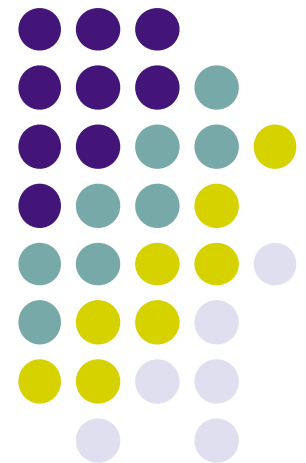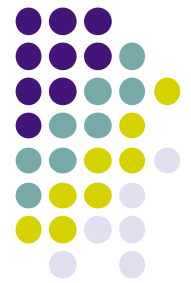# AUTHORITY & DEMOCRACY
100 Years On

Karen John

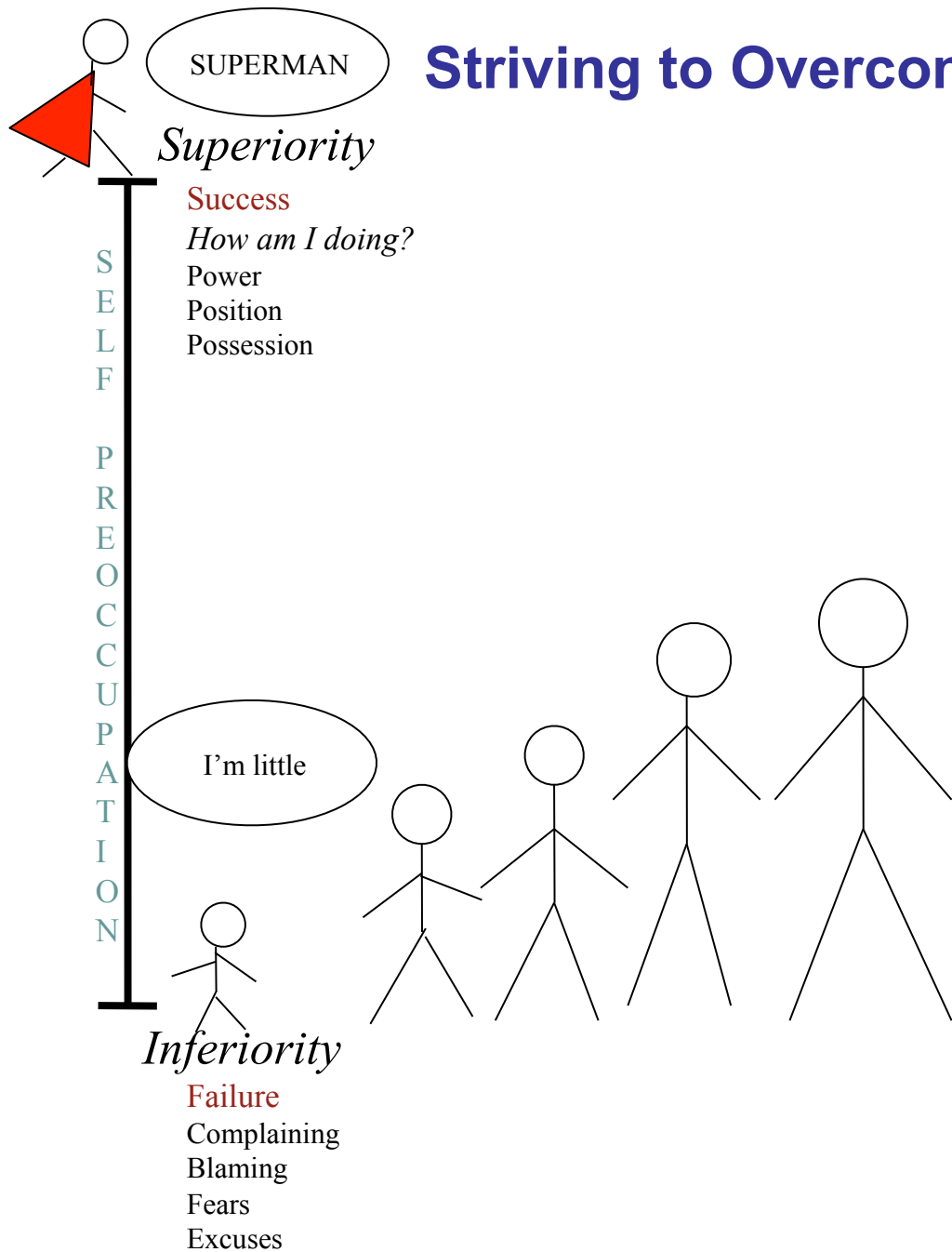# Introduction to Individual Psychology

In 1911 Adler left Freud's Psychoanalytic circle & argued:

- Striving for power or superiority is an effort to compensate for feelings of inferiority and protect self esteem – the *oedipal complex* is only one example

- Individual Psychology conveys the indivisibility of human feeling, thinking & behaving, as well as the indivisibility of physical & mental health

- Democracy has altered power relationships

- Even young children are highly sensitive to changes

- Authoritarian methods lead to defiance / disobedience

- New ways of relating among adults, adults & children and the sexes are needed to optimise human potential
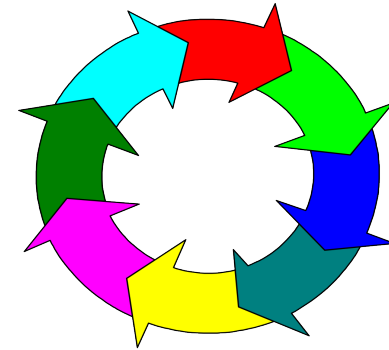
Striving to Overcome Feeling Inferior

SUPERMAN

Superiority

Success

How am I doing?

Power
Position
Possession

SELF PREOCCUPATION

I'm little

Inferiority

Failure

Complaining
Blaming
Fears
Excuses

3

Adler's Ideas about Human Behaviour and Psychology
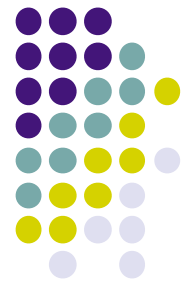
Human behaviour is motivated by a desire to belong…

- We humans are socially embedded.

- We are motivated to find our place in our families, at school, at work and in society.

- When we feel inadequate or inferior to others, we doubt our place in the group and instead of moving towards participation and co-operation, we defend ourselves against those demands.

4
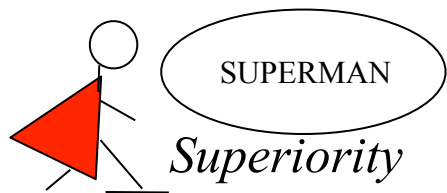
Finding the Courage to be Imperfect

SUPERMAN

Superiority

How am I doing?
Success
Power
Position
Possession

SELF PREOCCUPATION

Working together to make things better for everyone
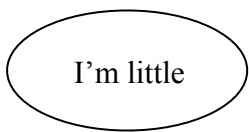
SOCIAL INTEREST
Community Feeling
What am I doing?
Sharing
Enjoying
Creating

I'm little

Inferiority

Failure
Complaining
Blaming
Fears
Excuses

5

Claiming our "good authority" requires understanding our own and others' needs...

Being clear about our beliefs, values and boundaries, and about the requirements of those involved in a range of situations...

Confidence to be responsible for -and take and stick to - decisions on behalf of others - sharing considerations with, and consulting with them, when reasonable to do so.

Ultimately, our sense of belonging and self-authority are emotionally *felt*, rather than *known*, and therefore, parents/leaders who doubt their belonging, worth and self-authority invariably have children/staff/citizens who also lack these essential feelings.

Research-derived Parenting Style Descriptors
## (Baumarind, 1978, 1991) support Lewin's observations & Adlerian Theory

Authoritative / Democratic parents direct activities in a rational issue-oriented manner, encourage verbal give & take, discuss reasons behind policies & solicit child's perspective and exert control without over-restricting.

Authoritarian / Autocratic parents do not encourage verbal give and take, instead value obedience & punitive, forceful measures. They may be concerned or neglectful.

Permissive / Laissez Faire parents see themselves as an optional resource for their children, but not as active agents responsible for shaping or altering their children's ongoing or future behaviour. They may be protective & loving or self-involved, offering freedom in order to evade responsibility for their child's development.

Research Support for Adlerian theory
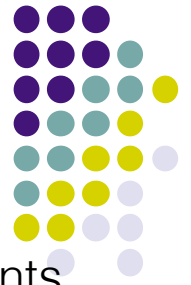
- Years of research show that troubled and troubling young people's parents tend to be 'authoritarian' or 'permissive', compared with well-functioning young people, who feel good about themselves and achieve - who have 'authoritative' parents. (Baumarind, 1967-1991; Chan & Choo, 2011; Fergusson, 2012)

- Parenting and parenting support programmes are found to bring about shifts to authoritative/democratic parenting, more positive parent-child relationships & child behaviour. (Anning, 2007; John, 2001)

- Sensitive and authoritative leadership in schools is found to lead to improvements in behaviour & achievement (Fonagy et al, 2005)

- Staff satisfaction, creativity and effectiveness depend on authoritative leadership that encourages inclusion, involvement, participation, empowerment and openess - yet autocratic management predominated. (Hamlin & Sawyer, 2007)

My Personal & Professional Aims

- Resist uselessly striving for significance and connect more fully and positively with others

- Acknowledge how insignificant and overwhelmed we can feel when faced with the enormity of global, national or even organisational problems

- Continue to take action towards locating and exercising my 'good authority' and encouraging others to locate, develop and exercise theirs

My Purpose & Approach

- Explore our current struggle to identify, claim and share our authority - towards advancing genuinely participative democracy

- Resist uselessly striving for significance, to connect more fully and positively with others

- Synthesise the wisdom of Adler and other astute observers, past and present - Alexis de Toqueville, Bertrand Russell, Rudolf Dreikurs - that is, those committed to achieving greater equality amongst all human beings

- **Consider** challenges, evidence & a case example from a vision-and-values-led workplace re exercising good authority, social democracy & ways forward

Definitions

Authority is a person or body holding power, the power to influence the conduct and actions of others - as well as the confidence resulting from personal expertise.

Democracy is government by the people - as well as the practice and principles of social equality.

Equality is the state of being equal ... in value, dignity, privileges, power, etc., with others.

Freedom is the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint.

Liberty is the state of being free within society, from oppressive restrictions imposed by authority, on one's way of life, behaviour or political views.
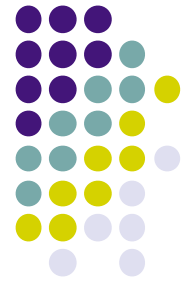
Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

Born into Norman aristocracy, Tocqueville (1805-1859) was a classical liberal. In 1831, having just completed law school, he was sent by the French government, with his friend Gustave de Beaumont, to examine the American prison system. He traveled 7,000 miles, visited 17 of the 24 states and took the role of a detached and dispassionate observer.

His central question was: *Why had the French revolution led to the terror and counter-revolution, while the American revolution brought about liberal democracy.*

He believed equality to be a providential fact.

Regarded democracy as an equation that balances liberty & equality; concern for the individual & for the community.

Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America

Identified five favourable conditions for establishment of democracy in America

1) common origins & language
2) exile in pursuit of religious freedom
3) absence of an aristocracy
4) few wealthy individuals
5) endurance of hardship and rough economic conditions that required common toil, mutual support and cooperation

## Generative & degenerative aspects of democracy
(Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835-1840)

1. Sovereignty of the people - Society governs itself for itself.
2. Freedom of worship safeguards morality and freedom
3. Free engagement in civil society promotes community
4. Democratic education is indispensable - NB equality of women

BUT

2. Social isolation, self-absorption, love of material gratification
3. Individualism proliferates – "Selfishness is a vice as old as the world..." but individualism is of democratic origin.
4. Pursuit of wealth & physical comfort enervates the soul – "virtuous materialism" leads to inaction
5. A taste for simple solutions – people seek to reconcile contrary principles - and purchase peace at the price of logic.
6. Belief in indefinite perfectibility leads to restlessness
7. Scarcity of lofty ambition
8. Unyielding of 'opinion'
9. A preference for commercial occupations
10. Potential breeding ground for despotism
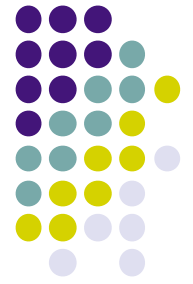
Bertrand Russell, Authority & the Individual

One of the great 20th C. philosophers, born in Wales, grandson of a statesman, Russell (1872-1970) delivered the first series of Reith Lectures in 1948. He returned to the basics of social cohesion and human nature, ambitiously surveying prehistory and the history of civilisation.

His central question was: How can the needs of society and the individual be reconciled?

A champion of humanitarian ideals, freedom of thought and social and political activism…

Believed that a world economy could provide for the material welfare of humankind...

1
5

Authority and Freedom (Bertrand Russell, 1948)

1. The two distinct purposes of social activity have different requirements: security & justice require centralised governmental control; progress requires wide scope for personal initiative.
2. Personal freedom requires morality informed by ethical beliefs.
3. The sphere of individual action should not be regarded as inferior to social duty.
4. A good society should be a means to a good life for all its citizens. What gives life value lies outside of government, but those in control often forget what actual human beings are like.
5. Decentralisation provides opportunities for hopefulness & individual activities.
6. Neither capitalism nor communism offers people opportunities for initiative or security.
7. Greed of possession lessens when there is no fear of destitution; a liking of power need not involve injury to others.

Rudolf Dreikurs on Social Equality

A psychiatrist, humanist and educator, Rudolf Dreikurs is probably the best known exponent of Individual Psychology. Like Adler - though 27 years later - he was born in Vienna to Jewish parents. Social Equality: The Challenge of Today was written in 1971 as a sequel to Adler's ' Social Interest: A Challenge to Mankind written in 1933.

His central question was: How can we make social equality a reality?

Dreikurs was an optimistic realist who believed that there was "plenty for everyone", that we are at the beginning of the 'Age of Democracy' and offered a psychological explanation for the *birth pains of a new society*.

Achieving freedom and equality (Dreikurs, 1971)

1. Self-discovery - the need to know and trust ourselves, towards inner freedom
2. Moving beyond conformity - lack of individuality and freedom are the cause, not the consequence, of conformity.
3. Understanding our emotions, thoughts and actions - our inability to live up to high standards of intelligence leads us to denigrate our emotions.
4. Moving towards harmony and cooperation, including resolving intergenerational, family & gender conflicts
5. Finding a safe place within the group - the social system threatens everyone's status and position, self-doubt interferes with feeling equal.
6. Recognising the interrelatedness of the individual & society
7. Fostering a humanistic religion - with principles, morals, symbols and ritual consistent with belonging to the human community - and the necessity of mutual good will and help.

Factors that undermine authority and democracy

Lack of government will	Social disconnection	Shallow pursuits	Anxiety / meaninglessness
Social equality not guaranteed	Individualism	Pursuit of wealth / greed of possession	No higher purpose / conformity of opinion
Abuse of power	Social isolation	Commercialism	Loss of meaning
Oppressive bureaucracy	Tyranny of majority/ Powerful minority	Perfectionism	Lack of confidence

Factors that strengthen authority and democracy

Government social lead	Social responsibility	Promotion of Social values	Social belonging
Social values, equality of worth and dignity	Community feeling & engagement	Freedom of choice & scope for initiative	Social belonging, pleasure & pride in belonging
Social justice	Civic morality	Moral purpose	Dignity & worth
Material security, social welfare & responsibility	Mutual support & cooperation	Creativity & pleasure in contribution	Higher purpose & engagement
Interrelatedness	Connection to the cosmos	Inner freedom	Human community

Social Equality increases
SOCIAL INTEREST
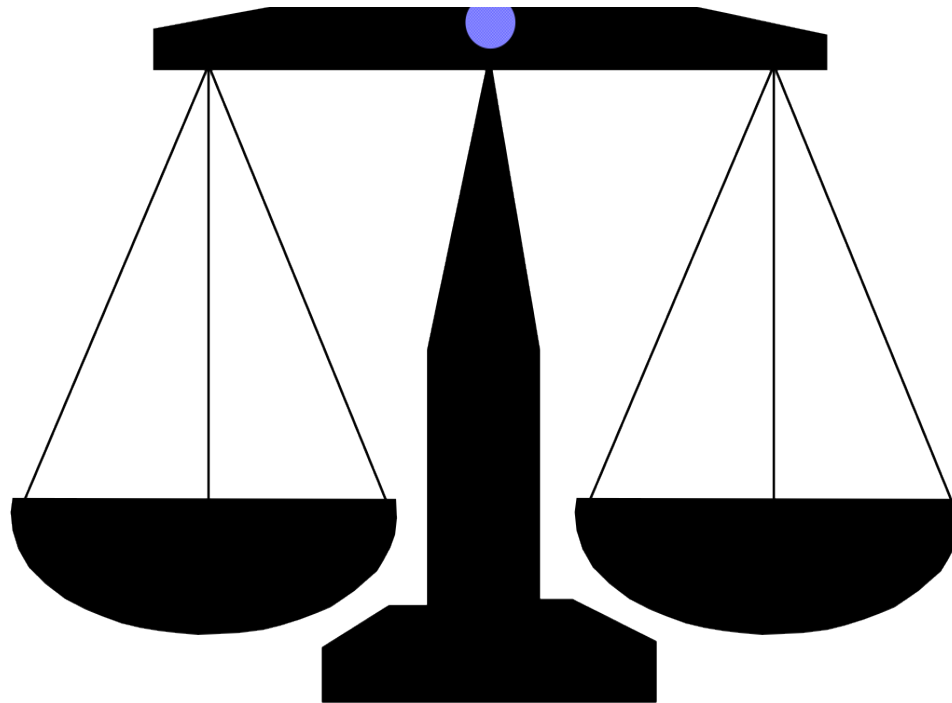
Research on Happiness

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Happiness means feeling good, enjoying life and wanting the feeling to be maintained.

"People want to be happy. But we also have a moral sense, which tells us to consider other people as well as ourselves… so we come to value the happiness of everyone equally. That should be the rule for private behaviour and public choice. We shall not always do what is right, but if everyone tries, we shall end up happier." (Richard Layard, 2005, p. 125)

Research support for the power of social equality

Epidemiologists Richard Wilkinson & Kate Pickett (2009)

The Spirit Level - Why equality is better for everyone

"Being human means being highly sensitive about being regarded as inferior".

Data from epidemiological studies - United Nations, World Health Organisation, World Bank, UK and US governments - show that income inequality within wealthy developed countries, US states and UK areas is closely related to:

• Adult health, wellbeing, mental health improved
• Children's wellbeing & educational achievement higher
• Social immobility greater
• Social problems reduced - violence, homicide, imprisonment
• Levels of mistrust greater
• Infant mortality reduced
• Life expectancy increased

Health is related to income differences *within* rich societies but not to those *between* them

Between (rich) societies

Within societies

Electoral wards in England & Wales ranked by deprivation score
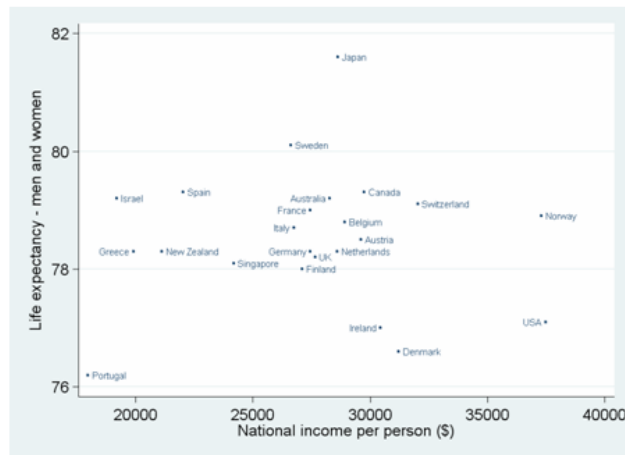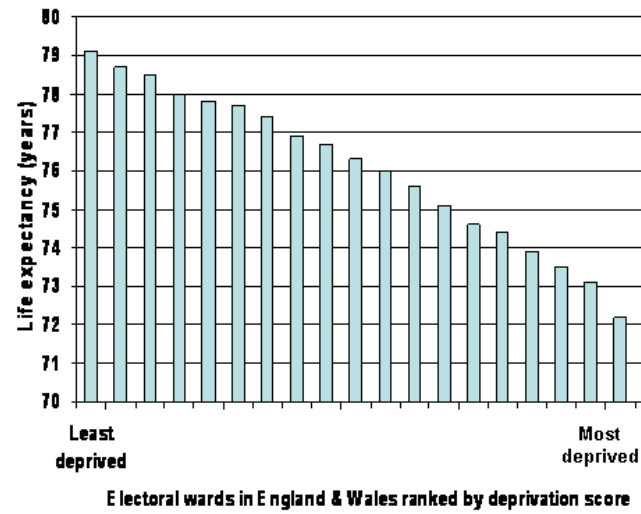
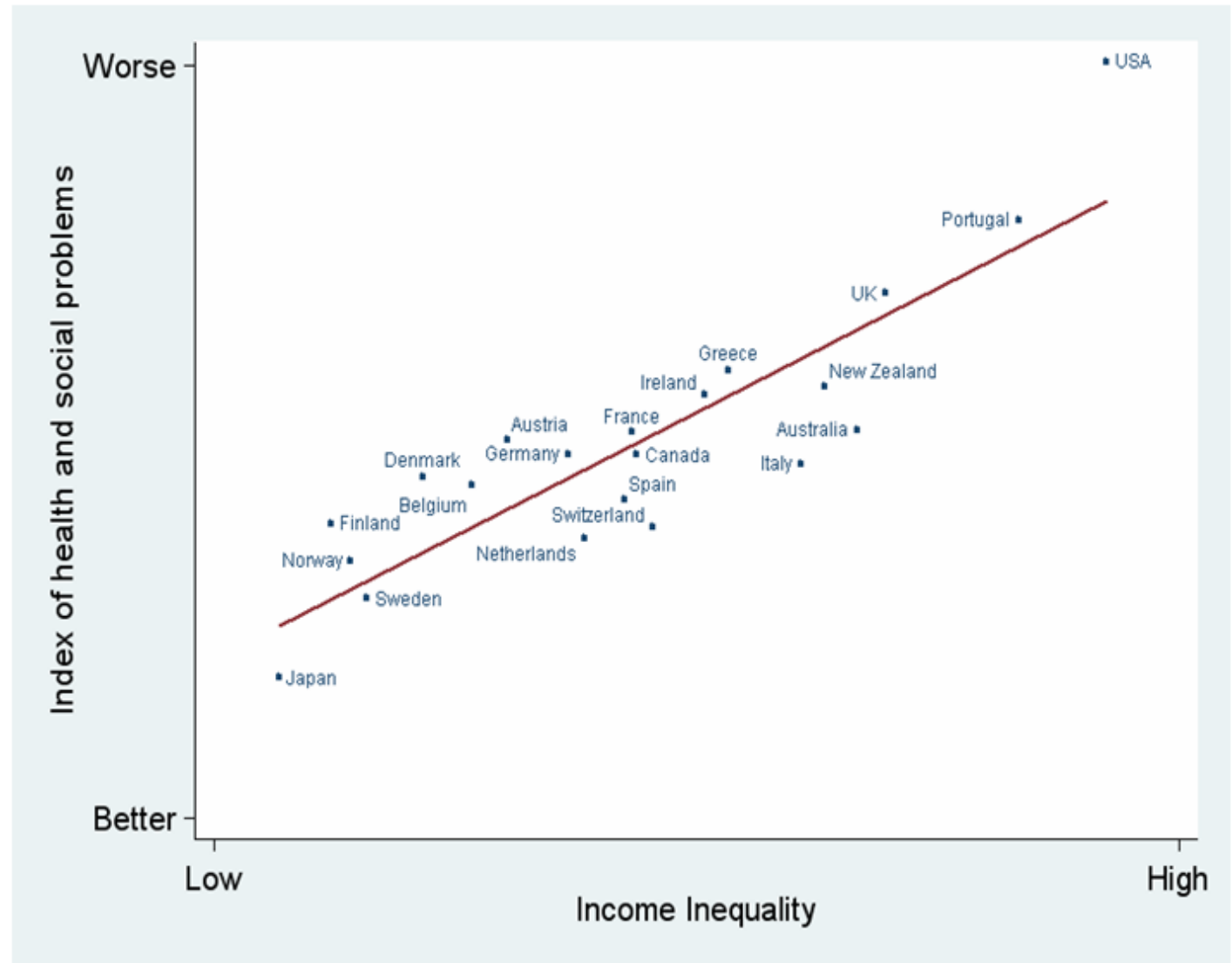*Source: Wilkinson & Pickett, The Spirit Level (2009)*

www.equalitytrust.org.uk   The Equality Tr

24

Health and Social Problems are Worse in More Unequal Countries

Index of:
- Life expectancy
- Math & Literacy
- Infant mortality
- Homicides
- Imprisonment
- Teenage births
- Trust
- Obesity
- Mental illness – incl. drug & alcohol addiction
- Social mobility

Source: Wilkinson & Pickett, The Spirit Level (2009)

The rich developed societies have reached turning point in human history

Politics should now be about the quality of social relations and how we can develop harmonious and sustainable societies.

Context of Case Example

Integrated local services for young children and their families evolved rapidly from 1998-2010:

- 250 local Sure Start programs, many alongside 100 newly developed integrated 'Early Excellence Centres'
- 524 local Sure Start programs in 2000-01
- 800 Phase 1 Sure Start Children's Centres designated between 2004-06, most existing Early Excellence Centres and other well-developed integrated settings in poor neighbourhoods.
- 2,500 Sure Start Children's Centres in 2006-08 with Phase 2 designations.
- 3,500 Sure Start Children's by 2010 with Phase 3 designations.

Case Example: Kingsland Children's Centre

- 55 staff members
- 7 registered disabled – 6 of whom were recently recruited, suffering from depression and frequently absent
- 4 team leaders negotiated part-time working patterns
- I supported Jan, who enjoyed working with an authoritative head after leading a children's centre within failing primary school with an autocratic head teacher

Case Example: Loss of Good Authority

- Head of Centre retired
- After nine months as Deputy Jan appointed as new Head of Centre
- Jan was authoritative, consultative, innovative and 'friendly but firm'
- Challenges were many: major building work, frequent staff absences led to overwork, stress & resentment, lack of leadership in 2 & 3-year-old room, constant bureaucratic changes at national & local authority (LA) expectations & targets
- Jan managed well, but inadequate & inconsistent support from LA human resources finally undermined his ability to lead.

Case Example: Loss of Good Authority

Government & Social Policy

Wider Social Values

Community Structures

Individual

loss of direction, belonging, confidence & meaning

lack of vision / leadership, target driven, adversarial

individualistic, perfectionism, power dynamics

social inequality, bureaucratic, short-term commitment