Macrosystems of Development
Bringing Powerful (sometimes Invisible) Developmental Forces into View

Our development is profoundly shaped by cultural and societal forces. Researchers call these forces "higher-order contexts" or "macrosystems" because they include larger overarching institutions, like our political, economic, legal, criminal justice, educational, and healthcare systems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The powerful effects of macrosystems are both obvious and hard to see. They are obvious in that we all know that society and culture permeate our daily lives. If you compare your life to that of your parents, grandparents, or children, it is clear that our developmental pathways are influenced by changing social and historical factors. At the same time, they can be hard to see. Because we all hold different positions in society, we can't possibly understand the effects of these higher-order contexts on everyone else. And because we are immersed in them, like the proverbial fish, we have trouble recognizing the water in which we have always lived. Macrosystems can also be hard to see because societies try to disguise their operation.

One set of powerful forces, active in all societies are "***hierarchies of human worth***." These are societal ladders that place different subgroups of people on higher or lower rungs (Ridgeway, 2014). We will touch on many different hierarchies as we go through class, but here we focus on two that are widespread today: hierarchies based on wealth and education (called "***class***") and those based on ***racialized*** categories. Status hierarchies are important to examine because their effects are ***pervasive***, yet they are often ***invisible*** to the people inside them (especially those at the top). At the same time, they are artificial or ***socially constructed***, meaning that they were invented by people and can be transformed by people. They are crucial to understand because of the powerful effects they exert on human development-- both directly by sending strong messages to people about their inherent worth, and indirectly by shaping all the lower-order settings of our daily lives.

No one alive today created these societal systems but the development of everyone alive today is profoundly influenced by them, and we all play a role in defending or demolishing them. ***Critical awareness***, where we see things as they truly are, is a complex developmental process of openness and reflection, and each of us have to go through it at our own pace and in our own way. But it is a first step toward taking collective action to reinvent and rebuild high-order contexts so that they better support everyone's healthy development, including our own. Examining the scientific evidence for status hierarchies, their effects, and the mechanisms that support them can help us form a fuller picture of these powerful forces.

| Learning Objectives: Models of Higher-order Contexts in Development |
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| • What are higher-order contexts of development?
    o How did the lifespan movement incorporate them in models of development?
    o How did Bronfenbrenner conceptualize macrosystems in the bioecological model?
 • Extensions that focus on culture and societal inequity
    o How did sociocultural researchers reconceptualize culture in ecological systems?
    o Why is it important to include patterns of societal opportunity and inequity? |

Models of Higher-order Contexts of Development

Most developmental scientists did not regularly incorporate higher-order contexts in their models and theories until the 1970s, when the idea was introduced by ***contextualist meta-theorists*** from the ***lifespan*** and ***ecological movements***. Up until then, psychology as a discipline, because it focuses on individual people, overemphasized the role of individual causal factors and overlooked causal forces from society or culture-- factors that are typically the focus of other disciplines, like sociology and anthropology.

Lifespan researchers highlighted the role of ***historical forces***. You can see this emphasis in the idea of ***cohorts*** or ***generations***, in which people born at the same time share the experience of growing up across historical periods when particular social and cultural changes are taking place. It is not surprising that historical forces were emphasized by Paul Baltes (Baltes, 1987), an early proponent of the lifespan movement who grew up in Germany during World War II, or by Glen Elder (Elder, 1999), a lifespan sociologist who studied the life paths of people experiencing major events, like wars or the Great Depression, at different ages. Lifespan researchers also argue for ***multidisciplinary approaches*** that includes not only biology and psychology but also disciplines that explicitly focus on higher-order contexts, like sociology, anthropology, and history.

Higher-order contexts also feature prominently in ***bioecological models of development*** (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Inspired by the ecological movements of the 1970s, proponents of this approach argued that children develop within ***complex social ecologies*** or multi-level systems. Bronfenbrenner posits four levels (see box), with the highest-level called the ***macrosystem***. This is the level that focuses on the larger overarching systems and institutions that surround systems from all the other levels. Up until then, psychologists typically stopped their analyses at the level of microsystems, like families and schools. They were not used to thinking about that ways that macrosystem factors have such a big impact on what is happening

inside those families and schools.
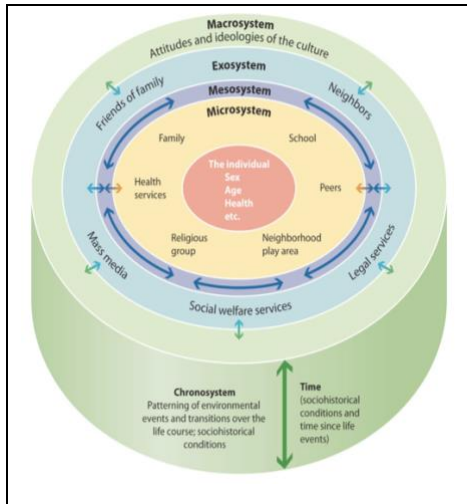
	Levels of Contextual Systems
	1. ***Micro-system:*** immediate settings of children's daily lives, like home, schools, and neighborhoods; the level at which developmental researchers typically focus their research efforts.
	2. ***Mesosystem***: connections or frictions between the settings of a child's daily life, such as the challenges of negotiating different expectations and demands at home, school, and in the neighborhood.
	3. ***Exosystem***: settings that do not contain the developing person, like a parent's workplace, but that contribute to children's development by influencing their micro- and mesosystems, like the quality of their schools.
	4. **Macrosystem**: "[T]he overarching institutional patterns of the culture or subculture, such as the economic, social, educational, legal, and political systems… Macrosystems are … carriers of information and ideology that, both explicitly and implicitly, endow meaning and motivation to particular agencies, social networks, roles, activities, and their interrelations" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515).

Lifespan and bioecological models directly challenged ***maturational metatheorists***, who dominated child psychology at the time and assumed that developmental patterns were universal based on common underlying biological and genetic factors. Together, these two approaches instigated a scientific revolution, a ***paradigm shift*** to the ***contextualist views*** common today.

Since that time, two important extensions of ecological models have been incorporated, both focused on the ways higher-order systems are structured and operate. First, ***sociocultural researchers*** criticized the bioecological model because, as shown in the figure above, it drew the macrosystem as a circle *outside of* the other three subsystems (Vélez-Agosto, Soto-Crespo, Vizcarrondo-Oppenheimer, Vega-Molina, & García Coll, 2017). Researchers argue that a better representation places ***culture*** deeply ***inside*** the model: Inside the attributes of the developing person, their social partners, and especially in their everyday interactions as part of communities of practice. From this perspective, culture (and by extension other macrosystem characteristics) don't just *surround* the levels below, they *permeate* or constitute them.

A second major extension is provided by the ***phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory*** (PVEST; Spencer, 2006; Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997). PVEST argues that it is not possible to fully understand the development of children and youth unless models include societal ***macrosystems of targeted inequity***. This lens is especially important in understanding children and adolescents from ethnic and racialized groups, whose development can be shaped by discrimination, inequity, and messages from society about their position and value. It also incorporates systems of opportunity and advantage that permeate the lives of children from the dominant culture. Lifespan developmental and ecological systems approaches, incorporating culture and societal systems of inequity, provide some of the most inclusive models used to study development today.

Learning Objectives: Explain the Nature of Status Hierarchies
• What are societal hierarchies of human worth?
o Name some status hierarchies in our society.
o Compare and contrast "agents" and "targets" in social hierarchies.
• What role do entrenched myths and cover stories play in the maintenance of status hierarchies?
o Name three ways status hierarchies undermine the development of the people at the bottom.
o Name three ways status hierarchies sabotage the development of the people at the top.

Societal Hierarchies of Human Worth

A particularly important aspect of all higher-order contexts are ***societal hierarchies of human worth***. By this we mean that all societies endorse more or less explicit rank orderings of the value of different subgroups of people (e.g., Ridgeway, 2014). As a member of society, you can probably list a dozen or more status hierarchies, based on things like on wealth and education (i.e., class), racialized groups, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity and orientation, disability and immigration status, age, religion, appearance, and so on. Status hierarchies have teeth because rank orderings grant differential ***access to resources, opportunities, and power***. We focus on hierarchies in the United States, not because it is the only society that endorses them, but because we are largely learning about the development of American children, adolescents, and adults. Every society has

them, and there are even status hierarchies endorsed *between* geographic regions, as you can hear in labels like "first world" and "developing world."

Most societies do not talk openly about their hierarchies. In fact, societies typically defend their rank orderings using **entrenched myths** and **cover stories** (Rendon, 2020; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997). **Entrenched myths** focus on the inherent inferiority of subgroups assigned to the bottom rungs, explaining why they are unworthy, and why people at the top are entitled to their position. **Cover stories** depict how societies want to see themselves, usually stories of **meritocracy**, that blame the targets of **discrimination** for the unequal conditions in their lives. This blame is called **stigma**, as in "poor people are stigmatized for their poverty." Some students are not used to discussing status hierarchies, entrenched myths, and cover stories. Other students belong to communities who have been fighting them for decades or centuries. The fact that most academics come from the top of many of these hierarchies is likely one reason why it took so long for their effects to be incorporated into developmental science.

How can we make hierarchies of human worth more visible?
Hierarchies are easier to see from the bottom, so let's try an **exercise** where we focus on parts of our identities that are located there (Ahmed, 2020). All of us have **complex multi-faceted identities** that include a wide range of attributes that fall at different places in current status hierarchies. When we map our identities on all those attributes, most people find that they fall into multiple positions on these different hierarchies. Although our individual identities are unique based on the dynamic interaction among all these multiple facets (a characteristic called **intersectionality;** Crenshaw, 1989, 1991), for this exercise, we are going to act as if we can take these facets apart and consider some of them separately.

People at the top of status hierarchies are sometimes called "**agents**" and those at the bottom are called "**targets**." When we are agents, our development is easier because we have **access to social power, resources, and opportunities**, whereas when we are targets, our development is more difficult because we are **excluded and faced with roadblocks**. Sometimes we say targets experience **disadvantages** and **discrimination** based on their category membership. Or we say that agents have **privilege** because they have advantages targets do not, or they have **immunity** because they do not have to deal with problems targets are confronted with every day. Lots of metaphors have been used to explain the differences in these subjective experiences and objective conditions. For example, we are all swimming hard in the streams of our lives, but agents are swimming downstream while targets are swimming upstream. Or we are all working hard to climb the ladder of success, but agents either start at the top or, as they climb, they find themselves on escalators, whereas targets have to use long steep stairs and are carrying backpacks full of bricks. Even if agents sit down or fall down, the escalator keeps right on carrying them up, whereas if targets fall down, they can roll all the way to the bottom of the stairs.

Unless agents know a great deal about the daily experiences of targets, it can be hard for them to agree that they have privileges or immunities. And because one way that hierarchies are maintained is by disguising them and dividing people up, in terms of housing and geography, agents don't always know very many targets or hear about their actual experiences. As a result, it can be hard for agents to empathize with or believe targets' daily realities. Widespread denial of the daily experiences of targets adds insult to the injury inflicted by status hierarchies.

Step 1. Focus on a category you belong to where your identity makes you a target.
The target identity most students can relate to, since many are first-generation or Pell-eligible, is "wealth." Students who come from low wealth backgrounds have directly experienced a range of roadblocks as they try to fight their way out of the bottom of this hierarchy. They experience the headwinds created by schools that do not prepare them well, high school teachers and guidance counselors who do not believe in them, tuition costs that keep getting higher, low wage jobs that make it difficult to pay for school, universities that do not support them, and professors who think they are not "the right stuff." They see the privilege of middle class students, who never question whether they are college bound, who do not have to work and take care of family, who are encouraged by professors and have plenty of time for unpaid learning experiences. Low wealth students know they are climbing a long steep staircase with bricks in their backpacks, even if middle class students (correctly) feel they are working hard, and are not aware of the escalators under their feet.

Next, think about **entrenched myths** and **cover stories**. In the case of wealth hierarchies and students, we know entrenched myths about first generation and students from low wealth backgrounds: They are not smart enough, their families do not support them or care about education, they face too many adversities to succeed. We know the cover stories: If only first gen students would work harder, they could succeed. These myths and cover stories are **false**. They ignore the strengths and assets students and their families possess, they overlook the grit, determination, and smarts that have gotten students this far, and they don't see the barriers that society (and professors and universities) throw in their way.

One of the most damaging things about hierarchies, besides the actual roadblocks, is that targets can start to buy into these

false narratives about themselves. These effects, called ***internalized biases***, can be seen at all ages. Try to ***identify one entrenched myth about your target self*** that you have bought into-- like women are not really good at math or first gen students don't have what it takes to succeed. As part of this exercise, do a journal entry about how you could ***undo some of these internalized biases***. Maybe you can imagine writing a letter to a new student, letting them know that they are not alone and these entrenched myths, which vibrate inside all of our heads, should be replaced by clear evidence-based convictions highlighting the strengths, abilities, and fortitude that allow students to excel.

Exercise: Agent Selves and Target Selves

We all have complex multi-faceted identities that position us in different places on different status hierarchies. In this exercise, we want you to reflect on the parts of your identity that make you a ***target***, located at the bottom of a given status hierarchy, and then on the parts of your identity that make you an ***agent***, located toward the top.

1. Focus on a category you belong to where your identity makes you a **target**:
   - List three ways that you have experienced ***disadvantages***, roadblocks, headwinds, or bricks in your backpack.
     - List three ways that people above you on this hierarchy experience ***privilege***, ***immunity***, or ***advantage***.
   - List three ***entrenched myths***, or stories you have been told about why people like you are unworthy.
     - Identify one ***entrenched myth*** that you would like to get out of your own head.
     - Write about one way that you can start to "***decontaminate***" yourself and recover from this myth.
2. Focus on a category you belong to where your identity makes you an **agent:**
   - Surface three ways your advantage, privilege, or immunity has ***sabotaged*** your development.
     - Write about one way you can start to help yourself heal from this developmental insult.
   - List three ways you can leverage your ***social power*** to try to break down unfair status hierarchies.
     - Think of a way you can ***challenge the power dynamics*** in an institution that defends status hierarchies.
     - Think of one way you can ***open up opportunities*** for people below you on this hierarchy to have their voices heard and acted on.

(Adapted from Amer F. Ahmed, Speak Out Series, Summer 2020)

Step 2. Find a category you belong to where your identity makes you an agent.
Now let's do the more difficult part of this exercise. Let's focus on a part of your identity that makes you an ***agent***. Some students have difficulty finding a part of their identity that would qualify as an agent. For some students, other people around them have no problem nominating status hierarchies this student seems to be at the top of-- like hierarchies of gender, race, or sexual orientation. However, students themselves sometimes do not always experience or believe that they have had any advantages just because they happen to be male or white or heterosexual. Other students have the opposite problem. They belong at the bottom of every status hierarchy they can think of, and the people around them would verify their perceptions. They cannot think of any parts of their identity that receive advantages or privilege.

We ask both these groups of students to keep looking. We ask them to stretch, with the idea that some of these agent positions may be hidden from them. (Remember, people are more in tune with the categories that make them targets.) A hierarchy that students sometimes overlook is ability status (e.g., learning, physical, emotional, or mental health disabilities). And one hierarchy that we can always fall back on in which we are *all* agents is the hierarchy of national residence. We all live in the United States, which is at the top of the global hierarchy of nations. If we wanted to, we could work together for a few minutes to list the power, privileges, and immunities we all enjoy compared to people from other countries, even though these advantages may be largely invisible to us. This part of the exercise can be helpful to people who have many target identities to see how easy it is for agents to be unaware of their higher status.

Although most students assume that the next step in this exercise is to list their advantages as an agent, we actually ask students to do something harder. We ask them to reflect on the ways that belonging at the ***top of a status hierarchy*** can actually ***sabotage*** your development.

How do status hierarchies undermine development of the people at the top?
Research has most clearly documented the damage done to children and families assigned to the bottom, especially those at the bottom of ***multiple*** hierarchies, and so we do not have a good research base examining ways that status hierarchies can hurt people at the top. Because most discussions of status hierarchies emphasize the advantages and privileges of people at the top, it often takes students a minute to surface the ways that hierarchies also cause harm. To loosen up our ideas we can try a thought experiment, described below.

Thought Experiment: Raising Healthy Children

Let's pretend you are part of a "new parent" group who are all getting ready to welcome newborns into your lives. You have

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been meeting and discussing ways you want to nurture your children's development. Now imagine that one of the parents-to-be starts describing the parenting they are planning, laying out the same practices that some people experience at the extreme top of these hierarchies.

They say, "Well, we plan to let them know in every way we can that they are *much* better than everyone else, but especially better than *some* people. We will tell them that that they can push anyone down and take their things, especially kids who are weaker. And we will make sure that they get straight 'A's in school whether they learn anything or not. We will remind them that they are entitled to all the best without working for it, and will make sure they get it. We will never set any limits or punish them, and we will always back them up no matter what they do. We will tell them that all their problems are caused by other people and if people are not nice to them, they are just jealous."

This example is exaggerated to make a point, but can you imagine what the other parents would say? In what world would these ever be seen as *good* child-rearing practices? These conditions are definitely *not* an advantage to anyone's development. The other parents would try to explain that such practices sound like an extreme form of indulgent parenting and are likely to spoil this child, or at least make their eventual healthy development much harder to achieve. Research suggests that children raised under such conditions would be more likely to be immature, low in self-regulatory skills, academic achievement, moral development, you name it. If we meet them in preschool, we will probably have to protect other children from them, but we will also be concerned about their own prospects for happiness. These contextual conditions are not good for anyone's development.

Even when developmental conditions are not so extreme, we can still reflect on the damage done to our agent selves. One of the most haunting problems seems to be *disconnection*. For example, studies show the identity confusion and loss felt by some boys under the pressure that is exerted on them to deny their authentic selves in order to remain in restricted definitions of masculinity (e.g., Reigeluth & Addis, 2016). And hierarchies disconnect society itself from some of its greatest strengths-- our common multicultural heritage and the potential contributions of those who are being marginalized and excluded. The world faces tough challenges, and status hierarchies prevent us from working together to solve them. So, we want you to think of *ways that the development of your agent self has been sabotaged*, and *ways you can help yourself recover*. This is a long-term project, and one that may take a while to unpack, so we encourage students to keep thinking about these questions.

Hierarchies and attempts to disguise them also disconnect people at the top from society's complex history, and so make it harder for them to find their place in existing social movements working to create a better world. We want you to think of ways you *can straightforwardly use the social power* handed to your agent self. You did not ask for it, but you've got it and so may as well use it. Status hierarchies have to be taken apart by everyone, but people at the top have a special responsibility, because they can *leverage their power to challenge others in power*. Sometimes learning about status hierarchies can be daunting, but we invite you to think of ways you can *challenge the power dynamics in institutions* that are fighting to keep status hierarchies alive, and of ways you can *open opportunities for targets of these hierarchies*, and especially opportunities for them to have their voices heard, listened to, and acted upon.

Learning Objectives: Explain How Status Hierarchies Are Created and Allowed to Function
• How are status hierarchies "socially constructed"?
o Give an example of a socially-assigned category.
o Why do societies insist that these socially-assigned categories are real?
• How are the negative effects of status hierarchies "societally sanctioned"?
o Define and give some examples of disparities in objective conditions
o Provide some alternatives to this "unfortunate but inevitable" state of affairs.

Creation of Hierarchies of Human Worth

Status hierarchies present a paradox. Although their effects are real, the categories on which they are based are not. Most of the categories used to create status hierarchies are *socially constructed* and *socially assigned*, meaning they have no natural or scientific basis. They are made up. Because society has been acting on them for so long, they seem real to us, but they are not. Such artificiality is easiest to see in hierarchies treated as real in other societies, and a clear example is India's *caste* system. This is actually a complex and nuanced social system, but let's just take it at its most simplified, like in the movies. We see a society where people are arbitrarily placed into "the haves" and "have-nots." Their whole lives are determined by something as simple as a red dot on their foreheads. If they are born into the "untouchable" category, their children and their children's children also have to become trash pickers, with no possible way out. The idea of a caste system horrifies us-- it seems so artificial and preposterous. How can the people at the top be so inhuman? How can the people at the bottom go along with this inhumane treatment? Why can't everyone see that this whole oppressive system is based on an outrageous lie? The idea of caste is not

real-- for heaven's sake, it's just a red dot!

Now hold on to that astonishment and outrage, and come back over to our society and let's think together about status hierarchies we all treat as real, like "race" (Wilkerson, 2020). The **concept of race**, which plays such a central role in our country, is just as artificial as any caste system. In status hierarchies, the first step is to create artificial categories of difference between people, and then to act as if these categories are natural or "real." For example, our society uses characteristics of outward physical appearance (like skin color, eye folds, noses, lips, and hair texture) to determine our "race," even though no scientific evidence for the validity of such categories exists. These *characteristics* exist, of course, but so do countless others, making such distinctions about as valid as constructing a "race" of "green-eyed" or "big-footed" or "double-jointed" people. For this reason, many scientists object to the word "race," and instead use the term "racialized," to indicate that we have taken a set of characteristics and created artificial groups which have then been labeled or "racialized."

As the writer Ta-Nehisi Coates reminds us, "Race is the child of racism, not the father." He means that for racism to work, proponents need the category of race to be treated as if it were real. Coates also uses the thought-provoking phrase "people who think they are white" to remind us that people at the top of hierarchies are particularly invested in making these categories appear real. **Racism** has been defined as a "system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks (which is what we call 'race') that unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities, unfairly advantages other individuals and communities, and saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources" (Jones, Truman, Elam-Evans, et al., 2008). One of the entrenched myths that supports racism is the idea that "race" is a natural category that results in groups who are genetically different from each other, and it is these underlying biological differences that are responsible for societal disparities. There is no scientific support for this position (see box). There is only one race-- the human race.

Optional Reading: No Genetic Basis for Race

If you would like to learn more about what geneticists are concluding-- that there is no scientific basis for the idea of racial categories-- we invite you to read the article published in the *National Geographic* in March 2018 summarizing the evidence used to make these conclusions.

https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2018/04/race-genetics-science-africa/

It is important to point out that scientists have long played a role in helping to **reify** (make something seem more concrete than it actually is) socially constructed hierarchies. For example, as early as the 1700s, Europe's scientific community was using craniometry (measurement of the brain and skull) to justify the idea that there were distinct races. And there is a long history of examining racialized differences in social science research. Most researchers make clear they are documenting disparities between groups of people belonging to socially-assigned categories. With unsettling regularity, however, studies are published in which researchers argue (typically without any supporting evidence) that subgroup differences are based on the superiority of one group (in genetics, intelligence, psychological characteristics, child-rearing, familial, or cultural practices). Such studies can be recognized because the superior group is always the one to which the researcher belongs. Moreover, findings are often used to justify policies that further disadvantage target groups, when such disparities could just as easily be used to justify *increases* in resources. Although this kind of research is still published, developmental science is getting better and better at recognizing it and calling it out for what it is (see this LINK for a recent example).

How do societies socially construct status hierarchies?

Laws are a key strategy societies use to create categories. It is interesting to see how state legislatures tried to define race (using for example, the "one drop" rule) in order to make discrimination legal. One instructive example is described in the Encyclopedia of Arkansas (https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/one-drop-rule-5365/). The same notion was upheld as recently as 1985, when a Louisiana court ruled that a woman with a Black great-great-great-great-grandmother could not identify herself as "white" on her passport. And research shows that today people who are biracial are more likely to be identified as belonging to whatever non-white category they also belong to (https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2010/12/one-drop-rule-persists/).

Several books document strategies that have been used to try to create racial categories:

Murray, P. (Ed.) (1997). *States' Laws on Race and Color*. Athens: University of Georgia.

Sweet, F. W. (2005). *Legal History of the Color Line: The Rise and Triumph of the One-Drop Rule*. Palm Coast, FL: Backintyme.


Immigrant voices: "I didn't know I was Black."

An interesting way to learn more about processes of racialization in the US, it to talk to immigrants who arrived as adults. Since they already completed the bulk of their identity development work, they have an adult's eye view on how arbitrary

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these racialized categories are. One telling comment many immigrants make is "Until I got to America, I didn't know I was Black"-- showing it is possible to grow up in societies where these distinctions are not made (e.g., https://www.cbc.ca/2017/i-didn-t-know-i-was-Black-until-i-moved-to-canada-1.4219157). Similar sentiments have been echoed by some Black children who grow up in predominantly white surroundings, for example, in Thomas Kirst's memoir, entitled *I Didn't Know I was Black until You Told Me*.

Enlightening stories are also told by Black Americans who visit other countries, for example, soldiers stationed in England or France during the World Wars. These soldiers discovered what it was like to live in societies where they were not treated like second-class citizens, and their predominant identity was not "Black" but "American." These experiences led to increased calls for equality when soldiers returned home in the 1920s and 1940s. Americans also learn something when they visit countries like Brazil, which endorses different racialized categories. They are surprised to discover that the same physical characteristics that get them classified as "Black" in America, get them classified as "white" in Brazil. The examination of how status hierarchies differ radically from society to society, and how other countries use categories (like caste) that make no sense to us, reveals just how artificial and arbitrary all these status hierarchies really are.

What is "class-ism"?
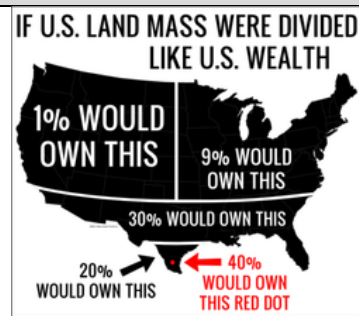
"*Classism*," can be defined as *prejudice* and *discrimination* on the basis of social class (education and wealth). It includes individual attitudes and behaviors, as well as systems of policies and practices that benefit the upper class at the expense of the lower class. Class discrimination and inequity are backed up by *entrenched myths* (i.e., prejudices) about the inherent inferiority of poor
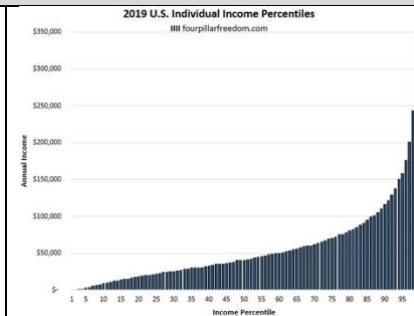
people, and *cover stories* that blame poor people for not having the "right stuff" to get ahead. These myths, which children often internalize, can lead first gen students to believe that people without much education, like their parents, are not smart or capable, and to doubt their own capacities to succeed in college. Luckily, even when students run into genuine barriers and discrimination, over time they come to recognize and appreciate the lessons they learned from their parents (about grit, determination, and the value of education) as well as their own strengths and gifts, which allow them to excel and to help others excel, too.

Societally-Sanctioned Inequities

A second way that status hierarchies are *socially constructed* concerns their effects. Hierarchies rely on *societally-sanctioned means* to produce very different living conditions for people who are at different rungs on these ladders. Research has done a thorough job of documenting these disparities, and how they are distributed along lines of class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, and so on. Let's think through the example of *class*, a category that combines wealth and education called socio-economic status (SES). In our society, the money a child is born into determines almost every aspect of their lives. They start with differential access to the basics: healthy food, secure housing, and health care; and continue with inequities in the quality of schools, neighborhoods, and community investments. Disparities are found in opportunities for higher education, employment, and economic advancement. There are even differences in the quality of the air children breathe and the water they drink. Such disparities register in differential health and rates of mortality.
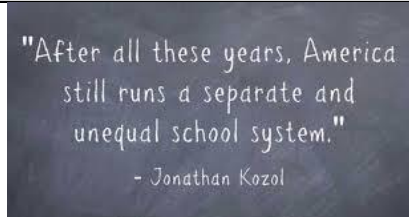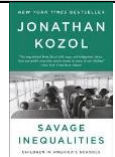
The *developmentally hazardous conditions* in which millions of poor children grow up can be thought of as *societally sanctioned*. By this we mean that our society has decided that children only get as much of the basics needed for their healthy development as their families can afford. Outside the US, many societies have decided that *all* children should breathe clean air and drink clean water, by enforcing statutes that make pollution illegal and thereby preventing concentrations of pollution in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty. Or they invest in the infrastructure and safety of all communities, so that low wealth neighborhoods still have community centers, farmer's markets, and parks. Some societies legislate mixed-income housing, so there are no neighborhoods with concentrations of poverty. Or they decide that everyone should have access to healthy food, secure housing, and affordable health care. In some societies, there is a threshold below which the living conditions of children and families are not allowed to fall. All families have *the right to these developmental basics*. In these societies, the disparities in living conditions between the richest and poorest children are not as stark, and conditions for the poorest children are not developmentally hazardous.

Thought experiment: What if there was a residential and school lottery?
To help students reimagine a society without such big disparities between children born into rich versus poor families, we can conduct a thought experiment where we pretend that where children live and the schools they attend are not determined by their family's SES, but instead by a lottery. Families are randomly assigned to a home in a random neighborhood anywhere in the city or suburb, and children go to that neighborhood's schools. Students are asked to reflect on the question: *What kinds of neighborhoods and schools would we allow to be created if we knew that we ourselves and our precious children could randomly be assigned to any of them?* Students quickly realize that residential segregation, and the fact that many people can buy their way out of poor neighborhoods, are two reasons why society as a whole has not risen up to protect children and families assigned to the bottom of social hierarchies. As we start to reimagine society, we can think about how to ensure that all children and families have the access they deserve to the developmental basics.

Another example of how societies make decisions about the conditions under which children are allowed to grow up involves the educational system. **Schools** are central contexts of children's **academic, social, and physical development**, and have the potential to be key engines of **upward social mobility**. However, in the US, schools are typically funded by property taxes. This seemingly simple economic decision means that neighborhoods full of expensive houses receive massive amounts of educational funding compared to those with smaller tax bases. Moreover, since education is not fully funded by taxpayers, schools in rich neighborhoods regularly hold fundraisers to pay for "extras" like sports and arts programs; and parents provide volunteer services, like coaching and teaching about engineering or computers. In poorer neighborhoods, families do not have the discretionary income or time to support these aspects of schooling. Such factors combine to create "savage inequalities" between schools in rich and poor neighborhoods (see box).

Savage Inequalities: Jonathan Kozol on Disparities in America's Schools		
	"After all these years, America still runs a separate and unequal school system." – Jonathan Kozol	Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York, NY: Broadway Books. Although this book was written in 1991, little has changed in the last 30 years to ensure that every child has the high quality schooling they need to learn and develop. We invite you to read Kozol's reporting about these differences or to listen to his sober warning about the costs of these widespread inequalities. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6wCsAXmjdI

We are so used to this funding model, that the deep inequities it creates can seem like an unfortunate but inevitable state of affairs. However, some societies make decisions to ensure that **all students have access to high quality schools and teachers**, and that the quality of schools **does not differ** across districts. In these societies, schools are also paid for by property taxes, but these funds are centrally combined and then divided equally among all schools. This ensures that every school is fully funded, including the "extras" which are not considered optional. In some of these societies, teachers are respected, well paid, highly selected and trained, and supported through small class sizes, professional development, and thoughtful school policies. In such societies, differences in SES still exist, and the wealthy still have access to elite schools that the poor do not (e.g., the famed Swiss boarding schools), but even children at the very bottom of the SES hierarchy attend **excellent schools**. Access to good schools is considered a **basic right** and a key engine to drive upward social mobility, thus continually reducing differences between ranks in SES hierarchies.

Another example that resonates with undergraduates involves societal decisions about **access to higher-education**. In our society, college is out of many people's grasp because they don't have the money to pay for it. Or students are forced to take on debt to finish their education, and have to deal with the downward pressure that exerts on their future economic prospects. However, in some societies, a university education is considered **a public good** and so most or all students can access it for free. It is a **societal decision** whether people at the bottom of class hierarchies will nevertheless have access to a high-quality college education.

Poor People's Campaign: A Call for Basic Human Rights
If you are interested in learning more about grassroots political movements aimed at lifting people out of poverty and providing basic necessities for everyone, a great place to start is with the website for the **Poor People's Campaign**, whose motto is "unleashing the power of poor and low income Americans." https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/

Are these "savage inequalities" also seen in status hierarchies organized around racialized categories?

Yes, widespread racialized and ethnic disparities have also been documented in almost every facet of daily life (i.e., housing, employment, educations, health, and so on). Since SES is so closely tied to race and ethnicity in the US, researchers have wondered whether some or all of these racialized/ethnic disparities stem from economic disadvantage. Alternatively, it could be that social hierarches organized around racialized categories add *additional layers of inequity* beyond those created by SES. If you put your science hat on, you can imagine *several ways researchers can test these hypotheses*.

- First, when examining racialized/ethnic disparities, researchers can *control for SES*, statistically removing its effects from the equation. If after controlling for SES, such disparities are still found, that would be evidence that status hierarchies based on racialized/ethnic differences exert an effect over and above those based on SES.

- Second, researchers can select a group of people who are heterogeneous with respect to race/ethnicity, but make sure all of them belong to *exactly the same level of SES* (say they all have incomes that are right at or just below the poverty line). Then researchers test whether there are disparities in target outcomes (like achievement or health status or employment) for subgroups according to race/ethnicity. Again, if racialized disparities are found, even among people who are exactly the same on SES, this is evidence for the added effects of status hierarchies organized around race/ethnicity.

- A third strategy starts with the same idea-- selecting a group of people who are heterogeneous on race/ethnicity and homogeneous on class, but instead of selecting a group at the bottom of the SES hierarchy, researchers select a group that is *middle or upper middle class*. This group should not be having any of the problems experienced by families who are low wealth or in poverty, so if class is the only determinant, researchers will not find racial/ethnic disparities in this group. If they do, this indicates that even middle- and upper-class families experience disparities based on race/ethnicity.

Researchers have conducted all these (and many other) analyses trying to tease apart the effects of SES and race/ethnicity. Findings from this *body of evidence* are clear: At every level of income, *researchers find racialized and ethnic disparities in a wide range of living conditions*, and in aspects of psychological and physical health, functioning, and development. For example, even for subgroups who are all middle class, racial differences persist in health outcomes, like the probability of dying from heart disease or stroke. Or compared to their white counterparts, children from upper middle class Black families receive lower grades in school (even controlling for achievement test scores) and are less likely to be admitted to elite colleges. This body of evidence is so clear that we even know the typical rank ordering of children according to the categories of race/ethnicity. At the top of the hierarchy are white children and some subgroups of Asian Americans, then Latinx children, followed by children from Black and Indigenous backgrounds.

This body of evidence demonstrates that the effects of *status hierarchies are compounded* or interact in their effects, putting us on notice that children and families at the bottom of multiple status hierarchies are particularly at risk for developmentally hazardous living conditions and other inequities. These findings are troubling because ethnic minority children are more likely than their white counterparts to be living in families with incomes below the poverty line. For example, according to the US Census Bureau, in 2018, of all the white children in this country under the age of 6, 9.1% lived in families with incomes at or below the poverty line; of Asian-American children, 11.2%. However, among Latinx children, more than twice as many, 24.3%, lived in poverty, and for Black children, more than three times, or 32.4% (this rate is probably similar for Indigenous children). The compounding of environmental risk is highly problematic if our goal is to provide all children with supportive higher-order contexts for their development.

Learning Objectives: Explain How Status Hierarchies Exert their Effects on Development
• Describe some mechanisms through which status hierarchies produce their effects.
o Give examples of interpersonal prejudice and discrimination.
o What are implicit biases and how do they influence children's experiences?
o Explain the idea of institutional and systemic discrimination and exclusion.
• How do we "know what we know" about the functioning of status hierarchies?
o List multiple strands of research that have examined the functioning and effects of status hierarchies.
o In what ways do these strands, taken together, create "a body of evidence"?

Scientific Evidence for the Prevalence and Effects of Status Hierarchies

There is no playbook explaining how to enforce status hierarchies, but if there were it would include chapters on segregation, exclusion, discrimination, entrenched myths, and cover stories. It would explain how, together, these processes produce "*regimes of inequity*," because they create self-amplifying systems that resist change. Distinctions among subgroups become *hierarchies* when they are used to treat subgroups differently. That's why they're called "hierarchies"-- because there is a ranking from top to bottom. Differential treatment (*bias, discrimination*), produces *segregation* and *exclusion,* and grants groups *differential access* to power, opportunities, and resources. These *inequities* produce disparities in living conditions,

health, and functioning. Such disparities are then used as evidence of **entrenched myths** about the **inherent inferiority** of subgroups at the bottom (**prejudice**, **stereotypes**). They are blamed (**stigmatized**) for their situations. When low status people object to the injustice of hazardous conditions and inequities, they are handed **cover stories**, usually based on **meritocracy**, which insists that the people at the top have earned their positions through talent and hard work. And people at the bottom only have themselves to blame.

As a budding developmental scientist, we hope you are asking yourself a "How do we know what we know?" question about the prevalence and functioning of status hierarchies. This is a complex multi-faceted question that has been studied in psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy, and economics for decades (e.g., Killen, Rutland, & Yip, 2016). Much of the best work has come out of **critical interdisciplinary centers** focused on ethnic and women's studies, which have produced influential historical documentation, political and social analysis, and counter narratives to help guide discussion and action (LINK). Taken together, there are multiple **strong bodies of evidence**. You may already be well-informed about these issues, but if you want to learn more, we encourage you to take classes and read on your own. Below, we highlight a few of **the strands of research** that examine the mechanisms through which status hierarchies play out their effects.

1. **Processes of Segregation**

   In practically every city in America, neighborhoods are **segregated by wealth**. We take for granted the fact that different neighborhoods have housing that costs different amounts, so that a family's position in the status hierarchy of class determines where they can live. We also don't think about the fact that, since wealth is differentially distributed by race/ethnicity, this state of affairs "naturally" creates neighborhoods of concentrated poverty that house high proportions of families from specific racialized categories-- families of color.

   Concentrating low status groups in specific neighborhoods allows communities to systematically disinvest in these areas (in their infrastructure, housing, grocery stores, public transportation, schools, jobs, community centers, and so on) and to allow them to be used for purposes that create unsafe living conditions (e.g., pollution based on traffic patterns, industrial sites, or garbage dumps), which contribute to further deterioration (Taylor, 2014). These neighborhoods, which can be identified with census tract information, are the site of some of the most hazardous developmental conditions imaginable. As Massey points out, "Segregation creates the structural niche within which a self-perpetuating cycle of minority poverty and deprivation can survive and flourish" (1990, p. 350).

2. **Processes of Exclusion**

   Status hierarchies also operate by enforcing **differential access** to resources and opportunities for social mobility, as seen in disparities in participation in higher education, higher paid jobs, home ownership, and leadership positions. Such **differences in representation** are well documented. The further you go up in the power hierarchy of any institution, the fewer people of color, women, and people from low-wealth backgrounds you will find. It is important to note that **gatekeeping practices** are enforced by everyone. For example, even in organizations that are overwhelming female and that elect their leaders, women are more likely to elect men. Whether or not these practices are intentional (and whether or not they are justified by **entrenched myths** arguing that few qualified people of color or women can be found), courts have ruled that such disparities, since they so clearly fall along lines of race, class, and gender, are **de facto** discrimination.

3. **Processes of Interpersonal Discrimination**

   A third kind of evidence involves research that looks directly at processes of prejudice, bias, or discrimination. For example, studies explicitly examine the **prevalence of entrenched myths and implicit biases** about subgroups at the bottom of status hierarchies. Researchers also document the presence of biases in current and historical public conversations, for example, in newspapers, political discourse, portrayal in the media, or scientific studies. Researchers can also use **lab settings** and **experimental designs** to see if they can reproduce some of the inequities observed in everyday life. For example, studies test whether people evaluate the same resume more or less favorably or grade the same essay more or less positively depending on whether the applicant or student has a name that sounds Black. Or they take student confederates to the mall, where they apply for actual jobs wearing hats that (unbeknownst to them) have gay rights or Black Lives Matter slogans, to see whether these applicants are more or less likely to be hired than students wearing baseball caps with the name of the local baseball team.

4. **Processes of Implicit Bias**

   When imagining **discrimination** (e.g., racism), many people have a prototype*: Overt interpersonal acts*, carried out intentionally by individuals who explicitly endorse prejudice. These prototypes are real and corrosive daily experiences, but focusing on them can lead to a kind of tunnel vision when we try to identify more widespread ways in which status hierarchies are enforced. Most people would not condone such acts, so assume they are not involved in processes of

discrimination. However, these assumptions prevent us from examining *our own roles* in these processes and the *roles played by major social institutions.*

You probably already know about "*implicit bias*," the prejudices we all unknowingly internalize from living in a society that endorses status hierarchies. Such biases are called *implicit* because they operate *below the level of conscious awareness*, shaping our actions whether we know it or not. (If you want to examine your own implicit biases, assessments are widely available.) Compared to overt acts of interpersonal violence and signs saying "No Chinese need apply," these acts are more *covert and subtle,* and therefore harder to recognize. Programs of research on implicit bias have led to deeper understandings of processes of discrimination, as captured, for example, in the book by sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva entitled, *Racism without Racists: Color Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. From this perspective, we should begin by assuming that, through our own implicit biases (even against the subgroups that we ourselves belong to), we are all unwitting accomplices in maintaining status hierarchies.

5. **Processes of Institutional Discrimination**

Some of the most powerful ways that bias and discrimination are enforced are *systemic*. Although these processes can be hard to see directly, the effects of *bias and discrimination lodged in major societal institutions* (like banking, health care, criminal justice, and educational systems) result in far-reaching inequities that become widely visible in things like educational attainment, employment, housing. These systems do not need active discrimination or individual prejudice to maintain status hierarchies, they are built in as the default. [To learn more about this issue, PBS has collected a list of resources on anti-Black institutional racism which you can access here.]

Many striking examples of *institutional discrimination* have been documented. A clear example was surfaced by the disability rights movement in the 1960s. Up to that point, people in wheelchairs were systematically excluded from access to almost all built environments-- public transportation, public buildings, hotels, schools, movie theaters, workplaces, and so on. No one *wanted* to exclude them, they were just seen as "disabled," and their exclusion was seen as an unfortunate side effect of their being in a wheelchair. The institutional reaction seemed to be, "Wow, it's too bad your wheelchair prevents you from doing all these things." The revolutionary idea from the disability rights movement was, "The problem here is *not* my wheelchair-- it's your stairs." The problem was that the *default* built environment was designed only to work for able people. It was created in a way that unintentionally but thoroughly discriminated against people who relied on ramps or wider aisles.

The broader lesson of the disability rights movement is that most institutions are designed to serve particular constituencies, usually those at the top of hierarchies. For example, the discovery that some children from high poverty backgrounds are not ready for Kindergarten led researchers to create pre-Kindergarten programs that will close this gap, but few questioned where the problem was located. Instead of asking why poor children are not ready for Kindergarten, we could ask why Kindergarten is not ready for poor children, that is, why Kindergarten starts at a place that is well aligned with 5-year-old middle class children but not with 5-year-old poor children. In the same vein, did you ever wonder why students whose high schools did not prepare them well for college are forced to take non-credit "remedial" courses at their own expense? Why don't college courses start where their high schools leave off? The elderly could also start asking similar questions. Why are street lights and the size of print on street signs (and telephone keys and the size of type in most books) designed for younger eyes?

Poverty and Jail: The Role of Bail
One example of institutional discrimination is apparent in rates of incarceration. The single biggest risk factor for incarceration are poverty and race/ethnicity. Many poor people, who have not even been convicted of a crime, are in jail because they do not have the money to make bail. In fact, 6 out of 10 people in U.S. jails—nearly a half million individuals on any given day—are awaiting trial. People who have not been found guilty of the charges against them account for 95% of all jail population growth between 2000-2014.   https://www.prisonpolicy.org/graphs/pretrial_by_state.html

6. **Documentation of Pervasive Disparities**

Research has documented the prevalence and severity of the *disparities* organized around class, race/ethnicity, gender, and other status hierarchies. These include deep and persistent differences in the lists of objective living conditions we have been discussing, including housing, jobs, neighborhoods, schools, healthcare, and so on (e.g., Evans, 2004; Evans, Li, & Whipple, 2013; Taylor, 2014; Trent, Dooley, & Dougé, 2019). Part of this picture also includes well documented and systematic overrepresentation of children and adolescents from poor and minority families in educational disciplinary and drop-out statistics and the foster care and criminal justice systems.

As a society, we have two choices about how we decide to explain these widespread inequities. On the one hand, we say

that such ***disparities are justifiable***, unfortunate but inevitable, since women's brains just can't understand math, Latino parents do not value education, and Black and Indigenous families are culturally disadvantaged. However, if we make or hear these arguments, we have clearly landed in ***entrenched myths*** that disparities are a "natural" product of the inherent inferiority of people at the bottom of the ladder. These explanations are clearly class-ist, racist, sexist, and so on. The alternative is to acknowledge that ***pervasive inequity and exclusion*** are evidence that the ***deck is stacked unfairly*** against specific subgroups, and that we are ***ignoring and defending socially constructed inequality.***

7. **Explanation of Observed Disparities**

   Since a large number of disparities are already so well documented, many programs of research focus on ***explanations***: why police are more likely to use excessive force on Black citizens, why boys outperform girls on math achievement tests, why men commit acts of interpersonal violence, why teachers are more likely to discipline Black students, why Latino youth are more likely to drop out, and so on. As one set of factors, researchers directly explore whether discriminatory processes and entrenched myths underlie these disparities.

   These are rich and innovative programs of research, the best of which employ ***convergent operations***. They examine the prevalence of disparities in the real world-- workplaces or classrooms, and then conduct careful ***observational or interview studies*** to see if they can detect the interpersonal processes that are involved. Researchers also ***experimentally*** test potential causal factors that are nominated by participants, theories, or previous research. For example, to test theories that excessive use of force is based on race and class, researchers create video games where participants are instructed only to shoot at video characters who are carrying guns (e.g., Dukes & Kahn, 2017). Then the characters in the games are varied so that their skin color and facial features are more or less phenotypically Black, and their clothes are changed to hoodies or business suits or polo shirts and khakis. Then the backgrounds are modified so they range from burned out buildings to college campuses to affluent suburbs. These carefully controlled studies indicate that all these factors causally influence how likely it is that people holding cell phones or water bottles will be shot in these video simulations. Researchers also test whether mistakes are more likely to be made by participants with specific kinds of beliefs, such as those who have higher levels of implicit bias or whose masculinity is more easily threatened. Then researchers go back into ***field settings*** and ask for access to police records about use of force incidents to see whether these factors are involved in actual police interactions (e.g., Kahn, Steele, McMahon, & Stewart, 2017).

   Researchers with a more ***inductive bent*** may spend time in institutions that have documented disparities by race/ethnicity or class. For example, they may visit high schools with high vs. low racial disparities in drop-out or discipline. Such studies may involve ***participant observation*** in classrooms and after school programs, and long ***open-ended interviews*** with students, parents, and teachers. You can imagine ***community-based participatory action research*** projects organized around food deserts or youth employment or universities who are not attracting, retaining, and graduating students of color or women in STEM disciplines. ***Case studies*** of workplaces, schools, or police departments who do ***not*** show discrimination, exclusion, or disparities would be especially helpful for collecting ***best practices*** for creating more equitable institutions.

8. **Interventions to Reduce Disparities**

   Many programs of research include efforts at ***optimization***, where teachers, employers, and police are provided ***professional development opportunities*** where they are taught about implicit bias and trained in ways designed to reduce their effects. If these interventions are conducted sensitively, they can also be opportunities for participants to explore entrenched myths that guide their actions. Optimization efforts ***test potential causal factors***, and show us both the potential and the limitations of changing individual attitudes, compared to shifting institutional factors. Most interesting are lessons that are currently being learned about how to reinvent higher-order systems, like universities.

   The most instructive programs of research are ones that eventually succeed in ***wiping out disparities***. A great example of such research started more than 30 years ago in response to well-documented gender disparities in math achievement, differences that favored boys and first emerged during adolescence. Math was interesting because no gender differences were found prior to adolescence. Many potential causal factors were explored, ranging from biological differences (e.g., increased in hormones during puberty) to discriminatory treatment by teachers. Discrimination seemed a likely candidate because of entrenched myths about women's "intrinsic aptitude" (a phrase made famous in 2005 by then President of Harvard Larry Summers), and researchers had already uncovered many ways these myths could be communicated. For example, mothers stop helping children with math homework in about the third grade, and math teachers change from predominantly female to predominantly male during middle school. Social factors seemed more likely than biological ones since outside of the US, fewer gender gaps in math performance are found.

   Careful research followed the trail backwards from the target disparity. The best predictor of performance on math achievement tests, for both boys and girls, is preparation: the number of math classes students have taken. And girls took fewer classes than boys. Studies then showed that gender disparities in preparation started when math became an elective,

and girls elected not to take it. Research on the factors that contributed to these decisions revealed that parents and counselors advised girls against taking these "hard" classes, teachers encouraged boys to take more math when they did well, but did not encourage girls, and girls themselves did not want to take elective math classes.

Research also revealed that although on the average boys outperformed girls, this difference was due to the fact that most of the extremely high math performers were boys, but it turned out that most of the extremely *low* math performers were also boys, and these boys were also less likely to take additional math courses as electives. So not only were girls being left behind, so were many boys. This led to an important strand of research on math pedagogy that investigated better ways to teach math so everyone could learn and see its relevance to everyday life. In the end, two systemic interventions were instituted: (1) math was no longer offered as an elective, it was required for all students, both girls and low performing boys; and (2) math was taught in a more motivating and accessible way. As a result, gender gaps in math have disappeared.

This example is instructive because it points to the complex intertwined processes that contribute to disparities and the relatively straightforward solutions for undoing them. A key role was played by entrenched myths about math talent. Some of these messages were carried by female people-- mothers who stopped helping with math homework, preservice teachers who opted out of teaching math, guidance counselors who did not want girls to take classes that were too hard for them, and the girls themselves-- who did not like math. You can see how this system feeds back on itself: If girls start taking fewer math classes in middle school, no wonder mothers don't feel ready to keep helping with math homework and women choose not to pursue careers as math teachers.

The solutions are also instructive. Interventions did not "fix" individual girls or math teachers (although growth mindset training would probably help counteract entrenched myths). Instead, they **changed the system**. First, they made math a requirement and not an elective. Everyone (including low performing boys) gets the same preparation. Second, and just as important, they reconsidered how math was taught so it did not just serve the high-performing boys and girls (who likely were the ones who would go on to become math teachers). Instead, math pedagogy was reinvented, moving away from math as a foreign language, to math as an important tool in our daily lives. These systemic changes were "win-wins," good for girls *and* boys. Reinventing the system so that it better served girls did not mean that is served boys less-- they were also better served. We look forward to ongoing programs of research that are asking these same questions as they appear in college curricula and pedagogy, where math classes seem to act as barriers for women and underrepresented minority students, and a gatekeeper to their interest and success in majors in the natural and social sciences (Eccles, 2007).

9. **Documenting Historical, Legal, and Ongoing Processes of Discrimination**

An important kind of evidence, both historical and current, focuses directly on the **mechanisms of discrimination and exclusion**. Some of these analyses trace the history of laws that made discrimination legal. For example, Jim Crow laws that lasting until the mid-1960sthat were enacted by southern Democrats after the Civil War, laws that made it illegal for people of different races to cohabit, have sex, or marry (called **anti- miscegenation** laws, the last of which Alabama removed from its state constitution in 2000), and anti-sodomy laws, present in every state by 1960, making male homosexuality illegal, the last of which was struck down by the Supreme Court in 2003.

One of the most fascinating areas of work provides access to the intentions and actions of powerful groups who are intent on enforcing status hierarchies. Such glimpses behind the curtain of power are rare but extremely enlightening because people at the top work hard to keep these machinations secret. Much of this scholarship and journalism relies on **artifacts** (like government files or other documentary evidence) and **testimony** or **oral histories** from targets of discriminatory efforts or from agents who have come to regret their participation in these practices. Many such efforts are revealed only later, for example, the practice banks started using in the 1930s to decide who gets home loans, which included a process called "redlining" that made it impossible for people of color to purchase homes. Or tape recordings from the Nixon White House explaining that the "war on drugs" initiated in the 1970s criminalized marijuana in order to quell anti-war protestors and focused on cocaine in order to target leaders of the Black Power movement. Or tape recordings describing "the Southern strategy" when political groups succeeded in winning Southern states by adding coded racist messages to their campaigns.

A Legacy of Housing Discrimination: The Story of "Redlining"

One of the clearest examples of a mechanism of institutional racism involves a set of discriminatory practices, called **redlining.** These practices started after the Great Depression when the government instituted policies designed to make it easier for Americans to own homes. These policies, including things like 30-year fixed rate mortgages, spurred widespread home ownership, along with a boom in the construction and real estate industries, expansion into the suburbs, and the building of stable close-knit neighborhoods. An important byproduct was the accumulation of generational wealth, since home ownership is the primary way that people pass wealth on to the next generation.

Black and Latino families were excluded from home ownership and accumulation of wealth through a process called "redlining." The Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC), the organization responsible for carrying out this governmental

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program, created Residential Security Maps, marking residential neighborhoods according to their risk assessments of how likely it was that families could make their mortgage payments. Since HOLC had no information on actual capacity, they marked these maps according to the types of families who lived there: (1) green for businessmen, (2) blue for white collar workers, (3) yellow for working class families, and (4) red for neighborhoods with "detrimental influences." Chief among those purportedly detrimental influences were the presence of "negro" families. Those neighborhoods were "redlined" and the HOLC would not approve loans for homes in those neighborhoods.

These redlined maps were created for all cities in America, and you can still see them today. The long-term effects of this institutional racism have been massive-- since home ownership is linked to neighborhood investment, quality or schools, stability of families, safety of air and water, access to healthy food, incidence of crime, type of policing, and accumulation of wealth. And such practices are still active today. During the 2008 mortgage crisis, Black and Latino families were more likely to lose their homes than White families, further exacerbating inequalities in housing and home ownership.

If you would like to learn more about the practice of redlining, and other institutional practices that have led to racial and ethnic inequities in homeownership, here are two optional short supplemental videos. The second short documentary was prepared by an organization, *The Two Hundred Coalition*, that is dedicated to reversing those inequities.

Housing segregation and Redlining in America: A Short History (NPR)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5FBJyqfoLM

Redlined, A Legacy of Housing Discrimination
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_sCS2E8k5g

10. **Efforts to Resist Social Justice Movements**

Especially interesting are ways that those at the ***top of hierarchies fight to stop social justice movements***. These efforts include a variety of legal and illegal tactics, such as attacking movement leaders using state-sponsored means (e.g., FBI and police records indicating that Martin Luther King, Jr. and Black Panther leaders were explicitly targeted) and active attempts to suppress voting from certain subgroups, as seen in systematic purges of voter rolls, adding voting requirements, removing polling stations that serve neighborhoods of color, and so on. Bodies of scholarly work, often from historians, highlight parts of our complex history that are often hidden, for example, forced residential schools for Native children, internment camps for Japanese Americans, campaigns of lynching directed toward African-Americans, and white supremacy movements still active today
(https://www.ohs.org/research-and-library/oregon-historical-quarterly/back-issues/winter-2019.cfm).

Some groups have collected this documentation to make it more accessible to teachers and the general public, for example, the ***Standing Rock Syllabus*** and teach-in put together by Columbia University in New York City.
https://nycstandswithstandingrock.wordpress.com/standingrocksyllabus/
https://nycstandswithstandingrock.wordpress.com/2016/11/03/watch-standing-rock-syllabus-nyc-teach-in-on-youtube/

Students trade information about their favorite documentaries, and practice their skills as citizen-scientists in debating the quality of the evidence and arguments they present. Examples include:
- Documentaries explaining the background of the Black Lives Matter Movement, like the documentary "13th" which analyzes the history of mass incarceration of Black men.
- Documentaries tracing the history of LGBTQ+ movements, like The Stonewall Riots.
- The series on Indigenous movements across the globe, called "Rise."
- "Immigration Nation" which analyzes ongoing practices in the immigration system.
- Documentaries laying out the the history of women's fight for the right to vote.

These documentaries are important learning opportunities that fill in knowledge about the complex history of societal inequities and social justice movements. These records also provide an education in the centuries' old resistance and resilience of marginalized communities. Most inspiring, they document the hard-won wisdom, guidance, and strategies communities have developed in how to exercise collective power in social movements, and how to reimagine and reinvent a more just world.

Higher-order Contexts Shape Development across the Lifespan

The higher-order forces of macrosystems, with their societal hierarchies of human worth, exert a powerful impact on all of our development. In this class, we will revisit their effects again and again because they influence development in all domains of functioning across the entire lifespan. For example, they influence parenting and families and the health of newborns. During

early childhood, they shape language development and whether young children are ready for school. In middle childhood, they impact academic achievement and the development of peer and friendship relationships. In adolescence, status hierarchies play an enormous role in the development of gender identities and the emergence of racial and ethnic identity. During emerging adulthood, they have an effect on whether youth go to college or are involved with the juvenile justice system. All throughout adulthood, higher-order contexts impact vocational choices and employment opportunities. During late adulthood, they shape our attitudes toward aging, our health and well-being, and even our average life expectancy. To provide a full account of development, lifespan models must incorporate these powerful cultural and societal forces.

Take Home Messages about Macrosystems of Development
We emphasize four big ideas from this reading:

1. ***Higher-order macrosystems***, made up of multiple layers of cultural, societal, and political systems, influence the development of all people, by shaping all the lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exosystems) within which we develop.

2. In every society, macrosystems include ***hierarchies of human worth*** that endorse more or less explicit rank orderings of the value of different subgroups of people. In our society, these include status hierarchies based on wealth and education (class or SES), racialized groups, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity and orientation, disability and immigration status, age, religion, appearance, and so on.

3. Although they are ***socially-constructed*** (i.e., arbitrary and artificial), these hierarchies shape our development by influencing the ***objective conditions*** in which we parent and grow up, as well through the ***entrenched myths*** they communicate about the inherent worth of subgroups inside specific categories, and the ***cover stories*** told to justify historical and ongoing inequities. Inequities are also ***socially sanctioned*** in that our society has decided that it will allow subgroups assigned to the bottom rungs to live in developmentally hazardous conditions.

4. The processes through which status hierarchies are enforced include ***segregation, exclusion, discrimination, bias***, and ***prejudice***, sometimes through intentional overt hostile acts by individuals, but more often through covert and subtle processes of ***implicit bias*** and ***institutional discrimination***. Many discriminatory practices were/are legal, and many are hidden from us. Historical accounts and social movements make these forces visible and provide inspiration about how to reverse the injustices they produce and reinvent more equitable social institutions.

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