

Super Inequality: A General Theory of Mass Poverty

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This study has set its goal to connect the dots and to build a unified general theory of inequality, which is capable of explaining the aggregate forces of historical, local, communal, national, and international systemic oppression and mass poverty at the same time. The super-super rich and super powerful are to blame and be held accountable for inequality, as they are the ones that have not only built the systems and forces that created inequality on an historical, intergenerational, and global scale but are also the ones maintaining those very systems and forces that create and worsen inequality and hence mass poverty on an appalling scale. The newly created theory of super inequality is aimed to gather and strengthen forces of science—and particularly, but not only, social policy—to be able, down the road, to tackle the perhaps greatest social problem of our time: inequality.

Keywords: *theory of super inequality, inequality, systemic inequality, systemic poverty, mass poverty, X-inequality*

Introduction

Sometimes, one wonders, what is supposed to be, and how is the world supposed to be? Is there a formula, a law, a principle that can tell it all? An equilibrium, perhaps? Mathematicians set up and use formulas wherever and whenever they can. Physicists and other natural scientists are obsessed and awed by laws of this or that, for this or that. Philosophers may work and juggle with principles, ideals, and ideas. Economists are strongly favoring and trying to explain the economy and economic and economically meaningful actions with equilibria, or disequilibria, or change from the one to the other, and then yet to another equilibria. What they all have in common are theories, as they guide every scientific action,

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and science and knowledge-building as a whole. Proposing theories (Capaldi and Proctor, 2008; Steiner, 1988) is the most important work of all in science, since without theories everybody operates in the dark, and drives around senselessly without aim, direction, and plan. Without theories, all the empirical data of the world are either meaningless (the theoretical option), or wait to be yet put together, analyzed, reassembled, categorized, compared, evaluated, understood, and applied (the practical option).

For more than a century now, physicists have been working on *a theory of everything* (first advanced by Albert Einstein and Carl Gustav Jung; cf. Einstein, 2016; Hawking, 1988, 2009; Shields, Simpson, & Banks, 2019). It is high time for social scientists to do the same. Recent new empirical evidence gathered and put forward by multiple authors, in multiple fields with multiple methods and from multiple scientific angles, has laid the pricks for a new fork on the road, for a new beginning: *a new understanding of inequality and how it generates, enflames, and perpetuates poverty*, that is, a new understanding of the outcomes of, and more importantly still, the processes behind poverty.

While poverty is addressed by a couple of scientific disciplines, only one has tried to tackle and prevent the very same: social policy. Having gone largely unnoticed, social policy has developed into its own academic and scientific discipline, for decades now, with its own discipline-specific theories and methods. In addition, more unnoticed was its breathtaking speed of development in the last three decades, roughly since the discipline-changing publication of Esping-Andersen's (1990) *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Rather than having *on its own* changed the science and discipline of social policy, or the world of social science in general, the book has mostly freed pressure waves filled with hunger and thirst for new breakthroughs in the understanding of human welfare, the welfare state, and the welfare state systems, as we may call them now, in all parts of the world. The book, without knowing at first, set off an avalanche of new research interests and undertakings that cumulated in new untraditional, innovative, explorative, and theory-building research studies across the world, in the form of tens of thousands research papers and books quoting this one book alone (deservedly or not, this is not the question) exclusively in the discipline of social policy.

As Luhmann's (1984, 1998) entirely novel and unique meta theory of social systems (or social communication systems) predicts—that with increase in social system size or communication frequency, that is, with increased system interactions (social communication, or research communication as in this case here), there comes increased system complexity—this increased system complexity of the scientific enterprise of social policy led (inevitably) to new approaches, new theories, and new methodologies, new ideas and new paradigms of operating in the scientific theater of social policy. In the Kuhnian sense, nothing less than a paradigm change took place over the course of the last three decades (Kuhn, [1962] 1970).

With the ravaging of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world of social policy has experienced another shockwave that yet again lets no leaf and no stone unturned. Poverty and inequality are rampant, governments are seemingly helpless—so it seems, and so they say, and more often than not, they do not want to talk about (and/or act upon) anything that has to do with the harsh and appalling realities people, families, children, the helpless, and the poor are exposed to.

People all over the world are desperate and desolate, we know. Hence, scientists are venturing on and starting new research projects and research understandings. This we can see now (cf. e.g., Kjaerum, Davis, & Lyons, 2021; Lupton & Willis, 2021; Wagenaar & Prainsack, 2021).

With the outside world (the system environment) getting more complex, the inside world (the welfare state systems themselves) also needs to try to find answers urgently; and, hopefully, there are appropriate solutions *identified* that are up to the task, to the necessitated degree and extent, and to take effect in the shortest possible timeframe. Not long time ago, this seemed impossible, really, and to some extent, in most places, it still may be. While this urge and push does not guarantee or make any social policy (including economic policy, health policy, and any other public policy) solutions speedier and more potent *per se*, it does increase the likelihood and perhaps the strength of a wind of change in how we press forward social policy science. The methodologies *may change* and/or *increase*, and the theories *may change* and/or *increase*.

As the title of this paper indicates, this study is about inequality, super inequality to be more precise. What is *super inequality*? Super inequality stands for super-high levels of inequality in society, just like super-aging stands for super-high levels of aging in society. The inequality we are talking about here is *systemic inequality*. At the same time, this systemic inequality is also transgenerational that cuts across centuries and millennia—that is, certain geographical/societal manifestations of inequality and, hence, mass poverty are sustained throughout centuries and/or millennia.

Super Inequality: A General Theory of Mass Poverty

On Super Inequality

Super inequality is a phenomenon as much as it is a process. We can grasp, see, understand, and measure different dimensions of *systemic mass inequality*. Systemic mass inequality is geographically, institutionally, and culturally imprinted onto and impregnated into cultures, societies, communities, and social and ethnic minorities alike. *Systemic mass inequality* feeds on itself (cf. Remington, Forthcoming a), as does the process that make the rich richer and the poor poorer. For instance, trickle-up economics is real, and truly and widely and constantly felt not only by billions but by even more in times of this COVID-19 pandemic.

The reality of trickle-up economics is opposed to the made-up idea (notion or fiction) of trickle-down economics (Ahmed, 1999; Aspalter, 2006, 2008). It is perhaps best said with the following words:

[T]he economic growth-oriented development paradigm and traditional welfare consider people as objects, consumers and recipients of services. These models do not call into question vulnerabilities, marginalization, and resources erosion of the poor which occurs through various forms of social, economic, gender injustices which are engendered by an extremely hierarchical society, by biased and distorted markets and by misgovernment by the state. ... The economic growth-oriented paradigm of development is not neutral in its effect on the anti-poor biases of the community, society, market and state. ... it has given very little to the poor and served disproportionately the interests of the rich and powerful ... this model of development has not only accentuated erosion of the resources of the poor but also exacerbated natural resource depletion and environmental pollution. (Ahmed, 1999, pp. 42–43)

To be sure, this is a global as well as a “historical”—that is, *our storical*—phenomenon. The cultural, economic, institutional, and political onslaught of colonialism on the local societies and populations over the past centuries have been prolonged and amplified over the course of *our story*, that is, our human story (“history”). To provide one clear example, out of countless many, Awoyemi, Oluwatayo, & Oluwakemi (2012, p. 4) have reported that:

[t]here are ... reasons why inequality could have been socially embedded in Nigeria, one being the vestiges of past defective colonial economic policy. This relates to the concentration of socioeconomic and other development programmes in the urban centers, where white administrators and their allies—the Nigerian elites—were found, while the rural areas, where the majority of the Nigerians lived, were neglected. Thus, the pivotal development advantages, which the urban centers and city dwellers enjoyed in terms of education, employment opportunities and health facilities (to mention a few), set the skewed structure of development. In other words, the dichotomy between the urban and rural areas with respect to poverty distribution, income inequality, unemployment and level of education in part becomes explainable.

Towards a Theory of Super Inequality

The culture of competition and the culture of the survival of the fittest have been nurtured and implanted into the brains of billions over centuries. The culture of mutual aid and cooperation (cf. Kropotkin, 1902) has been pushed to the margins of societies and their concomitant cultures. There has been a push by neoliberal

forces all over the globe for decades now to limit the actions of governments in general, in order to leave an ever-increasing room and playfield for the capitalistic and monopolistic/oligopolistic forces of *financial, economic, and political elites*, as it is them who control the world (including forefront and mid-rank politicians, judges, news anchors, chat show hosts, and media editors, cf. e.g., Chomsky, 2002; Herman & Chomsky, 2002).

The whole range of perverted and wicked influences of the elites on societies, their economies, politics, laws, regulations and practices are farthest-reaching.

For a better understanding of this, one definitely needs to consult and draw from the masterful works of Chomsky (1987, 2002, 2004, 2017), Foucault (1963, 1969, 1975, 2009, 2010, 2014, cf. also Lukes, 2005; Rabinow, 2010), Mohan (1985, 1986, 1987, 2011), and Nietzsche (1887).

For grasping and further understanding *the causal influence of politics on inequality and hence poverty*, one can immerse oneself, for example, into the excellent research works by Brady and his colleagues (see especially, e.g., Brady, 2019, 2009; Brady & Burton, 2016; Brady & Lee, 2014; Brady & Burroway, 2012; Brady & Sosnaud, 2010; Brady, Fullerton, & Moren Cross, 2009; Brady & Leicht, 2008), as well as Allan & Scruggs (2004), Aspalter (2001, 2002, 2010a, 2021a), and Woldendorp, Keman, & Budge (1998). The direct causal connection between inequality and mass poverty—the former directly causing the latter—has also been proven successfully empirically on multiple fronts by multiple experts (cf. e.g., Aspalter, Forthcoming a; Remington, Forthcoming a, b; cf. also Gould, 2014; USAID, 2021).

In all its forms, through all its interfaces and means, *inequality makes possible, and generates and sustains mass poverty and its processes of povertization*.

There are many multiple matrices of inequality all of which join forces and even sustain and multiply one another. Life-time and intergenerational inequality is maintained through, for instance, the following:

1. Polarization of educational opportunities (cf. e.g., Bourdieu, 1973, 2002; Collins, 1979)
2. Polarization of health: that is, health and access to health care on the one hand (the elites and the upper middle classes) and disease, incapacitation, and disability on the other (the masses of the people, and this around the world) (cf. Our Word in Data [OWD], 2022)
3. Wealth polarization (cf. Piketty, 2014, 2020)
4. Income polarization (cf. Kim & Aspalter, 2021)
5. Monopolization and privileged rewards associated with *access to finance and power relations* (cf. Collins, 1975; Murphy, 1988; Tilly, 1984, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003; Weber, 2019)
6. Exclusion and punishments delivered through taxation, fees, and social security financing; inflation and accompanying devaluation of savings, pensions and welfare benefits; and cold progression in taxation; plus exclusion from financing and economic opportunities (cf. Aspalter, Forthcoming a;

- Brady, 2009, 2019; Brady et al. 2016; Huang, Sherraden, & Sherraden, 2021; Remington, Forthcoming a)
7. Exclusion from positive social and cultural participation by means of perpetuation of social and cultural disharmony and inequality (cf. Mohan, 1987, 2011, 2012; Mohan & Bäckmann, 2020; Nietzsche, 1887)
 8. Expulsion from economic, social, and cultural life through emphasis on mass incarceration as a systemic means of oppression and weakening of the masses, that is, working and middle classes alike (cf. Foucault, 1975, 2009, 2010, 2014; Lukes, 2005; Rabinow, 2010; as well as Brady, 2009; Caliendo, 2021; DeFina and Hannon, 2009)
 9. Technologically facilitated and/or caused oppression of the poor (Eubanks, 2018) and
 10. All forms of social, political, economic, and cultural exclusions based on gender and sexual orientation (cf. Doob, 2021; Fraser, 1990, 2008, 2013, 2017, 2019; Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Fraser & Honneth, 2004; Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018; Gould, 2014; Haider-Markel, 2021; Haider-Markel et al., 2019; Jónasdóttir, 1994; Jónasdóttir & Jones, 2008; Kingfisher, 1996, 2002; Mathieu, 2016; Olorunshola, 2016; Sainsbury, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1999, 2000; Saxonberg, 2013; Taylor, Daniel, & Haider-Markel, 2018; Van Der Ros, 2013, 2014, 2015).

In order to arrive at a general theory concerning all forms and pathways of inequality, one needs to create and develop a *compound theory* (a meta theory) that explains inequalities themselves, their constant maintenance, their wicked interlocking and intertwining effects as well as the policies that (a) created them, (b) failed them, and (c) address or, better, prevent and undo them. Hence, many theories need to be applied (work) together *en group*. For this, the new umbrella theory of *super inequality* has been set up in this paper to be able to work henceforth more—and/or more effectively—in terms of theoretical, philosophical, and empirical research, in order to yet once more start to turn the wheel of science, and hence creation of knowledge.

Apart from a new extended application (a post-Luhmannian understanding) of Luhmann's social system theory which sees the smallest pieces of communication as the atoms (or the matter) all things are made of, theory of *super inequality* is built on and around Foucault's (1975) sharpest analytical construct and theory of the "*civil war*" *matrix*, which is a *matrix of power relations and power outcomes* of the rich and powerful versus the masses (that is, the poor and not so poor, the marginalized and not so marginalized).

In this constantly ongoing and century-old *matrix of power relations*, everyone fights for themselves, and every group fights for itself.

The powerful and privileged ones come to dominate all essential ways to control culture, politics, public administration, judicial system, economy, media, plus social and moral affairs in society, in the community, in the family, as well as in one's private life.

The super-super rich and the super powerful fight by seizing, creating, and hoarding opportunities, monopolies, oligopolies, one-sided financial privileges (tax exemptions, tax privileges, etc.), and all forms of normative and executive power concentrations (cf. especially Foucault, 1975, 2009, 2010, 2014; as well as Lukes, 2005; Rabinow, 2010).

These privileges of the elites also include and are maintained by party member privileges, professional privileges, tax and accounting privileges, occupational and educational hierarchies as well as exclusionary professional standards, testing, and licensing mechanisms, hiring requirements, secret or open dress codes, codes of conduct and behavior, special language and accents used, special sports and cultural preferences, and so forth (cf. e.g., Collins, 1975, 1979; Murphy, 1988; Tilly, 1998).

In addition, the explanation given by the theory of *open versus close relationships* by Weber (2019) adds to the explanatory salience of the *theory of super inequality*. Open relationships for the rich and powerful provide protection from failure, and support for success in all ways possible (including friendly phone calls, letters of recommendation, playing golf together, playing tennis together, going hunting together, dinner parties for the rich and powerful, and so forth). There are, of course, a great number of more theorists that have worked in this direction and on these grounds. These include, principally, for example, Abramovitz (1985, 1996, 2000); Collins (1975, 1979); Jónasdóttir (1994); Jónasdóttir & Jones (2008); Murphy (1988); Parkin (1979); Tilly (1984, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003); Tilly & Goodin (2006); and Van Wormer, Kaplan, & Jubly (2014).

The theory of *super inequality* is capturing *not* literally everything that is related to, but all (or the very most) of the *essence* that is in fact related to: systemic exploitation, systemic mass exclusion, systemic mass poverty, systemic oppression and alienation, systemic intimidation, systemic wearing down, plus systemic creation and maintenance of poverty, misery and disadvantage of the masses of people.

At the Core of the Theory of Super Inequality

We have, so far, assembled the heart of a unified general theory of inequality by looking at the joint theories of Luhmann, Foucault, and the findings of many other theorists and scholars such as Bourdieu, Tilly, Chomsky, Mohan, Fraser, Brady, Remington, and others. In addition, we have, for the first time, *theorized the causal connection between inequalities of all forms*—that are locked in time and inside culture, within geographical localities and political systems, all across the globe—and *systemic mass poverty*. This theory and finding does not (and is not designed to) apply to or describe those individual cases of poverty *that are caused, for the most part or entirely, by individual reasons of poverty alone*.

Narrowing down on the core of the heart of this new meta theory (or general theory, or grand theory if one would like to call it so), we in the following

text will integrate the findings of Foucault (1969, 1975, 2010) while applying a post-Luhmannian approach, that is, an all-inclusive communication perspective that extends Luhmann's theory of social communication to all forms of communication (cf. Aspalter, 2007, 2010b, 2020, 2021b; Luhmann, 1984, 1998).

Foucault is the foremost expert (that perhaps ever lived on earth) on *systems of thought*, from an historical, political, and cultural perspective. All of Foucault's theoretical insights hinge upon the central role of *social discourse and knowledge*. In Luhmann's terms, social discourse and knowledge are composed of nothing more and nothing less than *bits and pieces of social communication*. According to Luhmann (1984, 1998), bits and pieces of communication (words, ideas, and notions) are the atoms of society, as they are the atoms of social systems, all of which make up society as a whole. In addition to Luhmann's concept of social communication, which excluded private and internal forms of communication, feelings, and thoughts, Aspalter also incorporates them into his (more inclusive) version of a post-Luhmannian theory of social systems.

Therefore, for Aspalter, *social communication is*—when one is in private, or at any private moment, or with any private thought and feelings that one has—*constantly spun further and reproduced in perpetual motion by private thoughts and feelings, and thus constantly re-edited and rewritten*. These include memories, fears, and aspirations (cf. Aspalter, 2007, 2010b, 2020, 2021b). These are then, subsequently, released (reentered) into the arena of social communication, by ensuing acts and forms of social communication, over the course of a lifetime seen from the perspective of the individual, and over the course of many centuries and millennia seen from the perspective of distinct (and mutually interacting) cultures and expressions/forms of civilizations.

The Concept of X-Inequality

Now in the following passage, we will be building on Aspalter (2021c), by drawing on Leibenstein (1966, 1976, 1978a, b), who revolutionized economic and behavioral economic thinking as he looked at *people themselves*, rather than collections of people and their actions.

Here, *within our theory of super inequality*, we also introduce a new form of thinking when looking at inequalities, that is, all sorts of inequalities on both societal and individual levels. A new concept can be introduced, which can best be described as the concept of *X-inequality*—which is, obviously (but yet in a new form), modeled after Leibenstein's most influential and most useful concept of X-efficiency that has been fully proved empirically on multiple fronts.

Therefore, we are here replacing the Leibenstein's concept of X-efficiency with a concept of "X-inequality," that we—for better theoretical understanding and possible practical applications—are dividing into (for now) two layers of inequality groupings (*partitioning*), to be able to grasp individual factors as well, on top of societal factors.

The first one, on societal macro and meso levels, may be coined as “*societal X-inequality*,” which is composed of a variety of different “*societal-ecological inequalities*” (Figure 1). On the other hand, on societal micro-level, there is “*individual X-inequality*,” which is, in turn, composed of “*ecologically conditioned individual inequalities*” (Figure 2). Thus, in doing so, here the overall concept of Leibenstein’s X-efficiency has been divided into the following two layers (components), now being referred to as (a) “*societal X-inequality*,” and (b) “*individual X-inequality*.”

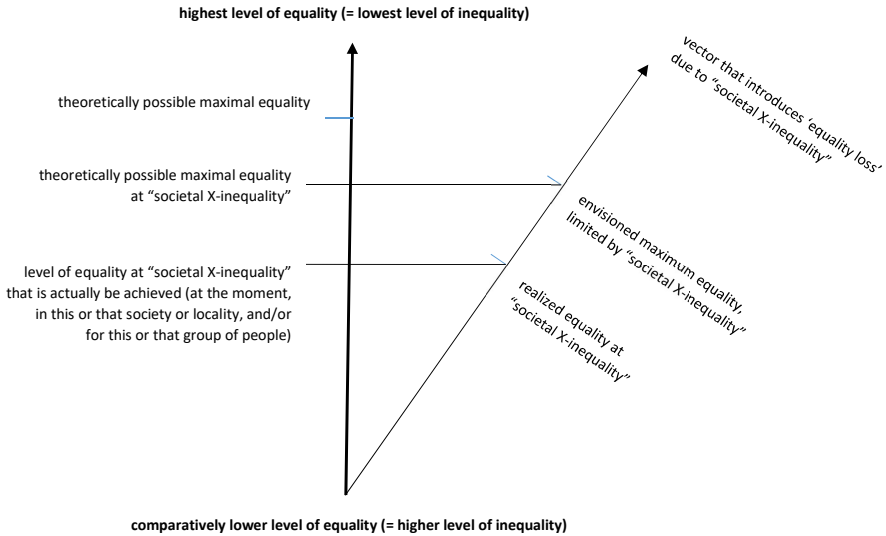


Figure 1 Integrating the impact of *societal-ecological inequalities* (or “*equality barriers*”): institutional, economic, social, cultural, and geographic environmental inequalities (“*equality barriers*”).

Notes: (1) According to Leibenstein’s finding, theoretically possible maximal equality (or efficiency, as in his case) is never possible (as is the *potential production possibility curve* in economics, cf. e.g., Scherer and Ross, 1990; in other words, in terms of general economics, for example, potential/theoretically possible gross domestic product (GDP) and actually possible GDP are always far apart from each other). There is a gap between theoretically possible maximal equality (or efficiency), as shown on top of Figure 1, and the level of equality (or efficiency) that, in the end, is actually achieved, as shown at the bottom of Figure 2. Hence, both figures need to be read and looked at together. (2) The overall gap (composed of *societal* and *individual X-inequality*) is different in different societies with different cultures and policies and resources in place. This gap is different for different communities, localities, and different groups of people (gender, ethnicities, etc.), at different phases of their lives, and in different life situations (e.g., single parents). (3) Leibenstein’s efficiency gap also applies to different industries, also in different countries, which has been empirically tested and proven for multiple times by many researchers (cf. Aspalter, 2021c). (4) The overall gap in our concept of X-inequality here—between levels of equality that are theoretically possible and that are actually achieved—has been split up into two dimensions: first, the societal dimension that looks at the negative, aggregate impact of *societal-ecological inequalities*, and second, the individual dimension that incorporates the negative, aggregate impact of *ecologically-conditioned individual inequalities* (cf. Figures 1 and 2).

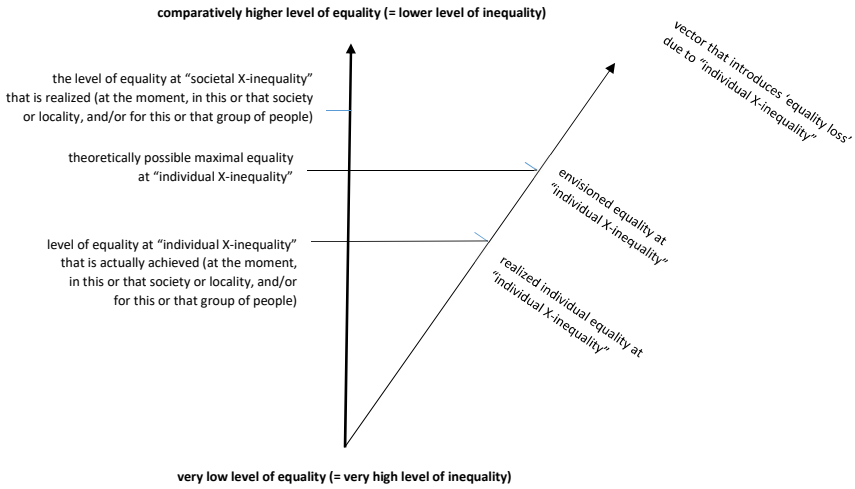


Figure 2 Integrating the impact of *ecologically conditioned individual inequalities* (or “equality barriers”): the impact of individual, family- and community-based, health- and psychology-based, gender- and sexuality-based, and age- and ethnicity-based inequalities (“equality barriers”).

Notes: (1) For the concept of “ecological rationality,” or ecological (i.e., “of personal environment”) influences on individual psychology and behavior, see the theory of Smith (2002, 2003, 2008), cf. also Braun (2019). This concept of ecological rationality has been adapted and partially built into the concept of X-inequality on the individual level (which is depicted here in Figure 2) (cf. Aspalter, 2021c for more discussion on the development and insights of behavioral economics and behavioral social policy). (2) In the above (in Figures 1 and 2), the concept of X-efficiency has been replaced with a concept of equality; hence, we could talk about X-equality, instead of X-efficiency as done by Leibenstein. However, in order to stress the problems with and all aspects connected to inequality, the concept of X-inequality has been introduced in its place (i.e., a reversed version of a possible X-equality concept). Nevertheless, the two figures shown above are depicting *equality losses* (instead of a single but aggregated efficiency loss as well in the case of Leibenstein’s theory) along the way, from the very top of Figure 1 to the very bottom of Figure 2. Therefore, these *equality losses* parallel *efficiency losses* that have been theorized by Leibenstein before. Both concepts, Leibenstein’s (1978a, b) X-efficiency and our concept of X-inequality, talk about *lost levels of “positive” outcomes*. These can be measured *exactly* now with empirical analysis, for example, by using *Aspalter’s Standardized Relative Performance (SRP) Index* (Aspalter, Forthcoming a, b, 2006).

Any grand theory, or general theory, needs to be broken down into more workable levels, and elements—for researchers to be able to set up and test their theses, or set up and compare own (specific, or specialized field-related) theories. This is the function of the concept and theory of X-inequality, apart from demonstrative and integrative theoretical purposes. That is to say, this concept may provide the nodes and interfaces to interact and connect with other numerous theories and models that are out there, and that are yet to be formed and developed over time.

Correction notice (12/20/2022): At the time of publication, the diagram in Figure 2 contained formatting errors mistakenly introduced during typesetting. These errors have now been fixed.

Henceforth, the concept and theory of X-inequality, as does the overall theory of super inequality, is set to serve the following four major functions:

1. To encourage, increase, and invigorate comparative research on topics related to and in the areas of mass povertization, systemic poverty, poverty of minorities and minority groups, the political economy of inequality through access, exclusion, and type of education and its contents; the political economy of inequality through access, exclusion, financing mechanism, incentive structures, and power relations in and through health, healthcare and long-term care systems and the relative and absolute absence thereof; the political economy of taxing and charging the poor and the near-poor; the political economy of inflation and cold progression in social security financing, taxation, and welfare benefits; and wealth, health, and happiness losses and systemic inequalities for different groups of people and communities over their lifetime and in different life situations and different geographic locations, and so forth.
2. To provide understanding, foundation, rationale, and objectives for successive normative social policies as well as systemic and paradigmatic changes in social policy across the widest possible range of policies (and non-policies).
3. To build further theories and facilitate the development of existing theories and paradigms.
4. To guide and encourage empirical research across the globe for hidden and neglected issues, and neglected people, whoever they are and wherever they are, while also incorporating a whole and/or much wider picture—that is, far-reaching analytical perspectives on systemic inequality, systemic poverty, and systemic processes of povertization.

Concluding Thoughts

The concept of X-inequality, as introduced above, is merely an additional concept (or theory) within a new unified general theory of inequality, which has been dubbed the *theory of super inequality*. The term “super inequality” stands for super-high, super-massive, and super-consequential inequality. It has been used very recently in an article by Forbes (2022).

Similar to the terms of super aging, super typhoon, or super volcano, the term “super inequality” does not imply a positive trait of the term but rather a universal high level and high impact of the phenomenon of inequality that is touching, determining, and changing people’s life chances, life events, and life outcomes, as it does with regard to entire families, communities, genders, sexually diverse groups, ethnic groups, societies, countries, and world regions as a whole, over short as well as very long periods of time at the same time.

The importance and wide- and deep-reaching consequences and follow-on consequences of inequalities in all its forms and aspects have been receiving a

much greater deal of attention in recent years, particularly because of the works of Piketty (2000, 2006, 2014, 2015, 2020). There has been so far no one *unified*, or any *general*, theory of inequality. In trying to address this need for theorizing and theory-building, this paper, while using the overall method of theory-building, has drawn on a good number of theories plus empirical studies, to start building such a universal general theory of *super inequality*. The fundament for it has been provided by theorists, philosophers, and empiricists all the same, which should set it onto a much stronger footing.

Nevertheless, as Bottomore (1972, p. 37) has put it so correctly, a theory is only as good as it is fruitful, that is, useful for other researchers, for further research studies down the road, in the years and decades ahead of us. This is certainly just the beginning, as theories are not built in just a couple of years but rather in terms of decades. The theories proposed by Bourdieu, Chomsky, Esping-Andersen, Foucault, Fraser, Luhmann, Mohan, Sainsbury, and Tilly have had the benefits of time to grow into their final or most updated forms.

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