

The Rise of Economic Inequality & Its Consequences for Child Protection

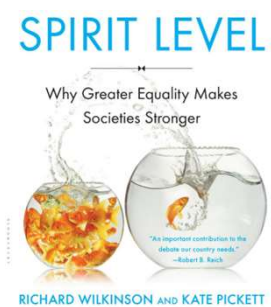
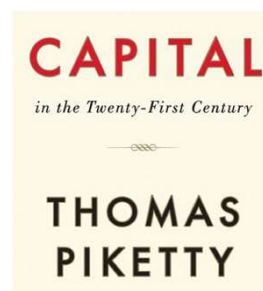
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Why the special issue?

- Rising economic inequality is a defining feature of our time.
- There is great variation across and within countries.
- Lots of social science on economic inequality – descriptive and explanatory. Inequality and health.
- Evidence on the link between poverty and child maltreatment, but very little work connecting economic inequality to child maltreatment



Background I

Poverty and child maltreatment

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Poverty and child maltreatment

1) Evidence for link between poverty and child maltreatment subtypes

- **strong** for physical abuse and neglect
- **mixed** for other subtypes of child maltreatment

2) Increased odds of reported incidents for poor families

- biased reporting?
- linked to increased needs?

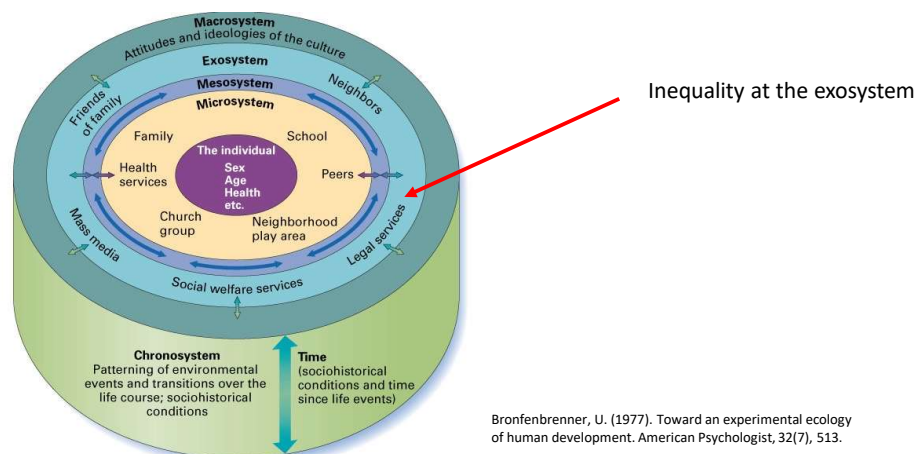
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Background II

Measuring inequality

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Ecological systems theory / Person in environment framework



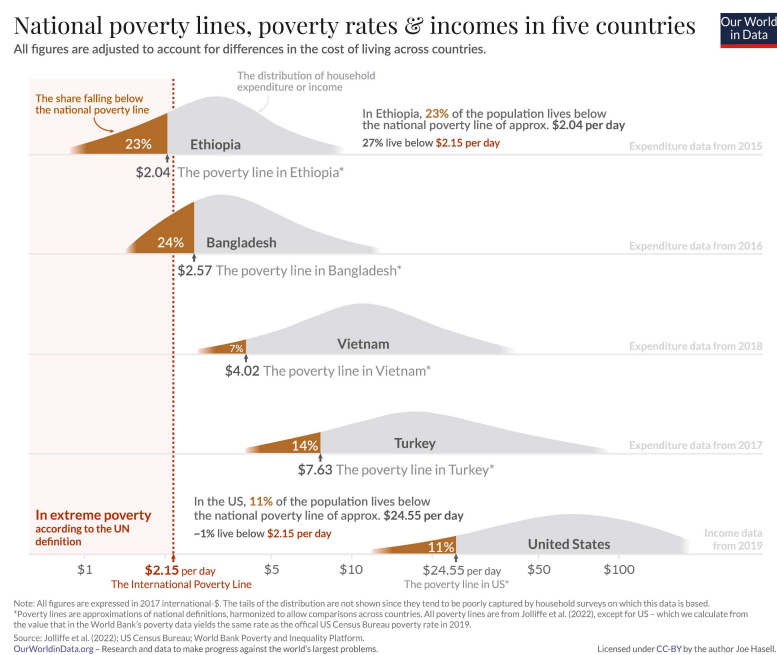
Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, 32(7), 513.

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What is inequality?

- Think distributions, not absolute cutoffs (poverty)
- There are a few ways to think about and measure economic inequality....

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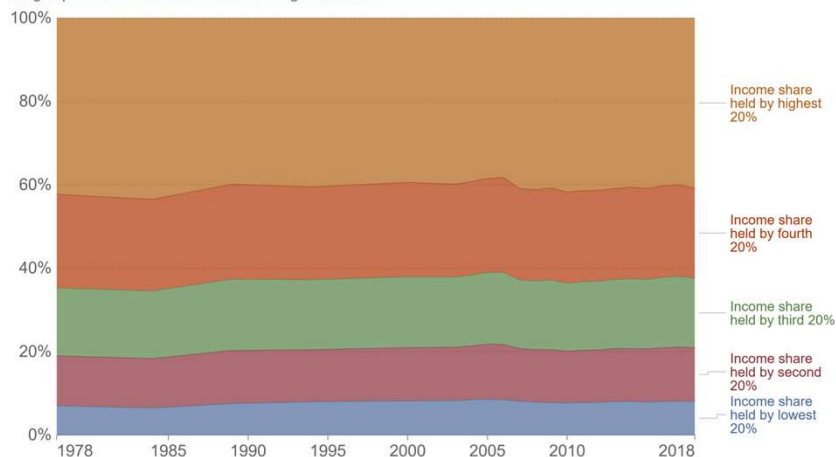


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Income shares by quintile, France, 1978 to 2018

The income share is the percentage of the national income received by a segment of the population – in this case in subgroups of 20% ordered from lowest to highest income.

Our World
in Data



Source: World Bank Poverty and Inequality Platform

OurWorldInData.org/income-inequality • CC BY

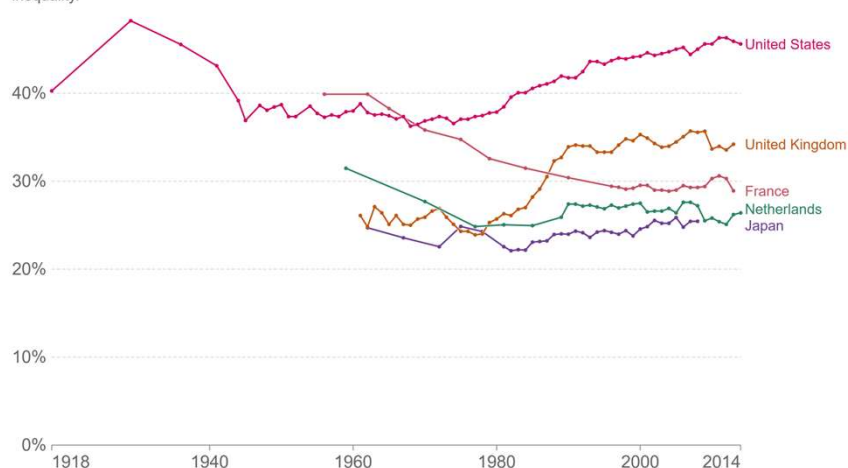
Note: This data relates to either disposable income or expenditure per capita (exact definitions vary).

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Inequality of incomes, 1918 to 2014

The Gini coefficient is a measure of the income distribution of a population. Higher values indicate a higher level of inequality.

Our World
in Data

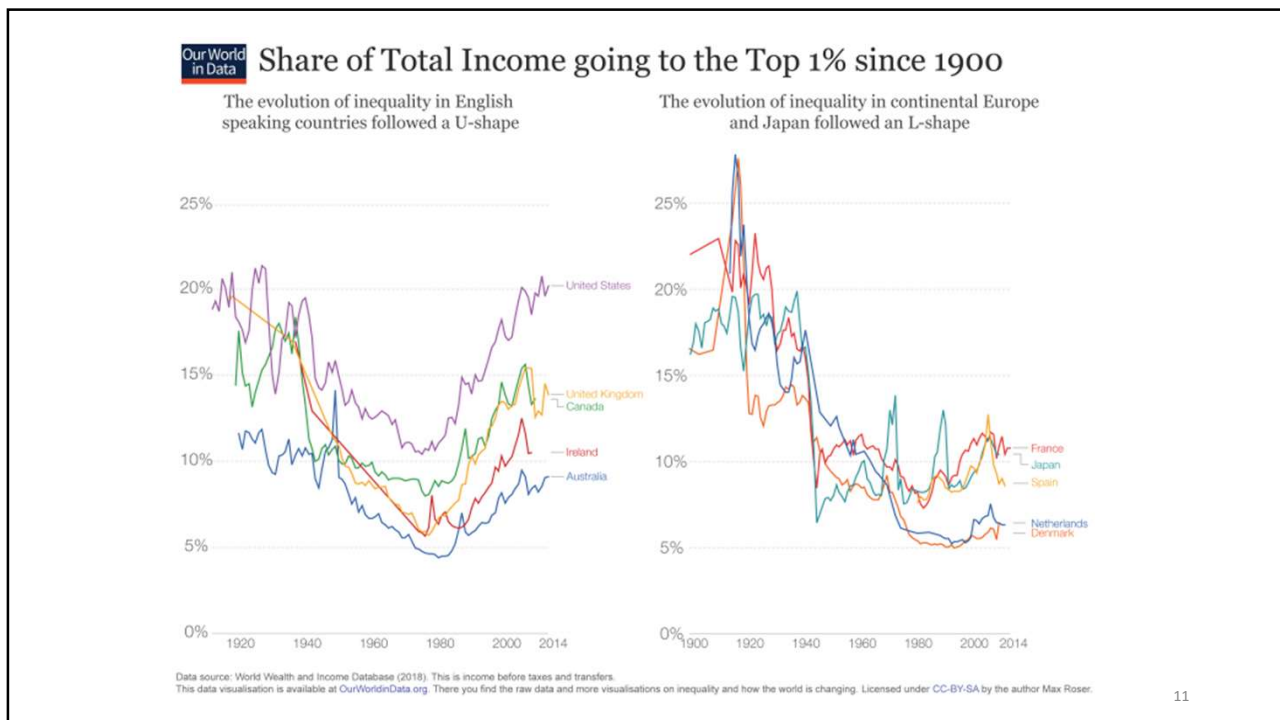


Source: Chartbook of Economic Inequality (2016)

OurWorldInData.org/income-inequality/ • CC BY

Note: This chart presents Gini coefficient time series that are consistent over time for each country. Before making cross-country comparisons please check the definitions on the 'Sources' tab.

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Special issue of *Child Abuse and Neglect*
 Inequality x Child maltreatment
 The takeaways

Takeaway 1 There is lots we don't know!

Findings on relationship between inequality and child maltreatment are not consistent

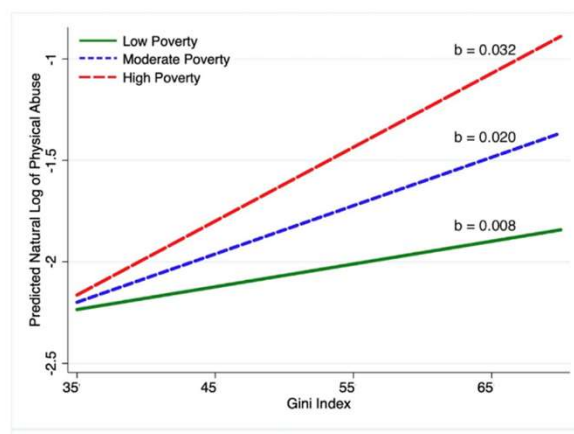
- *Zhang, Simmel & Nepomnyaschy (2022)*
positive relationship between county inequality and county CM rates
- *Bullinger et al. (2022)*
small positive association for child sexual abuse; negative relationship otherwise

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Takeaway 2 Interaction with poverty

Zhang, Simmel & Nepomnyaschy (2022)

- poverty levels moderate relationship between income inequality and CM
- strong relationship to increased rates of physical and psychological abuse in counties with moderate or high poverty



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Takeaway 3 Subtypes of maltreatment

Physical abuse

- Remember: Strong link between poverty and physical abuse
- Consistent findings that inequality relates to physical abuse
- Stress is the likely mechanism

Other subtypes

- Findings are less consistent
- Surprising given the strong link between neglect and poverty

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Other takeaways

Subjective measures

- play an important role in research on inequality
- include both subjective and objective measures

Racial and ethnic differences

- Either no racial disparities or
- Whites more affected by inequality if controlled for individual poverty
(*Putnam-Hornstein et al., 2022; Schneider and Schenck-Fontaine, 2022; Cai, 2022*)

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Back to the future?

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Future directions

The COVID-19 pandemic and increasing inequality

- Will prospect of decreased intergenerational mobility increase harsh parenting (*cf. Schneider & Brooks-Gunn, 2022*)?

Are the effects of inequality on CM culturally sensitive?

- Urgent need to expand research on the topic beyond the US!

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Reduce CM with strategies to reduce economic inequality?

- The role of government in offsetting inequality. Have [safety-net approaches](#) an impact on CM incidents?
- Diminish gentrification?
- Increase opportunities of educational mobility?
- Develop strategies that build on the human need for hope (controversial)?



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Access to Special Issue

[Child Abuse & Neglect | The rise of economic inequality and its consequences for child protection | ScienceDirect.com by Elsevier](#)



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