Global Stratification Economics (GSE): A Primer - Definitions and Research Implications

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I. Introduction and Purpose of Chapter

In the most recent World Inequality Report (2022), researchers outlined contemporary global trends in equality with expected yet nevertheless alarming results. Providing detailed descriptive income to wealth-situated analysis globally to domestic (country-specific), the report highlights interlinked relationships between climate change, the environment, home ownership, public ownership of goods and services, and wage inequalities between and within countries. For researchers and observers of global inequality, the descriptive findings alone are useful tools for research and advocacy to policymaking, but are often contextualized through conventional (often neoclassical) global economic theories that fail to fully explain the phenomena of economic inequality they are observing. Stratification Economics (SE) is a relatively underutilized yet burgeoning theoretical toolset that offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing dynamics of group-based inequality. To date, the SE approach has been primarily focused on applications to the United States, with growing references and comparatives from across the world (Darity, 2022; Chelwa et. al 2022)[1]. In this chapter, we coin the term Global Stratification Economics (GSE herewith) for use in applications of SE to a wide-variety of international contexts where a series of mechanisms emerge that can be identified as either (1) universal but matched to positioning along a country's development path or (2) context-specific and historically dependent in ways different from both the United States and other international environments.

In the next pages, we first summarize key theoretical tenets of SE, with the intention to inform and produce an analytical roadmap for GSE as a global framework for group-based inequality analysis going forward. We envision that future researchers, especially those in development and international economics, can apply GSE to a variety of global contexts using the framework presented here as a starting point. We then summarize literature on intergenerational mobility, economic opportunity, wealth inequality, and institutional and/or political mechanisms drawn from a diversity of international circumstances through a comparative lens. Our goal is to synthesize literature across countries, regions, and historical periods that highlights both shared and varied factors that contribute to intergenerational mobility, economic opportunity, and wealth inequality and that inform strategies for reducing disparities. Drawing from literature based in the Americas (primarily Mexico, the Caribbean and Latin America), Asia, and Africa as comparative, we focus on uncovering universal patterns and emerging lessons to illustrate advantages to development economists and other scholars engaging with international social and economic disparities from taking a more direct stratification approach using GSE in their studies. In addition to universal patterns, we present criteria to assist the identification of context-specific mechanisms of inequality and thus present a comprehensive and refined framework for thinking about group inequality from a global perspective. Finally, we

[1] Darity (2022) for example, begins his critical examination of the origins of Stratification Economics with U.S. specific examples, centering the U.S. Black experience, but also draws from examples of historical to modern group-based inequalities in India, Brazil, Hungary and the United Kingdom.

consider research on policy-based implications of GSE with relevance to global economic discourse and policy making.

II. Theoretical Tenets: GSE (Global Stratification Economics) as Analytical Framework

With intention to introduce GSE's crucial importance as a globally relevant field in economics, we provide a working list of several theoretical principles in which it operates. Before we continue, we note that "global stratification," which focuses on describing wealth to income based differences across the world, is complementary but distinct from GSE. GSE unapologetically emphasizes taking a historical approach, looking across time, and zeroing in on structural economic forces as mechanisms to understand long-run group-based disparities in a given society. With this as foreground, we argue that GSE operates under a set of inter-linked tenets:

- Group-based inequality (intergroup differences) within a given society, whether sovereignties or post-colonial territories must be understood in context of interconnected world systems that produce, regenerate, and maintain material inequities.
- These inequities, measured by the uneven transmission of resources amid group positionality, are not based on cultural to behavioral deficits (read: it's "x" group's (or country's) fault), but rather structural factors that operate globally to within-society contexts.
- Historical genesis includes the role of international political economy-origins of settler-colonialism, slave-economies, neo-colonialism, the nation-state, economic globalization, environmental extraction, racial capitalism, neo-liberalism and other institutional roots beyond, before and amid the inception of the United States.[2]
- As SE draws from sociology and social psychology (see Chelwa, et. al, 2022; Darity, 2020), GSE provides a critical space to examine the role of global tradeoffs between the environment, the economy and society (read: sociology), and group positionality with regard to seeking material rewards (read: social psychology).
- Conventional theories examine the role of assimilation and migration for subaltern groups in a given society, such as immigrants or refugees, while GSE rejects those theories in favor of sourcing settler-colonialism to modern imperialist foreign policies as key constructs in fomenting said group-based inequities across nation-state boundaries (see Lefebvre, et. al, 2024).
- Relatedly, GSE relies on a central point of departure by isolating the role of "imported stratification" (Davila, Mora and Stockly, 2011). By imported stratification, it is not just that in a particular socio-political context existing systems play a role in shaping intergroup dynamics–for sure groups are limited by the systems of oppression in a given

[2] In his review of the theoretical foundations of SE, Davis (2024) observes that SE's structural strand goes back to the work of Ricardo and Marx in their work on growth and distribution, however different in their approaches - in that class and social relationships shape the extent of growth and capital accumulation. The author also refers to more modern components including labor market segmentation and references DuBois, Veblen, Blumer and others as theoretical progenitors of what is now known as SE. Darity (2022) drew from Veblen and Blumer extensively along with Eric Williams classic study *Capitalism and Slavery* (2021, latest edition) in his crucial 2022 piece: *Position and Possessions: Stratification Economics and Intergroup Inequality*.

context, whether shaped by caste, race, gender, class, sexuality, or religion, but that group-level hierarchies from sending countries may be transplanted in ways that may replicate, transfigure, and accentuate existing inequities in the host country.[3] Thus GSE has a component of transnational durability.

- Related, the lateral mobility hypothesis helps us understand the role of imported stratification taken alongside migration advantage - whereas the median income of a particular migratory group in a given society as predicted by the median income they obtained in the home country (e.g. the social status in home country is predictive of social status in receiving country–see Lewis et. al, 2021; Darity Jr, et. al, 2017). In short, immigrant selectivity is better understood as a byproduct of the social systems in the origin country of a given group. Thus most immigrant communities will likely occupy the same relative economic position they held in the home/sending country.
- As aforementioned, a group's "inherited disadvantage" and identity-based constraints in a given societal context must be viewed not in neo-classical, utilitarian models that stresses meritocracy and credentials (education) as means for more secure life outcomes (read: human capital theories), but how race, caste, class, gender, religion and other variables may interact in a constraint like-fashion (e.g. bounded rationality) as a result of structural intention and processes for unequal material outcome.[4] This draws into light the role of "opportunity hoarding," (limited) social capital, institutionalized social, and economic segregation and network hiring and exclusion as integral discriminatory contexts to understand group inequality.

GSE therefore envisions group-based identity, historical processes, structural barriers, imported stratification as core tenets and draws insights from both neoclassical and heterodox approaches and from a growingly diverse set of researchers.

III. SE and Intergenerational Mobility, Economic Opportunity and Group-Based Constraints

Empirical Evidence Across Contexts

Past research from applications within the U.S. informs our review of empirical evidence across international contexts (e.g., Darity 2022; Chapter X of this volume). We consider literature in broad categories based on non-U.S. global regions of study as a starting point for this continued review. Despite this early concentration of applications of stratification economics to the U.S. case, global examples of SE have been increasingly featured in academic literature. This is especially true in development economics where stratification dynamics have been linked to complex examples of settler-colonialism, ecological/environmental extraction, and racial

[3] As example, Cuban exiles (arriving in the U.S. between 1959-1980) were subject to xenophobia and language discrimination upon arrival, *and* also were recipients of disproportionate state support not extended to other subaltern groups during the same period of migration while benefitting from whiteness, social capital and a host of imported advantages.

[4] See for example Patrick Mason's *The Economics of Structural Racism* (2023) where racism is positioned as a durable and enduring feature of the American political-economy. Emphasized is the role of educational attainment in Black communities, in that returns/pay-offs to credentials have not yielded expected outcomes to income and wealth per predominant economic theories.

capitalism. As a cross-society example, Darity and Nembhard (2000) found that stratification among racial and ethnic groups across countries looks remarkably similar in data drawn from Malaysia, India, Belize, New Zealand, and South Africa and argue that persistent differences are consistent with labor-market discrimination that is both systematic and institutional.[5] With these common experiences noted, we continue by reviewing evidence delving into individual countries and mechanisms at play.

Latin America and the Caribbean: Care Work, Colorism, and Macroeconomic Stagnation

Studies applying the stratification economics toolset to Latin America are relatively rare to date but span topics including affirmative action, wealth gaps, and indigenous and Afro-Latin American identity. Papers can be classified into those exploring lived experiences from microeconomic perspectives and those presenting analysis of institutional/systemic structures from macroeconomic perspectives drawn from case studies of Latin America. Table 1 presents a summary.

[Table 1 about here]

Bueno (2014), for example, presents a microeconomic-level qualitative case study showing how stratification plays out in everyday lives of Afro-descendant women in the Dominican Republic. Her research follows domestic workers who face intersectional hierarchies and frames her research within the research practice of "grassroots development analysis." Bueno links her work to theoretical concepts of social externalities, writing "Slavery and colonialism in the Dominican Republic as elsewhere in the Caribbean and Latin America, created conditions that exploited and created material benefits from the reproductive capabilities of African women and their productive capabilities as market vendors and artisans. From their arrival to Santo Domingo, enslaved African women became not only caretakers of their own families, also of their slave-owner family, as well as working as producers and sellers of agricultural and artisanal goods in markets" (p.41). Their economic story is more complex due to historically limited property rights leading to intergenerational transmission effects.

In other microeconomic work, Monroy-Gómez-Franco, Vélez-Grajales, and Yalonetzky (2023) consider skin-tone and colorism in an econometric study stratifying dark, medium, and light skinned women and men in Mexico. While the authors do confirm a colorist ordering, the magnitude of economic penalty is confirmed to vary with gender and to increase with deepening of the color gradient. Bueno (2014)'s micro-level qualitative work and Monroy-Gómez-Franco, Vélez-Grajales, and Yalonetzky (2023)'s microeconometric modeling contrasts with that of Monroy-Gómez-Franco and Villagómez-Ornelas (2024) who integrate stratification theory into their reinterpretation of inequality dynamics in Mexico. The authors attribute differences in education and health access and disparities in labor market participation/entry as being key factors in the historical development of Mexico's inequality. This allows for examination within and between classes.

[5] In their preceding working paper version, they documented racial and ethnic economic inequality similarities in 12 countries ranging from developing nations like Malaysia and Belize to more developed countries like Australia and the U.S.

In another application of macroeconomic analysis, Fandiño (2022) describes Latin American "leveling" of inequality with particular attention to the Brazilian case. Fandiño finds that Brazil and other Latin American countries missed the great transformations experienced by other regions of the world and argues that these missed opportunities for transformation are necessary to understand inequality dynamics in a deeper sense than those related to colonial institutions being preserved alone. Fandiño relates these patterns to relative inflexibility where the wage structure in the "leveling" nations remained anchored to status, capitalization, regional advantage, or patronage, despite economic growth.

Féliz and Millón (2022) bridge microeconomic and macroeconomic considerations in their analysis of class inequality in Argentina as being responsive to macroeconomic crises. Their central insight is that macro shocks (like stagnation, devaluation, and economic crisis) reconfigure class structure via disproportionate impacts on vulnerable strata. While many inequality studies rely on conventional income-based quintile stratifications, Féliz and Millón argue that such divisions often obscure variation in occupation, ownership, and capital access. Instead of using traditional income based quintile indices, the authors use Socio Occupational Condition from Census data, which permits them to define strata within broad working and non-working classes in a way that reflects structural positions and differential exposure to macroeconomic stress rather than just income ranking. This is important if income alone fails to capture vulnerability.

Altogether, the above findings cannot be understood without underscoring the role of *mestizaje* (racial mixing) in providing cover for the discriminatory material realities indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples face across the Americas (see Jiménez Román and Flores, 2010; Dávila, Mora and Stockly, 2011). In their classic study challenging the "rainbow people" metaphor (an extension of *mestizaje*), Darity Jr., Dietrich and Hamilton (in Jiménez Román and Flores, eds. 2010) found preferences for whiteness among Latine national subgroups in spite of Afro-descendency. Material-level studies consistently find that Afro-Latines receive poor returns to education as measured by poverty rates, employment status, wealth accumulation including home ownership and other economic indicators (see Holder and Aja, 2021; Martinez and Aja, 2021). This is despite this group possessing *more* credentials/education than other Latine groups (e.g. white and "other" self-identified Latines/Hispanics). Theoretical work has presented intersections between stratification economics and Latin American and Latinx Studies literature as informative of these dynamics (Lefebvre et al. 2024).

Scholars have also applied a GSE framework across several additional regional contexts. In Africa, research emphasizes the colonial legacy, spatial inequality, and the role of political power. In South Asia, studies focus on caste, colorism, gender, and land dispossession as mechanisms of stratification. In the U.S. and the global economy, the emphasis shifts to how financialization, macroeconomic regimes, and global value chains reproduce inequality across groups and nations.

Africa: Colonial Legacy, Space, and Power

Mainstream economists often frame Africa primarily through a deficit lens that emphasizes poverty, aid dependence, and weak governance. In contrast, research applying a Stratification Economics framework reframes the continent as central to understanding how

inequality is systematically produced and reproduced through global structures. A theme in several of the papers summarized below shows how inequality is reproduced through racial settler-capitalism, the historical and ongoing connection between racial hierarchy, control over land and resources, and systems of capital accumulation that channel value outward. By tracing how colonialism, land regimes, and market integration have organized access to resources and power, these studies reveal the institutional and spatial foundations of hierarchy that endure across generations. Rather than treating Africa as a site of underdevelopment, this research positions it as key to explaining the structures that shape who benefits and who is excluded in the world economy. Literature on Africa is summarized in Table 2.

[Table 2 about here]

A consistent theme in the literature is the lasting impact of the colonial legacy and the institutional structures it creates. Price (2003) examines whether Sub-Saharan Africa's growth shortfall can be explained by its colonial legacy and disease ecology rather than cultural or country-specific traits. In many cross-country growth studies, simply being a Sub-Saharan African country predicts slower growth, a pattern known as the "Africa effect." Price (2003) challenges this view by introducing measures of malaria ecology and colonial heritage, showing that Africa's growth trajectory is rooted in the global history of colonization. The disease environment is central because it shapes the type of colonial institutions established. In high-malaria regions, settler mortality led colonists to create extractive institutions aimed at short-run resource transfer, while in lower-mortality regions, colonists established institutions that protected property rights and laid foundations for long-run growth. He shows that once the colonial legacy and malaria-driven extractive institutions are accounted for in the analysis, the "Africa effect" disappears. Using data on nonindustrial countries from 1960-1985, he finds that colonial heritage explains about 30 percent of Sub-Saharan Africa's growth shortfall, showing that weak growth is tied to the lasting impact of institutions designed to extract resources rather than to culture or individual behavior.

Building on this theme, Obeng-Odoom (2020a) introduces the concept of spatial separatism, arguing that inequality in Africa is maintained not only through income gaps but through the structural organization of space and resources rooted in colonial land policies that privileged settlers and global systems of resource extraction. Spatial separatism is a mechanism through which dominant groups maintain their advantage and ensure the persistence of inequality. Those who control land and institutions capture the rents generated by collective social activity. Examples include gated housing estates that make wealth divisions visible, monopolistic control of municipal services that limit access to water and sanitation, and labor aristocracies in the oil industry where privileged workers enjoy better housing and services. These arrangements deny equal access, reinforce status hierarchies, and ensure that much of the value created within Africa's economies flows outward to absentee landlords, foreign corporations, and political elites.

Obeng-Odoom (2020b) extends the previous framework to the COVID-19 pandemic, showing how privilege shaped resilience. Africa was portrayed in the media as a continent on the brink of disaster, assumed to be too poor and too institutionally weak to cope. However, infection and death rates were far lower than expected, especially in the early phases of the pandemic. This

reflected local strategies, including reliance on traditional medicine, strong communal support systems, and experience coping with past health crises. At the same time, the pandemic highlighted that inequality in Africa is not simply about poverty but about entrenched patterns of privilege and exclusion. For example, those living in gated estates with reliable services and digital resources were able to weather lockdowns far better than those in communities lacking basic infrastructure. Conventional policy responses such as stimulus packages and debt relief often reinforced these divides, as they failed to reach the majority of African workers employed in the informal sector. Wealthy groups remained better protected, while Africa as a whole continued to bear the burdens of unequal trade, debt, and resource extraction.

Ouma et al. (2023) place Obeng-Odoom's work in a broader conversation with African feminist and heterodox economists, who affirm the importance of stratification economics but also call for deeper engagement with intersectionality and feminist economics. They emphasize that overlapping systems of patriarchy, class, and race jointly structure economic outcomes, which cannot always be captured by GDP metrics alone. The authors also argue that power asymmetries in international financial institutions such as the IMF and World Bank reproduce global inequalities through their lending programs and policy prescriptions, which prioritize creditors over local well-being.

A second set of African studies focuses on race and ethnicity as enduring stratification mechanisms. Chelwa, Maboshe, and Hamilton (2024) compare the racial wealth gap in South Africa and the United States using nationally representative wealth surveys. Despite distinct histories, they find strikingly similar outcomes: the typical Black household holds just 5-6 percent of white household wealth, and the gap persists across education, age, and income cohorts, often widening with education. They argue that slavery in the United States and apartheid in South Africa produced structurally similar racial wealth hierarchies that persist through institutional mechanisms. Complementing this, wa Githinji (2015) shows how ethnicity operates as a stratification mechanism in Kenya. Using the 1986 Labor Force Survey, he finds that members of the president's ethnic group enjoyed higher probabilities of formal employment and above-median wages. Under Kenyatta, Kikuyus held the advantage, but under Moi, the advantage shifted to Kalenjins, demonstrating how ethnic favoritism tied to centralized presidential power structured economic rewards. This system of ethnic favoritism not only reinforced intergroup inequality but also undermined class solidarity, as workers were divided along ethnic rather than economic lines.

South and Southeast Asia: Caste, Colorism, and Land

In South and Southeast Asia, studies consistently show how caste, skin color, and gender function as mechanisms of stratification. Caste-based networks continue to determine who gains access to entrepreneurship and leadership; colorism extends these hierarchies into labor and marriage; and state land and environmental policies reinforce unequal ownership and displacement. Inequality in the region persists through social hierarchies and state institutions that reinforce exclusion. Table 3 summarizes.

[Table 3 about here]

Stępczak (2025) examines the caste identity of 51 social entrepreneurs in Nepal and finds that over half are Brahmin or Chhetri, with dominance even more pronounced among women (59 percent). She highlights how *afno manchhe* ("one's own people"), kin- and caste-based networks, channels opportunity and reinforces group privilege. Recommendations include public awareness campaigns against caste discrimination, strategies to undo historical monopolies over education and opportunity by dominant castes, reforms to increase inclusivity in social entrepreneurship, and even symbolic practices, such as blood donation across caste lines, that challenge purity principles.

Colorism is another recurring theme. Vijaya and Bhullar (2022) conduct an experimental hiring survey in India and find no direct bias toward lighter-skinned applicants, but 94 percent of participants self-described as medium to light-skinned, pointing to aspirational preferences that shape opportunities beyond the labor market. Utley and Darity (2016) analyze matrimonial ads in New Delhi and show that complexion is reported in 40 percent of women's ads but far less frequently in men's. Descriptors such as "fair," "wheatish," and "rosy" function as forms of color capital, heavily influencing women's marriageability, dowries, and mobility. Both studies show that colorism is not limited to one sphere, but it operates across multiple markets, such as marriage, labor, and consumer markets, and is rooted in colonial history and caste, disproportionately disadvantageing women with darker skin and reinforcing group-based inequalities. These studies reveal that identity itself operates as a form of capital that determines access to opportunity and reinforces intergroup inequality.

Land dispossession provides another lens on structural inequality. Dhingra (2022) examines India's Land Acquisition Act of 1894 and its 2013 reform. She finds that the reform offered only the appearance of protection, as broad definitions of "public purpose" and exemptions from impact assessments enabled mass displacement of Adivasis and other marginalized groups. Compensation rarely reflected cultural or economic value, stripping households of food security and intergenerational wealth. The land laws illustrate how legal frameworks can function as tools of exclusion and adverse inclusion. By framing dispossession as "efficient" and "public purpose," the state legitimizes the transfer of resources away from historically marginalized groups while preserving the privileges of dominant classes and corporations. Emotional, cultural, and subsistence ties to land are ignored, and affected groups are left with payouts that neither replace lost wealth nor restore security. In this way, the legal structure itself reproduces long-standing power asymmetries rather than dismantling them.

Building on his work on land, rents, and inequality, Obeng-Odoom (2025) applies a SE framework to Balikpapan, Indonesia, to show how environmental and urban development reproduce inequality. He argues that initiatives framed as "green" or "sustainable" development, such as Balikpapan's eco-city projects, often reinforce existing hierarchies by prioritizing the interests of foreign oil and gas companies, international development agencies, and domestic elites. These actors shape urban and environmental planning in ways that continue patterns of extraction and exclusion. Local communities, meanwhile, face displacement, rising costs of living, and limited access to land and resources. The benefits from natural resource use and development projects flow outward to external interests rather than being reinvested locally. He highlights the need for democratic and inclusive environmental governance that treats land and nature as collective goods and ensures that development supports communities.

U.S. and the Global Economy: Institutions, Crises, and Value Chains

Research in the U.S. and global economy shows how macroeconomic institutions and regimes reproduce stratification across groups. This research shows how macroeconomic structures from monetary policy and fiscal policy to global production networks can reproduce inequality even as they claim to promote growth and efficiency. Table 4 summarizes.

[Table 4 about here]

Arestis, Charles, and Fontana (2014) use CPS data to study financialization since the 1980s. They show that wage premiums in finance and management disproportionately accrued to white men, while Black workers and women in other sectors saw below-trend growth, reinforcing hierarchies in access to high-status jobs. Seguino (2019, 2021) extends this analysis to economic crises and policy. She demonstrates that the 2008 financial crisis and austerity policies disproportionately harmed women and people of color, while contractionary monetary policy widened racial and gender employment gaps. Subordinated groups bore the brunt of downturns as "shock absorbers," while political backlash grew among insecure white men. She calls for macroeconomic policies oriented toward full employment, investment in social infrastructure, and wealth-building strategies such as baby bonds.

Finally, Eisenbarth (2023) applies stratification economics to Global Value Chains (GVCs), showing how colonial histories and unequal bargaining power allow multinational corporations in high-income countries to capture disproportionate value. Just as Indian land laws legitimize dispossession under the guise of "public purpose," GVC governance frames unequal exchange as "efficiency" and "competition." She argues that non-market interventions—such as reparations, debt relief, and loan forgiveness—are necessary to disrupt entrenched North–South inequalities.

These papers demonstrate how research applying a stratification economics framework relies on a wide range of methods to uncover structural inequality. Scholars employ descriptive statistics, comparative quantitative analysis, content analysis of social practices, experimental studies of skin shade and hiring, identity-based analysis, and historical, institutional, and legal investigations. Across these approaches, there is a common emphasis on the rules, norms, and power relations that reproduce inequality over time. The studies show how spatial arrangements separate groups and allocate privilege, caste hierarchies shape access to entrepreneurship and education, ethnic favoritism in labor markets is linked to political power, and colorism and skin shade operate as forms of "capital" that influence marriageability and social mobility. Many of the hierarchies explored share a common foundation in colonial systems that organized land, labor, and value extraction in ways that continue to shape contemporary inequalities. Anderson (2010) argues that colonialism and capitalism developed together, creating global hierarchies that still structure inequality today. They also highlight how land acquisition laws, macroeconomic policies, and financialization entrench group-based advantages. By combining different empirical strategies with contextual and historical insight, these studies move beyond individual-level explanations to expose the mechanisms through which group-based hierarchies are created and maintained. Taken together, the policy lessons that emerge from inclusive reforms in social entrepreneurship to redistributive land policies to equity-centered macroeconomic design and form the basis of GSE's central insight that inequality is actively produced and maintained and

can therefore be undone through deliberate institutional change and how GSE can be used as a scholarly framework moving forward.

IV. Universal Patterns vs. Context-Specific Paths

Shared Mechanisms: How Institutions Reproduce or Mitigate Inequality

Evidence from Latin America, Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and the global economy shows recurrent mechanisms through which institutions create and sustain group-based economic stratification. These patterns reflect the central tenets of GSE, which frames inequality not as the outcome of individual deficits or country-specific characteristics, but as historically rooted and institutionally maintained systems of advantage that operate within and across societies.

Across regions, the persistent effects of colonialism and racialized capitalism reveal how group-based hierarchies were embedded into the organization of land, labor, and markets. Colonial property systems, forced labor, and extractive governance established durable patterns of unequal ownership and segmented labor markets (Price 2003; Dhingra 2022; Obeng-Odoom 2020a). These arrangements exemplify GSE's emphasis on historical genesis or the view that modern inequalities originate in institutionalized systems of extraction and exclusion that span continents. Similarly, slavery and apartheid institutionalized racial hierarchy and wealth concentration that remain visible in contemporary distributions of income and assets, underscoring GSE's framework that intergroup inequality is reproduced through inherited structures rather than through productivity differences or human capital (Chelwa, Maboshe, and Hamilton 2024; Darity 2022).

In addition, historical examples show that inequities are often reinforced through citizenship laws, discriminatory taxation, and infrastructure investments targeted toward politically dominant groups (wa Githinji 2015; Stępczak 2025). These mechanisms reflect another core GSE tenet, which is that institutions transform social hierarchies into enduring structures of advantage by embedding them in laws, policies, and everyday administrative practices. Market-driven mechanisms can then magnify inherited advantages as credit markets reward pre-existing wealth, and global value chains can extract surplus from the Global South despite being sold as efficiency-related concepts (Eisenbarth 2023). This reinforces GSE's point that markets are shaped by power and often end up reproducing the very hierarchies they are thought to reduce.

Gender further interacts with these systems of stratification in ways that are often less visible but no less structural. As Ouma et al. (2023) emphasize, gender intersects with race, class, and ethnicity to shape how inequality is lived and transmitted. Patriarchal institutions, whether embedded in property laws, labor markets, or household divisions of labor, determine whose work is valued, whose care burdens are ignored, and whose voices shape policy. Across regions, women, especially those from marginalized racial or ethnic groups, face compounded barriers in access to land, credit, and leadership positions. This intersectional pattern aligns with GSE's claim that inequality is multidimensional and that systems of power, patriarchy, racism, and capitalism operate together to reproduce advantage and disadvantage across generations.

At the same time, deliberate institutional design can interrupt these processes. Land reforms in parts of East Asia (Darity and Nembhard 2000), targeted social-wage programs in Latin America (Féliz and Millón 2022), and equity-centered macroeconomic policies (Seguino 2019, 2021) demonstrate that inequality is neither inevitable nor immutable. These cases affirm the GSE claim that inequality is politically constructed and can therefore be dismantled through equally deliberate action. GSE's commitment to recognizing inequality as a product of choice rather than destiny provides both a diagnostic and prescriptive framework: it exposes how structural hierarchies are made and sustained, and identifies the pathways through which they can be undone.

These patterns also appear in social hierarchies based on appearance, where colorism, the preference for lighter skin, functions as a shared form of inequality across regions. Studies from South Asia, Latin America, and the United States show that skin tone shapes who is viewed as capable, attractive, or modern (Utley and Darity 2016; Vijaya and Bhullar 2022; Monroy-Gómez-Franco, Vélez-Grajales, and Yalonetzky 2023). These views, rooted in colonial histories that linked lighter skin with power and status, continue to influence people's chances in marriage, employment, and wealth-building. Institutions such as schools, workplaces, and the media reinforce these patterns by rewarding traits associated with lightness in hiring, promotion, and representation. Colorism, therefore, is not just a personal bias; it is a built-in social hierarchy that continues to reproduce inequality across generations. From a GSE perspective, this shows how social value, such as being seen as beautiful or respectable, can translate into real economic advantage. Identity itself becomes a kind of capital, shaped and sustained by institutions that decide whose traits are rewarded and whose are devalued.

Another recurring pattern across regions is spatial inequality, where control over land, housing, and natural resources determines who benefits from development and who is left behind. Across Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and Latin America, government policies and market forces have maintained and deepened these spatial divides. Urban redevelopment and "green" growth projects often displace low-income communities, while infrastructure and property systems channel benefits to already privileged areas (Dhingra 2022; Obeng-Odoom 2020a, 2024). In Latin America, Bueno (2014) shows how racialized and gendered labor systems in the Dominican Republic physically separate Afro-descendant women from centers of economic and political power. Their work in export-processing zones and elite households sustains the economy while keeping them socially and spatially marginalized, illustrating how stratification is maintained through spatial and institutional design as much as through wages or employment. From a GSE perspective, these dynamics reveal how geography itself functions as an institution of inequality. Decisions about land, urban planning, and investment distribute access to collective resources, embedding hierarchy into the layout of cities and economies.

Unique Contexts and Localized Stratification

While certain mechanisms of inequality appear across societies, the categories through which stratification operates are deeply shaped by local histories, institutions, and identities. These contextual differences highlight another central tenet of GSE, which is that inequality is built through global systems, but it takes different forms depending on where and how people live.

In the Americas and southern Africa, for example, race remains central (Chelwa, Maboshe, and Hamilton 2024). This is in contrast to South Asia, where caste and colorism remain foundational (Utley and Darity 2016; Vijaya and Bhullar 2022; Stępczak 2025). In parts of Africa, ethnicity aligned with national political power structures wages and employment opportunities (wa Githinji 2015). Gender and migration status further interact with these cleavages, as shown in studies of Afro-descendant women's work in the Dominican Republic (Bueno 2014) and of immigrant status and imported stratification in the U.S. and beyond (Davila, Mora, and Stockly 2011; Lewis et al. 2021).[6] We therefore highlight attention to social categorization differences.

National histories of resistance versus retrenchment likewise diverge. South Africa's constitutional embrace of social rights and Bolivia's plurinational reforms represent sustained struggles for equity (Obeng-Odoom 2020b; Ouma et al. 2023). In contrast, neoliberal reforms in other settings have eroded earlier redistributive gains (Fandiño 2022). Recognizing these local genealogies of both oppression and mobilization is central to GSE's commitment to empirically grounded analysis.

Finally, while religion has been acknowledged as a possible domain of ascriptive group advantage (e.g., Darity 2005's mention of "Protestant privilege"), the international arena offers space for a more detailed treatment of religion (e.g. modeling of religious assignment or religious switching in the context of religious dominance as a stratification axis). Within the global setting, GSE offers a path toward understanding the roles of group assignment or ascriptive membership versus choice-based group affinity. For religion, one might consider membership such as that of being externally classified as "Muslim," "Christian," or "Hindu," for example, to be imposed exogenously as in the case of race or ethnicity at birth. However, the psychological identification in group affinity may be choice-based where there is enhanced scope to strategically emphasize or down-play connection to a group in ways not possible under ascription.

Reframing Global Economic Policy with Insights from SE

GSE broadens the horizon of global economic policy beyond income distribution to include recognition and reparative justice (Darity 2022). This can be implemented via economic policies that are designed to embed recognition and repair and thus move policy from short-run policy alleviation toward longer-run structural transformation. Examples include job-guarantee programs, attention to the creation of inclusive financial institutions, and formal reparations and/or asset-based welfare transfers.

[6] For example, the U.S. Cuban Refugee Program invested 1 billion dollars in the early 1960s, a sum unprecedented for the times, for successful group incorporation post Cuban revolution migration. Taken alongside the group's apparent disproportionate whiteness, scholars have noted this was not the same institutional-adjustment level treatment as offered to Haitians, Dominicans, and other Latines migrating during the same time period, or perhaps more egregiously, Puerto Ricans who are U.S. citizens by virtue of U.S. imperialism and neo-colonial annexation earlier in the 20th century.

One major theme is labor and employment reforms. Seguino (2019, 2021) argues that full-employment or job guarantee programs are not only about income stability but also about shifting the balance of power in labor markets. Without such programs, subordinated groups often act as "shock absorbers" during economic downturns, where they are the first to lose jobs, face reductions in hours, or experience wage stagnation. By guaranteeing employment, states can strengthen the bargaining position of marginalized workers and prevent economic crises from reinforcing existing group status. Examples such as India's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Indonesia's Jaminan Kehilangan Pekerjaan and Argentina's Plan Jefes y Jefas de Hogar show how guaranteed employment can stabilize incomes and empower groups that may have been historically excluded (Arestis et al. 2014; Seguino 2019; Féliz and Millón 2022). In India, MGNREGA provides up to 100 days of guaranteed employment at the statutory minimum wage to rural households. Imbert and Papp (2015) find that the program raised wages for low-skilled workers by 4.7 percent, with larger effects in poorer states. At the same time, Dutta et al. (2012) find that while 45 percent of rural households wanted work, only slightly more than half received jobs, reflecting unmet demand and variation in program access across states. However, research also shows that higher land inequality offered fewer MGNREGA jobs because powerful land owners resisted program expansion. While the program did raise wages for the rural poor, it did not appear to alter deeper structural inequalities in land ownership, caste hierarchy, or long-term employment opportunities.

Beyond job creation, Seguino (2019, 2021) calls for public investment in care infrastructure as a structural policy to recognize unpaid reproductive labor and support women's economic participation. By expanding public provision of care services and improving pay and conditions in care sectors, governments can simultaneously raise productivity, generate employment, and redistribute time and resources within households. Similarly, Féliz and Millón (2022) analyze Argentina's *Plan Jefes y Jefas de Hogar* as a "social wage" program that integrated welfare and labor rights, offering income security and social inclusion to unemployed women while recognizing care work as socially valuable labor. This approach reframes care not as a private burden but as a collective good essential to economic stability and growth. From a GSE perspective, such policies value work historically excluded from economic measurement, advance reparative justice by addressing gendered and racialized divisions of labor created through past policy neglect, and drive institutional transformation by redefining what counts as productive investment within fiscal and employment frameworks. In doing so, they reorient macroeconomic policy design toward equity and inclusion, challenging systems that have long sustained group-based disadvantage.

Land and natural resource governance represent another major theme of reform. Obeng-Odoom (2020a) proposes that land reform must go beyond the redistribution of the land itself to include the redistribution of land rents. He argues that rents generated from land are often captured by absentee landlords and transferred away from local producers and communities instead of being reinvested to support their development. Reforms should redirect rents toward public services and community welfare because the value of land is largely created by collective investment and not by the landowners alone. Dhingra (2022) also calls for legal frameworks that ensure meaningful consent, fair compensation, and recognition of the social and cultural value of land, particularly for Adivasi and marginalized communities.

Building on this argument, Obeng-Odoom (2025) examines Balikpapan—often praised as one of Indonesia's most sustainable cities—and shows that its "green success" conceals deep structural inequalities. The city's eco-initiatives, closely tied to the oil and gas industry, have displaced low-income residents and concentrated control of land and resources in the hands of political and corporate elites. He calls for policies that reclaim the collective and ecological foundations of value creation by channeling rents from oil, land, and environmental projects into public investment, ecological restoration, and community-controlled development funds. He argues that residents who sustain and protect local ecosystems should be recognized as producers of ecological and social value, not treated as passive recipients of development. Achieving this requires transforming urban governance, replacing top-down, corporate-led planning with participatory and democratic systems accountable to citizens and workers. He argues that environmental progress without redistribution simply rebrands old hierarchies as "sustainability." Genuine sustainability must share both resources and decision-making power so that ecological policy becomes a vehicle for equality rather than another form of exclusion.

For many of the regions we have examined, development prospects are heavily constrained by external debt. Financial and debt reform is another mechanism for policy transformation. Obeng-Odoom (2020a) argues that much of this debt was incurred under colonial or authoritarian governments and financed projects that primarily served the interests of creditors. Repayment obligations divert resources away from important social and development projects and reinforce dependency. Debt cancellation not only provides economic relief but also corrects the historical and ongoing extraction and discrimination that create and perpetuate inequality.

Arestis et al. (2014), Obeng-Odoom (2020a), and Eisenbarth (2023) each highlight that transforming financial systems is essential to addressing structural inequality. Arestis et al (2014) call for reorienting finance toward productive and socially beneficial investment through public oversight and credit allocation reforms. They argue that the shift from productive to speculative finance has deepened stratification and that restoring state guidance over credit can mitigate these inequalities. Similarly, Obeng-Odoom (2020a) emphasizes locally controlled and publicly governed institutions—such as community land trusts, development banks, and cooperative credit systems, that reinvest value in social and ecological priorities rather than extracting it for private gain. Eisenbarth (2023) extends these ideas globally, arguing that dependence on private finance and multinational-led production locks the Global South into subordinate positions. She proposes expanding regional and state development finance institutions to channel investment toward inclusive, domestically driven development. Together, these proposals align with GSE's view that financial institutions are not neutral intermediaries but core structures that determine who holds power and who benefits. Democratizing control over credit and investment can thus transform finance from an engine of extraction into a foundation for collective repair and equitable growth.

Reparations or asset-based welfare are policies with the aim to reverse centuries of wealth extraction (Darity 2022). This can include baby bonds and other targeted restitution payments. Obeng-Odoom (2020a) proposes that reparations directly address the legacies of slavery, colonialism, and ongoing resource dispossession. It is important that they not just be a symbolic gesture, but a means to address structural inequality. Chelwa et al. (2024) propose that

education alone will not close racial wealth gaps because it is deeply rooted in historical systems of slavery and apartheid. Policies need to address asset or wealth accumulation and ownership, such as baby bonds.

Policies to confront caste, ethnic favoritism, and colorism must address the social hierarchies that structure economic opportunity and political power. Stępczak (2025) calls for institutional reforms that democratize program governance, expand access to credit, and ensure representation of marginalized castes in leadership roles. Similarly, Vijaya and Bhullar (2022) and Utley and Darity (2016) findings point to the need for stronger anti-discrimination laws, public awareness campaigns, and education and media reforms that challenge the aesthetic hierarchies rooted in colonial histories. wa Githinji (2015) calls for transparent fiscal rules and redistributive frameworks that ensure equitable resource allocation across regions and ethnic groups. Together, these studies suggest that dismantling entrenched social hierarchies requires policies that go beyond income redistribution to reshape the institutions and cultural norms that determine social worth. By embedding fairness and representation into the rules of labor markets, education, finance, and public investment, these interventions reflect GSE's vision of structural transformation, recognizing how identity-based inequality is reproduced through institutions and redesigning those institutions to distribute both recognition and resources more equitably.

Finally, Ouma et al. (2023) remind us that these policies should be designed through an intersectional lens and extend beyond academic institutions. They emphasize the importance of alternative forms of knowledge production, particularly from feminist networks, grassroots organizations, and other non-academic actors whose perspectives are often excluded from mainstream policy debates. Transforming development policy following a GSE framework requires not only redistributing resources, but also rewriting the rules so that they reflect the lived realities of marginalized groups.

Informing Approaches to International Development

A GSE perspective reshapes international development thinking. Conventional metrics such as GDP growth or headcount poverty obscure the distribution of gains among racial, ethnic, caste, and gender groups (Chelwa et al. 2022). Complementary measures such as though based on group-differentiated wealth and income gaps, intergenerational mobility indicators, and dignity-of-work indices can better track structural progress by linking to human dignity and rights.

Institutions such as the IMF and World Bank and global trade regimes remain pivotal. A GSE approach urges these bodies to replace austerity-driven conditionality with equity-centered conditionality: protecting social spending, financing reparative infrastructure, and embedding labor and human-rights standards in trade agreements (Seguino 2021; Eisenbarth 2023). This includes careful attention to institutional mechanisms including the structures and impacts of tax and transfer regimes, the legal recognition of group rights, global heterogeneity in education systems, with attention to drivers of labor market segmentation with attention to social norms and customs.

In sum, recognition, redistribution, and repair emerge as mutually reinforcing pillars of an international development agenda informed by GSE that is one capable of dismantling entrenched hierarchies and supporting equitable, sustainable futures.

V. Conclusions - Applying Global Stratification Economics

Applying the GSE framework to development economics means moving beyond explanations that focus on individual merit or cultural traits and instead examining how institutions, laws, and power structures systematically shape who can own assets, access credit, and benefit from growth. GSE emphasizes that economic hierarchies are created and sustained through institutional design rather than individual productivity. Inequality is not accidental. It is organized and maintained through the rules, norms, and power relations that define how economies function.

A GSE perspective directs attention to how the historical roots of inequality and the ongoing design of policies sustain disparities. Rather than asking why some countries or groups are poor, GSE asks how institutions and privileged actors maintain their advantage and how these arrangements reproduce hierarchy across generations. This reframing has direct implications for research and policy alike. It points toward structural remedies such as land redistribution, reparations, reforms to property rights, and institutional redesign, moving economic policy away from short-term alleviation toward systemic transformation.

To apply GSE effectively, researchers must design analyses that reveal the structural mechanisms behind inequality. This begins with reframing research questions to trace how historical structures shape current outcomes. For example, rather than asking why one region grows more slowly than another, a GSE-oriented study would investigate how colonial land systems, financial regimes, or labor segmentation determined who could accumulate wealth and who remained excluded. Such analysis moves from diagnosing deficits to mapping the architecture of privilege and exclusion that underpins observed disparities.

Applying a GSE lens also requires selecting outcome measures that capture structure, not just flows. Standard or neo-classical development analysis often centers on GDP, income, or poverty rates. GSE calls instead for examining the distribution of wealth and productive assets, access to collective goods like water, housing, and education, and the capacity to withstand shocks through savings, credit, or public transfers. These indicators reveal how economies distribute not only income but also security and opportunity. Wealth, in particular, reflects the cumulative effects of historical processes, colonialism, land dispossession, and caste exclusion that structured initial distributions of resources and continue to perpetuate inequality over time (Darity and Ruiz, 2024). Because inequality is institutional, not individual, GSE-based research focuses on mapping and measuring the rules that govern access to resources. This involves identifying how laws and norms are enforced and for whom: who receives property titles or public credit, which regions get infrastructure or fiscal resources, who faces eviction or exclusion, and how workplace and media norms define value and belonging. Even cultural and bureaucratic norms can be treated as institutional rules that assign social and economic worth. Operationalizing these dimensions allows researchers to test how advantages and disadvantages are created through the design of economic and social systems.

Empirical designs grounded in GSE focus on institutional change rather than individual variation. Instead of attributing outcomes to "skills" or "education," researchers examine how shifts in property rights, labor policy, or financial systems alter group power relations. This may include evaluating the rollout of job guarantee programs, land titling reforms, or debt cancellation initiatives, using before-and-after or staggered implementation designs to observe how these structural shifts redistribute resources and bargaining power. Studying these transitions provides insight into both how inequality is produced and how it can be dismantled. Research inspired by Stratification Economics has already demonstrated how such inquiry can be done. Quantitative analyses reveal persistent wealth, employment, and wage gaps across race, caste, ethnicity, and gender. Experimental and content-based studies show how everyday practices, such as colorism in hiring or ethnic favoritism in politics, reinforce group advantage. Historical and legal work uncovers how land, finance, and trade institutions distribute privilege and risk unequally. These diverse approaches illustrate the value of combining statistical evidence with institutional, historical, and qualitative research to capture both the measurable and lived dimensions of inequality. Diverse approaches are especially important when data sets and data collection processes fail to measure aspects of group assignment.

Nuanced methods such as "street race-gender" (López et al., 2018) deepen this understanding by distinguishing between a person's self-reported identity and how they are perceived and treated in daily life. This distinction reveals how group identities operate as social classifications that structure material outcomes rather than as neutral demographic categories. Incorporating such perspectives allows researchers to ask richer questions about how inequality is created, sustained, and contested, and what kinds of institutional transformation are required to achieve equitable development.

In short, applying GSE shifts the focus from individuals to institutions, from short-term outcomes to the long-run organization of power, and from isolated interventions to systemic reform. By tracing how historical rules evolve into modern institutions and how those institutions determine access to wealth, security, and recognition, GSE provides a roadmap for understanding not just where inequality exists but how it is made, and how it might be unmade.

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Table 1: Comparative Summary of Research Papers applying SE to Latin America

Reference	Major Theoretical Themes	Data & Empirical Approach	Primary Findings
Bueno (2015)	• Stratification economics applied to grassroots development • Intersection of race, gender, and class in a neoliberal economy • Explores how social hierarchy devalues Black women's labor	• Qualitative ethnography and participant-observation with Black Dominican women in export processing zones and domestic work • Grounded in stratification economics and Blumer's social hierarchy theory	• Shows persistent racialized and gendered labor market discrimination despite neoliberal market reforms • Identifies "negative externalities" borne by workers—low wages, abuse, limited mobility—contradicting neoclassical predictions • Highlights women's individual and collective resistance strategies
Fandiño (2022)	• Links social conventions and norms to wage inequality • Compares Brazil with the "Great Leveling" in 20th-century developed economies • Challenges Kuznets' inverted-U and purely economic explanations	• Long-term historical and secondary data on wage inequality trajectories • Comparative analysis of institutional and normative changes affecting wage structures	• Argues that absence of a reconstructed social convention of wage equity explains Brazil's persistent wage inequality and Latin America's "leveling" • Emphasizes noneconomic (social–institutional) factors in sustaining inequality
Féliz and Millón (2022)	• Structural political economy of class inequality • Critique of income-quintile approaches; focus on class positions and social relations of production	• Argentine Permanent Household Survey (EPH), 2009–2020 • Socio-Occupational Condition (CSO) to classify social classes • Bootstrapped income estimates and generalized entropy indexes to decompose inequality	• Finds that crises reshape class structure, deepening inequality within and between classes • Shows income-based stratification obscures mechanisms; occupational insertion and control over capital explain vulnerability and inequality better

Monroy-Gómez-Franco, Vélez-Grajales and Yalonetzky (2023)	• Intersection of gender and skin tone within stratification economics • Focus on intergenerational mobility and colorism	• Pooled national MMSI-2016 & ESRU-EMOVI 2017 social mobility surveys (~37,000 obs.) • Rank-persistence and transition-matrix models by gender and skin tone	• Finds no gender gap in mobility among light-skinned Mexicans • Identifies a colorist penalty affecting men and women differently: women with medium/dark skin have lower expected ranks and lower top-end persistence than men of the same tone
Monroy-Gómez-Franco and Villagómez-Ornelas (2024)	• Applies stratification economics to Mexico's 21st-century distributive regime • Integrates social stratification theory with critiques of human capital theory	• Reinterpretation of national inequality evidence (e.g., corrected income distribution and capital income concentration) through a stratification lens • Conceptual synthesis rather than new microdata analysis	• Shows that persistent high inequality in Mexico cannot be explained by human-capital gaps alone • Highlights how group-based structural barriers (gender, skin tone, ethnicity, economic origin) drive unequal access to and returns on human capital

Table 2: Comparative Summary of Research Papers applying SE to Africa

Reference	Major Theoretical Themes	Data & Empirical Approach	Primary Findings
Price (2003)	• Colonial legacy • Challenges "Africa effect" in growth	• Cross-sectional OLS regression of per capita GDP growth • 78 nonindustrial countries, 1960-1985 • Colonial heritage and malaria ecology variables	• The "Africa effect" disappears once colonial legacy and malaria are included • Colonial legacy explains ~30 percent of Africa's growth shortfall

Chelwa, Maboshe, and Hamilton (2024)	• Racial wealth inequality • Intergenerational inequality	• 2017 National Income Dynamics Panel survey for South Africa • 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation for U.S. • Compares Black-white racial wealth gaps in U.S. and South Africa • Comparative analysis	• Black households hold 5% (South Africa) and 6% (U.S.) of white wealth household • Gaps persist and widen with education and persist across age cohorts and income quintiles • Similarities rooted in a shared history of state-sanctioned discrimination, dispossession, and slavery and apartheid
wa Githinji (2015)	• Ethnicity as stratification • Political power • Weakening of class solidarity	• 1986 Labor Force Survey for Kenya • Econometric analysis linked to presidential regimes (Kenyatta and Moi)	• Members of president's ethnic group had a more than 20 percent likelihood of formal jobs and more than 10 percent chance of above-median wages • Shows there is a national political power structured advantage
Obeng-Odoom (2020a)	• Spatial separatism • Property systems • Reproduction of inequality	• Case studies • Housing/gated communities • Control and access over municipal services • Oil labor markets • Historical and institutional analysis	• Inequality is reinforced through spatial arrangements • Calls for land reform, reparations, and restructuring of labor systems
Obeng-Odoom (2020b)	• Pandemic revealed and exacerbated inequalities	• Policy and discourse analysis • Case studies • Public health data, policy reports	• Wealthy groups in Africa with infrastructure fared better during the pandemic • Informal workers were excluded from relief measures
Ouma et al. (2023)	• Intersectionality • Feminist economics • Critique of landlordism-focused inequality analysis	• Theoretical review • Symposium commentary on Obeng-Odoom's work	• Property systems transfer wealth upward • Need for deeper engagement with gender and intersectional approaches

Table 3: Comparative Summary of Research Papers applying SE to Asia

Reference	Major Theoretical Themes	Data & Empirical Approach	Primary Findings
Stępczak (2025)	• Caste stratification • Gendered exclusion • Adverse inclusion in social entrepreneurship	• Original dataset of 51 leading social entrepreneurs in Nepal (surveys, interviews) • Mixed methods analysis	• More than half of the entrepreneurs are Brahmin/Chhetri, dominance of these castes larger among women • *Afno manchhe* provides preferential treatment in hiring and promotions, disproportionately benefiting Brahmins and Chhetris. • Limits inclusivity • Need public campaigns against caste discrimination and programs to increase inclusivity in entrepreneurship
Vijaya and Bhullar (2022)	• Colorism • Colonial/caste legacies • Inequality in labor markets	• Survey experiment with 275 Indian graduate business students in 2020 • Randomized resumes paired with skin-tone-altered photos	• No direct hiring bias, but 94 % of evaluators self-identified as fair/light, revealing aspirational bias and persistence of colorism in other markets.
Utley and Darity (2016)	• Color capital • Gendered inequality • Marriage markets	• Matrimonial ads from the Sunday Times of India (New Delhi, March 17, 2013) • Content analysis of single-day sample	• 40 % of women's ads reported complexion • Men rarely described their own skin tone • Women's desirability tied to "fair/very fair/rosy" descriptors • Colorism functions as a form of racism. • Need to explore psychological impacts of colorism and link to the global skin-lightening industry

Dhingra (2022)	• Land dispossession • Adverse inclusion • State power	• Legal-institutional analysis • India's 1894 Land Acquisition Act and 2013 RFCTLARR Act, • Case laws	• Reforms allowed continued • dispossession • Reforms allowed projects to avoid protections, and compensation often failed to reflect the true economic, cultural, and subsistence value of land • Marginalized groups disproportionately displaced.

Table 4: Comparative Summary of Research Papers applying SE to Global Economies

Reference	Major Theoretical Themes	Data & Empirical Approach	Primary Findings
Eisenbarth (2023)	• Global value chains • Colonial continuities • North-South inequality	• Historical institutional analysis • Case studies of firms such as Apple and Nike	• Global value chains enable Northern firms to capture most value, perpetuating colonial inequalities • Upgrading is insufficient, need reparations and debt relief
Arestis, Charles, Fontana (2014)	• Financialization • Wage stratification • Racial/gender inequality	• Regression analysis of wage growth by occupation, race, and gender • U.S. Current Population Survey (1979-2007)	• White men in finance/management gained wage premiums • Black men, Black women, and white women in other jobs saw below-trend wage growth
Seguino (2019, 2021)	• Macroeconomic policy and SE • Austerity • Intergroup inequality	• U.S. and global macroeconomic datasets on unemployment, fiscal monetary policy, labor outcomes • Policy analysis and econometric review	• Crises and austerity disproportionately harmed women and people of color • Contractional monetary policy widened unemployment gaps • Advocates for equity-centered fiscal/monetary policy and investment in care sector