedded forms of cultural capital are central to the determination of life chances. Some forms of linguistically mediated inequality are externally driven, involving diverse forms of discrimination, stigmatization, and social closure. But differing linguistic repertoires also contribute to inequality through a *self-enforcing* dynamic that does not require any active exclusion or closure. Opportunities—not just for education and employment but also, even more fundamentally, for the formation of broad and strong social ties and for full participation in a broad spectrum of collective activities—are systematically limited for those who lack proficiency in the prevailing language. This systematic constriction of opportunities works largely through self-exclusion from the pursuit of opportunities that require forms and degrees of linguistic competence beyond those possessed; it therefore holds even for those who experience no discrimination, stigmatization, or active exclusion. It is a kind of agentless exclusion, an exclusion without excluders, but it is no less powerful for that. The distinction between externally driven and self-enforcing modes of linguistically mediated inequality, to be sure, applies only to inequality-generating processes *within* particular sociolinguistic environments, not to the larger-scale processes that have *shaped* those environments. The large-

scale transformations involved in colonialism, nation-state building, and the spread of global capitalism, for example, have created vast inequalities among languages, raising the economic, political, and social value of some and devaluing others (Gal 1989: 356–357).

Religiously mediated inequality, like linguistically mediated inequality, may be externally driven by the systematic privileging or disprivileging, formal or informal, of certain religious categories.³⁵ Formal discrimination on religious grounds has been sharply curtailed in liberal polities, but it has not been and cannot be eliminated; it is now widely recognized that states can never be entirely neutral in matters of religion (Bader 2007: 82ff), even though they can make, and have made, substantial moves in the direction of a more even-handed treatment of different religions.³⁶ Informal discrimination and stigmatization remain important as well, notably toward Muslims in European countries of immigration.

Religious beliefs and practices can also generate inequality from within. The traditional gender norms promoted by various (often ethnoculturally inflected) forms of conservative religion, for example, may generate gender inequalities in educational attainment, labor force participation, and earnings, while also disadvantaging the larger ethnoreligious categories in which such traditional gender norms are prevalent. Ultra-Orthodox Jewish families may be similarly disadvantaged by the religious premium placed on large families and full-time Torah study for ultra-Orthodox men.

Distinctive forms of religious belief and practice may confer advantages as well as disadvantages. These may be mediated by the social forms of participation in religious institutions or by the cultural content of religious beliefs and practices. Participation in religious institutions can generate social capital and network-linked advantages, as well as a wide range of physical and mental health benefits. Distinctive religious beliefs and practices may confer economic advantages indirectly (for example, by curbing drinking, drug abuse, and other risky

³⁵ I discuss religion here since it is both a *component* of ethnicity, a key part of the cultural content of many ethnic identifications, and an *analogue* of ethnicity (in that many forms of religion, like ethnicity, are socially understood as basic sources and forms of social, cultural, and political identification that sort people into distinct, bounded, and largely self-reproducing “communities”). See Chapter 4 of this volume for a more extended discussion. A sustained comparison of linguistic and religious pluralism as forms of difference and sources of inequality is found in Brubaker (forthcoming).

³⁶ On moves in liberal states toward a more neutral and even-handed stance toward religion and the limits of such moves, see the discussion in Chapter 3.

behavior) or more directly (for example, by sanctioning the pursuit of worldly success, as in “prosperity theology”).

Inequality along ethnic or religious lines can be generated by social separation as well as cultural difference. By social separation I mean concentration in residential, occupational, institutional, social-relational, marital, consumption, media, and recreational space. Such social separation regularly arises in postmigration contexts as an incidental byproduct of scarce resources, limited information, language constraints, and, above all, the network-mediated dynamics of migration and settlement, which can lead to the formation of ethnically organized business niches, churches, and other institutions. But social separation can also be pursued as a *deliberate strategy of insulation* from surroundings that are perceived as physically dangerous, economically disadvantaging, morally compromising, or culturally threatening. Whether arising as an incidental byproduct or pursued as a deliberate strategy (and of course these are not mutually exclusive alternatives), such self-organized (though resource-constrained) *separation* differs sharply from externally imposed *segregation*, formal or informal. While imposed ethnoreligious segregation is massively and cumulatively, albeit unevenly, disadvantaging, uniting cultural stigmatization and material deprivation, self-organized social separation is more ambivalent in its implications for inequality.

The flip side of the incidental social separation characteristic of almost all immigrant communities is the social-relational and institutional density of the ethnic enclave, which can provide resources and opportunities for those without the contacts, resources, or language skills to flourish in the wider society. Yet many second-generation immigrants experience enclosure within ethnically organized institutions as constraining rather than enabling and as limiting the range of opportunities and the reach of networks. A similar ambivalence characterizes strategies of deliberate insulation. Some ethnoreligious communities—or more specifically, some husbands and fathers in such communities—may seek to isolate and thereby insulate their wives and daughters from what is regarded as an (ethno)religiously unsuitable, morally dangerous, and potentially dishonoring public realm. Such enclosure can generate and reproduce not only gender inequality but broader forms of ethnoreligious inequality. On the other hand, poor immigrants, constrained to live in neighborhoods they see as undesirable, often enlist a strategy of insulation in the service of social mobility (as well as cultural reproduction).³⁷ Such strategies of insulation

³⁷ See, for example, Portes and Zhou 1993: 86, 90. Such strategies of insulation seek to keep children out of certain undesired networks and to embed them in alternative, preferred, more surveyable networks formed by ethnic churches, language schools, camps, and so on. The

can be employed in an attempt to prevent the behavioral or attitudinal assimilation of their children to peers in the immediate environment, as a means of enhancing their longer term educational and occupational chances. Dissimilation and social encapsulation in the short term (in relation to a disfavored immediate urban milieu) may facilitate long-term assimilation and integration (in relation to a wider middle-class national environment).

What can be said in summary about the distinctive ways in which ethnicity—as a category of difference—is implicated in the production and reproduction of inequality? The broad understanding of ethnicity adopted here, embracing race as well as ethnicity-like forms of religion, complicates matters. Still, this much can be said: Like gender, and unlike citizenship, ethnicity (in contemporary liberal contexts) is internally as well as externally defined, primarily informal and uncodified, and socially embedded; its workings are diffuse and distributed rather than concentrated at a few key thresholds. Yet there are key differences between ethnicity and gender. Social separation—whether externally driven (as in the residential, educational, and network segregation of African Americans) or self-organized (as in ethnic niches and neighborhoods and ethnic or religious strategies of insulation)—is central to the inegalitarian workings of ethnicity, while social interdependence, as concretized in the household division of labor, is central to the inegalitarian workings of gender. Essentialist understandings of self and other are central to both ethnicity and gender, but while gender essentialism features widely shared understandings of complementary difference that generate and legitimize gender-differentiated educational paths and occupational choices, ethnic essentialism can constitute ethnic, racial, or religious others as stigmatized, despised, or feared outsiders.

General Processes

I have argued in the preceding sections, contra Tilly, that citizenship, gender, and ethnicity are implicated in very different ways in the production and reproduction of inequality. Having analyzed these differing forms of difference, I return now to a more general level of analysis. I identify three general processes—alternatives, in a sense, to Tilly's proposed general mechanisms of exploitation and opportunity hoarding—by which categories of difference generate and sustain inequality. I consider first the *allocation of persons to positions*; next *the social production of persons* with different self-understandings, dispositions, aspirations, and

promotion of more or less arranged marriages with home-country spouses also belongs to such strategies of insulation.

skills; and finally the *structuring of positions* themselves and the rewards that are attached to them.

Allocation and Exclusion

The channeling of persons to positions, broadly understood, begins at birth, or in fact before birth, with the social and even biological (genetic and epigenetic) inheritance of the persons concerned. Here, however, I focus on the proximate dynamics of allocation and exclusion: on gatekeeping processes at points of access to desirable positions. I consider in the next section the anterior processes that endow people with different dispositions and resources and channel them differentially toward (and away from) such points of access.

Four types of processes can produce categorical exclusion from or unequal representation in desirable social positions: formal categorical exclusion; informal yet strictly or largely categorical exclusion; categorically inflected selection; and category-neutral screening on category-correlated, position-relevant characteristics.

Formal categorical exclusion—with the conspicuous exception of exclusion based on citizenship—is now vestigial in liberal democracies. In a remarkably short time, the “minority rights revolution” (Skrentny 2002) has transformed law from an instrument that permitted and even mandated categorical exclusion to one that forbids such exclusion and may even mandate preferential treatment for formerly disadvantaged categories. I noted this in my discussion of gender and race, but the transformation extends to other ascriptive categories, including ethnicity, national origin, religion, and, increasingly, sexual orientation.

By informal yet strictly or strongly categorical exclusion, I have in mind processes such as the exclusion of blacks from white neighborhoods; the exclusion of Jews from WASP-dominated law firms (and restrictions on the admission of Jews to elite colleges [Karabel 2005]); the exclusion of religious or racial outsiders from clubs; and the exclusion of women and minorities from a wide range of jobs, both by discrimination at the point of hiring and by the exclusionary practices of self-consciously macho or white occupational or workplace cultures. Processes like these could and often did result in wholesale categorical exclusion—in the exclusion of all or almost all members of certain categories—despite their informal nature. Yet these too have been massively delegitimated and legally prohibited in the past half-century—except in the

increasingly narrowly defined sphere of private association such as marriage and friendship choices.³⁸

Despite the elimination of most formal categorical exclusion and the erosion—as a result of legal prohibitions and changing cultural understandings—of strictly categorical informal regimes of exclusion, substantial between-category inequalities continue to result from point-of-allocation processes. They do so in part through what I call *categorically inflected* selection processes. These are processes in which category membership matters but is not the only thing that matters. This can happen in two ways. First, gatekeepers may hold conscious beliefs—correct or incorrect—about average group differences in position-relevant characteristics. Selection processes are categorically inflected to the extent that gatekeepers' decisions are based not only on their assessments of observed *individual* characteristics but also on their beliefs about average *group* characteristics, taken as a proxy for unobserved individual characteristics.³⁹ Second, unconscious category-linked associations may bias gatekeepers' assessments of individual characteristics. Categorically inflected selection processes are not *strictly* categorical: they do not select solely on the basis of category membership. But they contribute to categorical inequality by skewing selection processes—to varying degrees—to the advantage of members of some categories and the disadvantage of others.⁴⁰

³⁸ Private clubs are a legal gray area. Here too the sphere of the indisputably private has been shrinking. The Supreme Court ruled in two cases from the 1980s that clubs such as the Jaycees and Rotary were too large and effectively public to be able to exclude women by claiming a right of private association. Clubs for women or members of minority groups are in a stronger legal position (Buss 1989).

³⁹ This can lead in certain circumstances to something approximating wholesale categorical exclusion. Bielby and Baron (1986: 760–761), for example, show that extreme levels of occupational sex segregation can be generated by a simple model in which costs of employee turnover are high, employers perceive women as more likely to quit, and information about individual propensity to quit is unavailable.

⁴⁰ In legal and organizational environments in which hiring, promotion, and firing practices are closely monitored, in which organizations are under pressure to hire or promote minorities or women, and in which the costs of discrimination—or of the appearance of discrimination—can be substantial, the skewing can sometimes favor members of generally disadvantaged categories (Petersen and Saporta 2004: 886).

Finally, even selection processes that are scrupulously category-neutral at the point of selection may generate between-category inequalities. This can happen when skills, experience, or other qualifications are unequally distributed across categories or when supply-side processes generate categorically skewed applicant pools.

The first two processes involve unambiguous and wholesale categorical exclusion, formal and informal. The third—categorically inflected selection—involves differential treatment but not wholesale exclusion. The fourth generates a disparate impact but without differential treatment or direct discrimination. This last process highlights the limits of analyses that focus on allocation and exclusion at the point of selection (or on formal or informal categorical exclusion from selection processes). A broader view of the processes through which categories of difference are implicated in the production and reproduction of inequality must encompass the social production of persons and the social structuring of positions.

The Social Production of Persons

The social production of persons includes the full range of processes that generate agents endowed with particular self-understandings, dispositions, aspirations, skills, experience, human or cultural capital, and ways of thinking and acting. The persons so produced subsequently present themselves at points of selection—or refrain from presenting themselves—as differently qualified candidates. The processes involved in the social production of persons generate both *difference* and *inequality*. On the one hand, they generate forms of difference—in self-understandings, aspirations, and commitments—that channel different categories of people (men and women, most obviously, but also members of different racial, ethnic, or religious groups) in different directions (toward different educational choices and occupational aspirations, for example, or into different networks). This differential channeling and social separation may then generate inequality as a secondary result, even in the absence of initial inequalities in skills or levels of education. On the other hand, the social production of persons directly generates between-group inequalities in skills, education, and other aspects of human capital.⁴¹ These in

⁴¹ Even when these between-group inequalities are much smaller than within-group inequalities, they may translate into substantial between-group inequalities in representation in particularly desirable and particularly undesirable positions. One reason for this is that even when group-specific distributions (for example, of skills, education, or experience) substantially overlap, there is likely to be much less overlap at the tail ends of the distributions.

turn generate inequalities in access to positions, even in the absence of any categorical exclusion or discrimination.

Between-group differences in skills, education, and other qualifications figure both as an *explanation* of inequality (in individualist accounts that focus narrowly on the point of selection) and as a *dimension* of inequality that requires explanation in its own right (in structural accounts that are more broadly concerned with the social production of persons and the social structuring of positions). As a dimension of inequality, such between-group differences emerge from differences—at once social structural and cultural—in the key environments (families, schools, neighborhoods, and peer groups) in which dispositions, skills, and aspirations are formed, insofar as these environments are differentiated and stratified not only by class but also by sex, race and ethnicity, or religion.⁴²

In Bourdieusian perspective, dispositions more or less conducive to achieving or maintaining a privileged position in social space are formed through a twofold process of internalization. On the one hand, the social structure is internalized: the constraints, opportunities, and resources inscribed in the social structure—which vary by sex, race and ethnicity, religion, and so on as well as by class—are translated into the dispositions, skills, and aspirations that constitute the habitus and embodied forms of cultural capital. Aspirations are adjusted to opportunities through what Bourdieu calls the “causality of the probable,” which is “no doubt one of the most powerful factors of conservation of the established order” (2000: 231; 1974).

On the other hand, the symbolic structures of domination are also internalized: the prevailing schemas of classification, perception, and evaluation, which systematically valorize dominant positions, dispositions, and forms of cultural capital while devalorizing and sometimes stigmatizing others.⁴³ The internalization of such self-devaluing schemas of classification and

⁴² See, for example, Lareau 2003. On the need for an integrated understanding of the cultural, structural, and social psychological dimensions of unequal environments, with special reference to race, see Emirbayer and Desmond (forthcoming); on the recent renewal of interest in culture on the part of students of poverty, see Small et al. (2010). See also Lamont et al. (2014) for a theorization on the role of cultural processes in the production of inequality.

⁴³ This is a theme developed throughout Bourdieu’s oeuvre; among many other discussions, see those in *Pascalian Meditations* (2000: 169ff) and *Masculine Domination* (2001: 22–42). There is a risk, to be sure—of which Bourdieu was well aware—of overemphasizing internalization and its contribution to social and cultural reproduction.

appraisal allows the dominated to collude, if only unconsciously, in their own domination, for example by way of downwardly biased self-assessments, depressed aspirations, self-hatred, or self-destructive behavior.⁴⁴ Symbolic violence becomes thereby a key mechanism linking difference and inequality.

Positions and Their Rewards

Accounts of inequality that focus narrowly on the allocation of persons to positions neglect the social processes that form the persons and structure the positions, generating (1) persons unequally disposed and equipped to pursue desirable positions and (2) the structure of unequally rewarded positions itself. Having addressed, all too briefly, the former, I turn now to the latter.

Sociologists and anthropologists have long distinguished between positions in the social structure and the persons who occupy them. Corresponding to this is a distinction between two forms of inequality: inequality between *categories of positions* and inequality between *categories of persons*.⁴⁵ The relation between difference and inequality depends in obvious ways on the latter. But it depends on the former as well, insofar as inequality between categories of persons is mediated by unequal access to categories of positions. If women and minorities are disproportionately represented in low-status positions, for example, then the magnitude of male-female or majority-minority inequality depends not only on the degree of disproportional representation but also on the degree of inequality inscribed in the structure of positions itself. If occupations, social classes, neighborhoods, and schools differ relatively little in the rewards attached to them, then the disproportionate representation of minorities in less desirable occupational, class, residential, or school positions matters less for the overall structure and experience of between-group inequality than it does when positional inequality is greater. In a more egalitarian social structure, questions of what categories of people live in which neighborhoods, attend which schools, and work at which jobs are much less consequential.

⁴⁴ For an interesting attempt to bring a psychoanalytically informed extension of Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence to bear on racial inequality in the United States, see Emirbayer and Desmond forthcoming: chapter 6.

⁴⁵ On positional inequality—the degree of inequality inscribed in the structure of social positions, irrespective of the characteristics of the persons who occupy them—see Baron and Bielby 1980; Kalleberg and Griffin 1980. On the distinction between positional inequality and status inequality (inequality between kinds of people) in the domain of gender, see Jackson 1998.

As this suggests, the connection between difference and inequality can be attenuated in two ways. If one takes positional inequality as given, the connection can be attenuated only by changing the allocation of persons to positions (which may in turn depend, in the longer run, on changing the social production of persons). But the connection between difference and inequality can also be attenuated by reducing positional inequality: by shrinking the gap in rewards between more and less desirable positions. This could be done, for example, by raising the minimum wage, strengthening labor unions, or instituting more progressive taxation of income. Formally, these measures are difference-blind, concerned only with categories of positions; substantively, however, they would reduce inequalities between categories of persons.

This raises the questions of how rewards get assigned to positions, how particular degrees and forms of inequality get built into structures of positions, and how patterns of positional inequality change over time. These large and complex questions, which engage broad macroeconomic debates about technology and labor market structure as well as sociological debates about positional inequality, are beyond the scope of this chapter. But one issue requires brief discussion here: How do categories of difference figure in the structuring of positions? More specifically: In what ways, and to what degree, is the structure of positions—especially the assignment of different rewards to different positions—affected by the categorical identities of their incumbents?

According to the devaluation hypothesis, female- and minority-dominated jobs suffer a wage penalty, net of skills, experience, onerousness, and other factors that affect pay levels (England et al. 1988; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993; Petersen and Morgan 1995). The hypothesis remains controversial (on gender, see Tam 1997, 2000; England et al. 2000). But it illustrates an important general mechanism through which the categorical composition of incumbents can affect the rewards assigned to a position or, more abstractly, the “quality” or “value” of a position.

One can see this by broadening the conception of “position” beyond jobs to include neighborhoods as positions in residential space, schools as positions in educational space, and class positions. The literature on racial residential segregation, discussed earlier, makes clear that the categorical composition of a neighborhood’s residents can affect the services provided to the neighborhood, the willingness to invest in the neighborhood, and the image or discursive representation of the neighborhood, generating in some cases a mutually reinforcing nexus of confinement, neglect, abandonment, and territorial stigmatization (Wacquant 2008). A similar point can be made about the categorical composition of public schools or other public

institutions. And the changing racial, ethnic, or religious composition of the working poor and subproletarian population, who can easily be represented as “them” rather than “us,” may have contributed to diminishing support for redistributive policies in contemporary liberal democratic settings (Larsen 2011). In other contexts, the ethnoracial or ethnoreligious composition of economically privileged commercial or landowning strata has rendered them vulnerable to expropriation, expulsion, or worse, particularly at moments of economic or political crisis (Brubaker 2011a).

Obviously the processes that shape and reshape positional inequalities are enormously complex, and I have not been able to provide even the briefest account of them here. I have sought rather to highlight the social definition of positions and their rewards as a distinct inequality-generating mechanism that interacts with the allocation of persons to positions and with the social production of persons endowed with different and unequal dispositions and resources. And I have noted some ways in which categories of difference—specifically the categorical identities of incumbents—may shape the social definition of positions and the rewards that are attached to them. Positions and their rewards are the objects of chronic struggles, and these struggles (for improved pay or working conditions, for a wider jurisdiction, or for recognition as a licensed trade or profession, for example) are driven in the first instance by the *positional* identities and interests of the incumbents, not by their ascriptive *categorical* identities and interests. As these struggles alter the social definition and rewards of positions, making them more or less attractive, the categorical composition of their incumbents may change. But as I have suggested here, the reverse causal process may also occur: exogenously driven changes in the categorical composition of incumbents can lead to a social redefinition and reevaluation of positions and their rewards.

Conclusion

What is the relation between difference and inequality? Tilly’s influential account of categorical inequality focused on processes of exploitation and opportunity hoarding through which internal organizational divisions—the boundaries between clusters of similarly rewarded positions—are matched or aligned with major axes of categorical division in the wider social environment, such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or citizenship. Probing the ambiguities in Tilly’s discussion of exploitation and opportunity hoarding, however, cast doubt on his claim that the major categories of difference are implicated in the production and reproduction of inequality in fundamentally similar ways. This led me to adopt a more differentiated and disaggregated analytical strategy

and to consider separately the relation between difference and inequality in the domains of citizenship, gender, and ethnicity. In the penultimate section, I returned to a more general level of analysis and specified—as an alternative to Tilly’s exploitation and opportunity hoarding—three general processes through which categories of difference enter into the production and reproduction of inequality: the allocation of persons to (or their exclusion from) reward-bearing positions; the social production of persons unequally disposed and equipped to pursue desirable positions; and the structuring of positions and their rewards.

Position-Mediated and Category-Mediated Inequality: The Social Distribution of Honor

I have focused my analysis on inequalities that are mediated by reward-bearing positions. Jobs are the paradigmatic example of such positions; other examples include neighborhoods, schools, clubs, and nation-states. There are good reasons for focusing on position-mediated inequalities. Not only inequalities in income and wealth but also inequalities in basic physical security and in mental and physical health are increasingly mediated in the contemporary world by such positions. Even the social distribution of honor is mediated by positions. Incumbents of different positions enjoy differing degrees of respect, prestige, and deference (Goffman 1956; Shils 1968; Goldthorpe and Hope 1972). Stigma too attaches not only to categories of persons but to categories of positions: there are stigmatized jobs (Hughes 1958: chapter 3; Ashforth and Kreiner 1999; Drew et al. 2007), stigmatized neighborhoods (Wacquant 2007), even stigmatized countries.

Yet inequality is not only mediated by positions; it also attaches directly to categories of persons. I therefore wish to supplement my position-focused analysis with some brief comments on forms of inequality that are mediated by category membership *per se*. Exposure to violence, for example, is crucially mediated by country, region, class, and neighborhood. But some forms of violence specifically target categories of persons, notably women, gays, and members of ethnoracial or ethnoreligious minorities. Unequal exposure to such targeted forms of violence thus attaches directly to categories of persons.

The distribution of honor, respect, and esteem, too, is only partly mediated by positions.⁴⁶ Some forms of disrespect, dishonor, or symbolic aggression, like some forms of physical violence, target particular categories of persons. Apart from such deliberate, consciously targeted acts of disrespect, members of subordinate categories may be exposed to chronic and routine

⁴⁶ On the social distribution of honor as an aspect of the distribution of power, the discussion of Weber ([1922] 1978: 926–938) remains foundational.

affronts to dignity.⁴⁷ Even in a context in which overt racism is marginal and thoroughly delegitimated, for example, African Americans—independently of the positions they occupy—risk being stopped for “driving while black.” And apart from such specific instances of disrespect, whether or not deliberately intended as such, people may enjoy more or less honor, respect, and esteem simply by virtue of their category membership, again independently of the positions they occupy.⁴⁸

The categorically unequal distribution of honor, respect, and esteem is in the first instance a form of *symbolic* inequality, that is, of inequality in the distribution of symbolic goods. But such inequality is not *merely* symbolic. Insofar as it operates through the internalization of dominant self-devaluing schemes of classification and appraisal, it has material effects. In this way, the social distribution of honor can be incorporated and embodied in individual persons: in bodily hexis, ingrained ways of thinking and feeling, and other somatic manifestations such as susceptibility to stress and disease. These incorporated *dispositional* inequalities can contribute, in turn, to *positional* inequalities by downwardly biasing self-assessments, depressing occupational aspirations and educational investments, and channeling members of subordinate categories away from the pursuit of highly rewarded positions.⁴⁹ There is thus a reciprocal relation between positional inequality and the social distribution of honor. On the one hand, positional inequality shapes the distribution of honor through the positive and negative honor attached to positions. On the other hand, the directly category-mediated distribution of honor shapes positional inequality through the internalization of self-devaluing schemas of classification and appraisal and the effects of this internalization on self-assessments, aspirations, dispositions, and behavior.

There is of course a risk in overstating the power of this circular dynamic of incorporation and externalization that leads from positions to dispositions and then back to positions. It’s worth underscoring in this connection that inequality in the distribution of honor exists quite apart from such deep, self-devaluing incorporation. “Shallower” forms of symbolic inequality—the unequal enjoyment of honor, respect, and esteem that supervenes on membership in valued and devalued,

⁴⁷ On race, see Emirbayer and Desmond forthcoming: chapter 6.

⁴⁸ In some contexts, however, categories of personhood are themselves mediated by social position. In much of Latin America, for example, racial or color category membership depends on social position, in accordance with the expression “money whitens.”

⁴⁹ This is an instance of a broader dialectic of internalization and externalization that is a central theme in Bourdieu’s work.

marked and unmarked categories—can be significant in their own right, even if members of subordinate categories do *not* internalize dominant schemas of evaluation and appraisal but instead challenge and contest those schemas through strategies of transvaluation (Wimmer 2013: 57–58) or de-stigmatization (Warren 1980; Lamont 2009; Lamont and Mizrachi 2012).

Categorical Inequality Revisited

“Categorical inequality” is a leitmotif of Tilly’s book, and the phrase has appeared many times in these pages. But the term is elusive and ambiguous. Weak and strong meanings can be distinguished. The weak meaning is purely descriptive: it designates *any* significant between-category inequality, irrespective of how that inequality is generated. Differences in average earnings between women and men are an instance of categorical inequality in this sense, simply because average earnings are lower for women than for men. We would continue to speak of categorical inequality in this weak sense even if there were no evidence of discrimination in hiring or promotion and no evidence of the devaluation of female-dominated occupations. Categorical inequality in this sense refers solely to the *fact* of between-category inequality; it says nothing about the *processes* through which such inequality arises. Such inequality is *measured* by the analytic use of *statistical categories* for which data are available, but it need not be *produced* by the exclusionary workings of *social categories*.

The strong meaning turns on the contrast between *categorical* and *gradational* forms of inequality. This contrast applies both to inequality between *positions* and to inequality between *persons*. With respect to the former, positions in large organizations tend to be organized in bounded clusters, separated by large gaps in rewards and virtually insurmountable mobility barriers (between workers and upper managers in firms, for example, or between enlisted soldiers and officers in the military). Inequality tends to be gradational *within* clusters of positions but categorical *between* clusters.

With respect to inequality between persons, the contrast between categorical and gradational inequality has both a *global* meaning, referring to the basic structure of the social order as a whole, and a more *local* and restricted meaning, referring to different modes of allocating particular rewards and opportunities. The global contrast distinguishes social orders stratified on the basis of ascriptive and morally incommensurable categories of personhood to which radically different rights and obligations are attached (nobles and commoners, landowners and serfs, men and women, upper and lower castes, free and slave) from social orders like our own in which the dominant principle of differentiation is functional and basic categories of

persons are assumed to enjoy equal moral status and legal rights (Schmidt 2013). The local contrast distinguishes two ways in which specific rewards and opportunities can be allocated: on the basis of ascribed categorical identities or on the basis of individual qualifications and performances.⁵⁰

Combining this local idea of categorical allocation with the notion of categorically distinct clusters of positions yields a strong local meaning of categorical inequality: *positions defined by discontinuous bundles of rewards and opportunities are assigned or allocated on the basis of ascribed categorical identity*. Strong forms of categorical identity in this sense have persisted well into the modern era. But they have eroded dramatically over the course of the past two centuries, especially during the “minority rights revolution” of the past half-century (Skrentny 2002). Legally mandated categorical exclusions—as well as strongly categorical informal regimes of exclusion—have been massively delegitimized; the law now mandates equal treatment on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, religion, and (to a lesser extent) sexual orientation, and it may even mandate preferential treatment for members of previously excluded categories. This has undermined and illegalized informal as well as formal regimes of categorical exclusion, insofar as these go beyond a narrowly defined sphere of private association. Although this development has proceeded furthest in the West, it is a global phenomenon, evident in a series of striking changes at the level of the world polity (Koenig 2008; Schmidt 2013).

There is one conspicuous yet seldom noticed exception to this precipitous decline in legally mandated or sanctioned categorical inequality. While discrimination on the basis of other ascribed identities has been massively delegitimated, discrimination on the basis of citizenship has been largely unchallenged. Countries—or more precisely, clusters of countries—can be seen as positions in the global nation-state system, to which discontinuous bundles of rewards and opportunities are attached; and access to these positions is assigned on the basis of a categorical identity that is assigned at birth. Citizenship is the great remaining bastion of strong categorical inequality in the modern world; this inherited status continues to underwrite and legitimate immense structures of between-country inequality on a global scale.

Other ascribed categories of difference continue, of course, to enter into the production and reproduction of inequality in important ways that I have sought to clarify in this chapter. But they do so, on the whole, in ways that have become less strictly categorical. Categorical

⁵⁰ As I suggested in my discussion of categorically inflected selection processes, there are various intermediate possibilities in which category membership per se matters without being the *only* thing that matters.

inequality in the weak, statistical sense is ubiquitous; but categorical inequality in the strong, processual sense—referring to the allocation of categorically distinct bundles of rewards and opportunities on the basis of ascribed categorical identities—is increasingly vestigial in liberal democratic contexts.

A great strength of Tilly's *Durable Inequality* is its sustained attention to the categorical nature of inequality between clusters of organizational positions. Yet Tilly does not consistently distinguish this kind of intra-organizational categorical inequality from categorical inequality in the allocation of persons to positions or in the social production of persons. Categorical inequality among *organizational positions* and categorical inequality among *persons* have quite distinct causes and need not go hand in hand. Strictly categorical inequality between clusters of positions is the rule in contemporary large organizations; strictly categorical inequality in the allocation of persons to positions, or in the social production of persons, is the exception.

Of course, this does not mean that the mechanisms that generate and sustain inequality are difference-blind. But even when the mechanisms are not difference-blind, they no longer turn centrally on strictly categorical forms of exclusion, formal or informal. They turn instead on categorically inflected selection processes, which—without being strictly categorical—may skew selection processes to the advantage of some categories and the disadvantage of others. They turn on the social production of categories of persons unequally disposed and equipped to pursue desirable positions. They turn on the social definition and valuation of positions in ways that reflect, in part, the categorical identities of their incumbents. And they turn on the ways honor, esteem, and respect—and their opposites—attach not only to categories of positions but also, if in diminishing measure, to categories of persons.

Inequality has increased dramatically in recent decades. But it has not become more categorical. Changes in the *degree* of inequality and changes in the *mode* of inequality result from different processes. Though it is beyond the scope of this chapter, I would speculate in closing that inequality has become less categorical in recent decades, while categorical differences have become less inegalitarian.⁵¹ The dynamics of unbridled capitalism that are

⁵¹ This is obviously far too sweeping. Given the many relevant axes of categorical difference and the fact that most axes involve multiple socially significant categories and categorical pairs, any hypothesis designed to inform research would have to specify which categorical differences have become less inegalitarian. (On the importance of categorical pairs, even in systems involving multiple categories, see Tilly 1998: 6–7.) In the U.S. context, for example, even as most ethnic and religious categorical differences have become less inegalitarian, the categorical distinction

primarily responsible for intensifying systemic inequalities do not turn, in the first instance, on ascribed categories of difference. Financialization, for example, has contributed in a major way to increasing inequality (Lin and Tomaskovic-Devey 2013); but ascribed categories of difference have been largely irrelevant to the dynamics of financialization. At the same time, the differentialist turn of recent decades in liberal democratic polities has eroded some of the symbolic harms and inequalities associated with categories of difference. The social distribution of honor remains far from category-neutral, and some categories of difference—notably “Gypsy” in east central Europe and “Muslim” in northern and western Europe—have become more rather than less stigmatized in recent decades. But many forms of difference are much more likely to be publicly ratified and privately accepted today than, say, a half-century ago, and the social distribution of honor and esteem has become much less glaringly category-based.

Categories of difference figure in the production and reproduction of inequality, arguably, in a decreasingly categorical manner. This does not make them any less important. But it does highlight the limits of the closure paradigm in the analysis of inequality: an overextended notion of categorical exclusion obscures more than it reveals about the dynamics of inequality (Brubaker 2014). And it suggests that Tilly’s account of categorical inequality, paradoxically, may be overly categorical. In his concern to distinguish his approach as sharply as possible from prevailing gradational and individualist modes of analysis, he insists too much on the strictly categorical nature of durable inequality. I have tried to outline a more differentiated account of the relation between difference and inequality, sensitive both to strictly categorical and to a variety of other processes and dynamics.

between black and non-black has remained a crucial and refractory focus of inequality. I have discussed some reasons for these differing trajectories. Saperstein and Penner (2012: 676) suggest, in addition, that the patterned microlevel fluidity of racial identification and classification reinforces entrenched black–non-black inequalities “by redefining successful or high-status people as white (or not black) and unsuccessful or low-status people as black (or not white).”

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