



From the MixCache.com library

SAMPLE COPY

Caste, Color, and Class: Race, Ethnicity, and the Historical Roots of Poverty

MixCache.com

SAMPLE COPY

Table of Contents

- **Introduction**
- **Chapter 1** Hierarchies and Poverty: Concepts and Methods
- **Chapter 2** From Status to Stratification: Long Histories of Caste and Race
- **Chapter 3** Colonizing Categories: How Empire Made Difference
- **Chapter 4** Law's Scaffold: Codes, Courts, and the Legalization of Inequality
- **Chapter 5** Enclosing Mobility: Segregation, Spatial Control, and the City
- **Chapter 6** Labor Regimes: Slavery, Indenture, and Coerced Work
- **Chapter 7** Wages of Whiteness and Purity: Cultural Economies of Privilege
- **Chapter 8** Land, Credit, and Capital: Exclusion from Productive Assets
- **Chapter 9** Education and Knowledge: Gatekeeping the Future
- **Chapter 10** Health, Sanitation, and the Body: Biopolitics of Poverty
- **Chapter 11** Policing and Punishment: Criminalization of Communities
- **Chapter 12** India I: Caste, Village Economies, and Colonial Policy
- **Chapter 13** India II: Reservations, Social Movements, and New Inequalities
- **Chapter 14** The Americas I: Slavery, Plantation Capitalism, and Abolition
- **Chapter 15** The Americas II: Jim Crow, Segregation, and the Welfare State
- **Chapter 16** The Americas III: Migration, Mestizaje, and Racial Orders in Latin America
- **Chapter 17** Africa I: Indirect Rule, Ethnicity, and Labor Reserves
- **Chapter 18** Africa II: Apartheid, Pass Laws, and Township Economies
- **Chapter 19** Gendered Hierarchies: Intersectional Burdens and Resistances
- **Chapter 20** Religion, Caste, and Race: Moral Orders and Social Control
- **Chapter 21** Markets and the State: From Liberalization to Neoliberalism
- **Chapter 22** Measuring Inequality: Data, Methods, and Caveats
- **Chapter 23** Policy Pathways: Redistribution, Recognition, and Representation
- **Chapter 24** Transitional Justice: Truth, Reparations, and Reconciliation
- **Chapter 25** Futures of Solidarity: Building Inclusive Institutions

Introduction

This book asks a deceptively simple question: how did societies build and enforce hierarchies that condemned whole groups to poverty, and why do these arrangements persist even after their most notorious forms were dismantled? To answer it, we compare three world regions—India, the Americas, and Africa—where caste and racial classifications were not merely social labels but organizing principles of power. Across these settings, elites turned difference into hierarchy and hierarchy into a durable distribution of life chances. The result was group-based poverty: not the sum of individual misfortunes, but the product of institutional design.

Our approach foregrounds mechanisms. Legal codes sorted people into categories and assigned unequal rights; segregation mapped status onto space; labor regimes extracted value while restricting mobility. These were not accidental byproducts of modernization but deliberate architectures that aligned political authority with economic advantage. When social worth was written into law, reinforced by police and courts, and reproduced through markets and schools, poverty became predictable: it followed the lines of caste and color.

The comparative lens lets us see both convergence and variation. In India, caste stratification preceded colonialism but was reframed and bureaucratized by it; in the Americas, race was forged through slavery, plantation capitalism, and settler conquest; in Africa, empire codified ethnic and racial orders through indirect rule and apartheid. Each trajectory had its own grammar, yet all produced similar outcomes: unequal access to land and capital, stratified education and health, and patterned exposure to violence and vulnerability. By placing these cases side by side, we can distinguish what is locally contingent from what is structurally recurrent.

This is also a book about resistance and reform. Hierarchies have always been contested—by enslaved people and indentured workers, by anti-caste and civil rights movements, by unions, student protests, and grassroots coalitions. Their struggles yielded abolition, voting rights, reservations and affirmative action, desegregation, and social protections. Yet reforms often arrived layered atop older institutions, leaving intact the infrastructures of exclusion—property regimes, carceral logics, fiscal arrangements—that continue to sort opportunity. Understanding why partial change stalls is essential to designing policies that do not simply rearrange inequality.

We combine archival evidence, socio-legal analysis, and economic data with case studies of cities, plantations, villages, and mines. The method is historical-institutional: we trace how rules were made, enforced, evaded, and transformed, and how these rules shaped the distribution of assets, work, and welfare. Attention to gender,

religion, and migration reveals how caste and race intersected with other axes of power to intensify deprivation—or, for some, to open narrow corridors of mobility. Throughout, we adopt a comparative ethics: description must serve judgment, and judgment must orient action.

Finally, this book speaks to policy. If poverty was built by institutions, it can be unbuilt only by institutions—through redistribution (land, capital, income), recognition (anti-discrimination law, representation, cultural dignity), and decriminalization (undoing punitive governance of the poor). We evaluate interventions from cash transfers to reparations, from public employment to universal services, from truth commissions to inclusive city planning. The goal is not a technical blueprint but a framework: to align moral accountability with practical design, to reconcile historical injustice with forward-looking commitments, and to make solidarity a matter of policy as well as sentiment.

The chapters that follow chart this argument. We begin with concepts and methods, survey the long histories of categorization, and then examine the legal, spatial, and labor mechanisms that produced stratified poverty. Regional studies of India, the Americas, and Africa ground the analysis, while thematic chapters on gender, religion, markets, and the state widen its scope. We close by weighing measurement challenges, policy pathways, and the work of transitional justice—before turning toward futures of solidarity and the building of institutions capable of delivering not only equality before the law, but equality in the conditions of life.

CHAPTER ONE: Hierarchies and Poverty: Concepts and Methods

The world has long organized itself by ranking people. Some rankings are informal, whispered at dinner tables and etched into social manners. Others are carved into stone, written into law, and enforced by police, priests, and employers. Wherever hierarchy exists, it channels opportunities: who gets the good land, the safe job, the healthy neighborhood, the respected name. When hierarchy is linked to caste or race, poverty is not random; it follows lines drawn by history and codified by institutions. This book looks at how those lines were made, how they hardened, and how they still matter.

Poverty appears simple from a distance: too little income, too much insecurity. Up close, it is a tangle of causes—market shocks, family misfortune, bad luck, personal choices. Yet certain patterns repeat across continents and centuries. In India, villages known for generations as “backward” show higher poverty rates regardless of local markets. In the United States, majority-Black counties tend to have lower household wealth than majority-white counties, even after controlling for education. In South Africa, townships built under apartheid remain poorer than suburbs designed for whites. The common thread is not individual failure but group disadvantage.

The term “group-based poverty” refers to outcomes that cluster along lines of social classification. It differs from absolute deprivation, which can afflict anyone, and from class inequality, which organizes people by relation to production. Caste and race create layered hierarchies that cut across class: a low-caste professional in India may earn well yet face stigma that limits access to housing; a middle-class Black family in the United States may enjoy higher income but still be exposed to greater policing and health risk. Group-based poverty is about the probability of disadvantage tied to ascribed status, and about the institutions that raise or lower that probability.

Three regions anchor this study: India, the Americas, and Africa. This choice is not a claim that these places are interchangeable. It is a method: by comparing cases with different historical trajectories but similar patterns of stratification, we can separate local idiosyncrasies from recurrent mechanisms. India’s caste system, with its deep roots and modern bureaucratization, offers one lens. The Americas—with slavery, settler colonialism, and racial democracies—offer another. Africa, shaped by empire, indirect rule, and apartheid, provides a third. Placing them side by side makes the architecture of inequality more visible.

Caste and race are not the same, though they share a family resemblance. Caste,

especially in South Asia, is often endogamous, ritualized, and tied to notions of purity and pollution. Race, especially in the Atlantic world, is tied to phenotype, colonial conquest, and the logic of biological hierarchy. Yet in both cases, classification assigns rights and opportunities, marks boundaries of belonging, and organizes labor. Ethnicity, too, can be mobilized as a hierarchy when empire or the state turns cultural difference into administrative categories. The book treats these not as essences but as political technologies.

Institutions are the connective tissue between classification and poverty. Legal codes define citizenship, property, and criminality. Labor systems set the terms of work, mobility, and compensation. Spatial plans allocate health and risk by neighborhood. Schools gatekeep credentials. Markets distribute credit and capital. Police and courts mete out punishment. Each of these is a mechanism. When these mechanisms align—when law, space, and labor all favor the same groups—inequality becomes self-reinforcing. Poverty is not an accident; it is an outcome produced by design.

Consider a village in western India where Dalit families historically worked as landless laborers. Land reforms were passed, but maps, records, and local power kept the best plots in upper-caste hands. Credit flowed through caste networks; banks hesitated to lend to low-caste entrepreneurs. When schools were built, teachers mirrored caste hierarchies in their expectations. The result: poverty persisted not for lack of effort, but because every institution touched the same fault line. Similar patterns appear in the American South, where Black sharecroppers were kept in debt, and in South African homelands, where migrant workers were denied urban property rights.

To compare across regions, we need a common language. Here is a compact glossary used throughout the book:

Term	Meaning in this book
Caste	A hereditary, endogamous status hierarchy, often linked to occupation and ritual ideas of purity, especially in South Asia.
Race	A system of classification based on ancestry and phenotype, historically tied to empire, slavery, and settler colonialism.
Ethnicity	Cultural and linguistic identity, sometimes mobilized by states as an administrative category and transformed into hierarchy.
Class	Social position based on relation to production and market, distinct from but interacting with caste and race.
Group-based poverty	Deprivation that clusters by social category due to institutional design rather than individual factors alone.
Institutions	Formal rules and persistent practices—legal, spatial, economic—that

Term	Meaning in this book
------	----------------------

This book also distinguishes between mechanisms and outcomes. Mechanisms are the causal processes by which institutions produce stratification: exclusion from property, restriction of mobility, extraction of labor, unequal law enforcement. Outcomes are the observed distributions—poverty rates, wealth gaps, health disparities. By focusing on mechanisms, we avoid treating inequality as a vague cultural trait and instead analyze the levers that move it. This makes policy analysis more precise: if we know which levers exist, we can ask which ones to pull, and how hard.

Empirical evidence is drawn from multiple methods. Archival research reveals the making of legal codes and the minutes of colonial committees. Socio-legal analysis maps how courts interpreted statutes and how norms influenced enforcement. Ethnographic studies show how hierarchies are lived and negotiated in markets, schools, and neighborhoods. Economic data—household surveys, census records, administrative files—allow us to measure group disparities across time. Case studies bring texture and context; comparative analysis brings patterns and contrast. Triangulating among them guards against overgeneralization and provincialism.

We also keep an eye on gender. Hierarchies rarely distribute their burdens evenly: patriarchy intersects with caste and race to intensify deprivation. A Dalit woman and a Dalit man face different risks of violence and exclusion; a Black woman in the United States confronts wage gaps and maternal health risks that Black men do not. Household arrangements, care work, and reproductive labor shape who bears the cost of poverty. Including gender is not a moral add-on; it is a research requirement for understanding how stratification works.

Religion, too, is part of the institutional landscape. Religious codes have sanctioned status distinctions, but they have also sustained movements of resistance and reform. Whether in India's anti-caste traditions, Christian abolitionism, or Islamic debates on Zakat and social justice, faith can both entrench and dismantle hierarchy. This book treats religion as a field of power: a source of moral legitimacy that elites and subalterns contest, with consequences for how poverty is explained and addressed.

The historical timeline matters. Hierarchies are not static; they evolve. Before colonialism, caste in India was local and varied; race in the Americas was forged by the transatlantic slave trade; African ethnic orders were reshaped by empire. Codification—writing rules into law—amplified and hardened these differences. Abolition and decolonization altered the legal landscape but often left property, policing, and education structures intact. Today, globalization and neoliberal markets interact with these older institutions, sometimes reproducing them in new forms.

A central theme is the relationship between moral accountability and practical design.

We are interested in why institutions that created group-based poverty persist and how they can be redesigned. That requires acknowledging historical injustice without reducing policy to symbolic gestures. Redistribution (of land, capital, and income), recognition (anti-discrimination law, representation), and decriminalization (ending punitive practices) are policy dimensions that matter. But design matters too: rules must be robust enough to overcome entrenched interests and flexible enough to adapt to local contexts.

This book also considers measurement. How we count poverty shapes what we see. Aggregate income data can mask intra-group heterogeneity. Wealth measures—assets, housing, savings—often reveal deeper gaps than earnings alone. Health and exposure to violence are dimensions of poverty that standard surveys miss. Administrative data can help, but they carry their own biases. We discuss these challenges not to stall on technicalities but to ensure that claims about inequality are supported by evidence that can withstand scrutiny.

What, then, is the book's analytic stance? It is historical-institutional: we trace how rules are made, enforced, evaded, and transformed. It is comparative: we place cases side by side to separate local contingency from structural recurrence. It is multidisciplinary: we draw on law, history, economics, sociology, and anthropology without pretending to master any. It is policy-relevant: we evaluate interventions not as moral pronouncements but as designs tested against institutional realities. And it is cautious: we aim for claims that fit the evidence and acknowledge uncertainty.

To set the stage, consider three snapshots. In a district of India, a child from a Scheduled Caste household enters a school where the teacher assumes she will underperform; the curriculum rarely mentions her community's achievements; her family's lack of collateral limits access to microcredit. In the United States, a Black family moves into a neighborhood redlined in the 1930s; the roads are pitted, the clinic is understaffed, and the police stop young men at higher rates; mortgage approval remains harder despite reforms. In South Africa, a domestic worker in Cape Town commutes from a township built under apartheid; her bus fare eats into wages, her children study in crowded classrooms, and her employer's property benefits from a tax system that favors homeowners.

Those snapshots hint at mechanisms without collapsing them into caricature. The Indian village illustrates how education, credit, and social expectations intersect. The American neighborhood shows how historical maps shape contemporary risk. The South African commute reveals how spatial planning and transport policy drain time and income from the poor. None of these stories is pure; each mixes state policy, market incentives, and social norms. The point is that when institutions line up in the same direction, outcomes for groups become predictable—and poverty becomes structured.

Some readers may ask whether caste and race are too different to compare. Others may wonder whether class alone explains poverty. The comparative method is designed to answer both questions. If caste and race were identical, patterns would be uniform across regions. They are not. If class were sufficient, intra-class gaps across caste and race would vanish when income is held constant; they do not. Comparison does not erase difference; it clarifies how difference is mobilized by institutions to produce shared outcomes.

The book's structure reflects this approach. After this chapter's conceptual map, we take a long view of categorization and then zoom into mechanisms: law, space, labor, culture, assets, education, health, policing. Regional case studies anchor the analysis in concrete settings. Thematic chapters examine intersections like gender and religion. We end by asking how inequality can be measured, what policy can do, and how societies might reckon with historical injustice while building inclusive futures. The sequence is deliberate: concepts, history, mechanisms, cases, themes, policy.

To be clear, this is not a book about blame or redemption. It is a book about how institutions work. Some readers will recognize their own histories in these pages; others will find unfamiliar terms and contexts. The goal is not to provoke guilt or pride but to build understanding: how classification becomes law, how law becomes practice, how practice becomes a pattern of poverty. If we can trace the design of inequality, we can design its undoing.

One final note on style and method. We avoid unnecessary jargon and try to keep the prose lively, but we take precision seriously. Where evidence is thin, we say so; where debates are live, we map the terrain. We aim for a grounded storytelling: anecdotes serve illustration, not proof. Data sit alongside narratives; archives alongside surveys; voices from the ground alongside analysis from the sky. The result should read like a journey through institutions—part travelogue, part blueprint—without losing sight of the people who live inside them.

The question that animates this book is practical: if inequality is built, how do we unbuild it? That requires knowing what institutions do, how they persist, and where change can pry them open. It requires understanding the past without being trapped by it, and engaging the present without mistaking temporary fixes for structural reforms. Above all, it requires seeing poverty not as a private burden but as a public design—and asking whether we can design something better.

This is a sample preview. Purchase the book to read the full content.

Visit MixCache.com to purchase the complete book.

SAMPLE COPY